

THE LIVING BUDDHA



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THE LIVING BUDDHA

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE SIN OF ATLANTIS"



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To

MR. AND MRS. GERALD GURNEY.

PROLOGUE

"Can a woman's tender care
Cease towards the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be
Yet will I remember thee."

THE voice was a small mezzo of no particular quality, and—if truth must be told—a trifle flat in intonation. It sounded tremulously through the open window of the bungalow, across the verandah to the steps, where a bearer lay curled up asleep.

Save for the woman's voice the most profound silence brooded over bungalow and compound. Beyond, the deserted parade-ground lay, a white expanse beneath the Indian night—a night made almost day by the moon, which was at the full, and by the myriads of stars which flashed and gleamed incessantly as if signalling to the heavens some universal news.

Beyond this again lay the sandy, arid country, here and there great rocks and boulders rising up fantastically from the earth.

Benaputta, one hundred miles north, and slightly east of Lucknow, was as dull a station as existed in the month of May, year 1857. Mrs. Burney certainly found it so. She was the only white woman in the place. Her husband had at least his two

lieutenants to enliven things, but bar the reiterated dinner invitation to these young gentlemen, there was for her no excitement.

Things would have been worse had it not been for her idol, the centre round which her own and her husband's lives revolved, who lay in the cradle before her, drifting to the land of sleep, borne thither on the somewhat uncertain waves of her lullaby.

Two little fists firmly clenched, a most determined jaw—also firmly clenched—and a most determined little frown on the expansive and puckered baby brow. To Catherine Burney, they all three indicated will-power and strength of character of quite an exceptional kind. One of the tiny hands grasped a regimental button which was hung by a slender gold chain round his neck.

She drew the mosquito curtains closer, and murmured for the hundredth time that she wished Jack would come in. Baby had never looked so interesting. This was her perpetual reflection, no matter what his vagaries.

Catherine Burney had been married two years, and was now barely twenty-one.

Captain Burney, home on leave, driving from the station to his father's house, had passed a girl with tumbled hair, swinging two grubby little brothers on a six-barred gate, whilst near them stood a large basket full of blackberries. One moment the group were shouting with merriment, the next they were all off the gate gazing ruefully at the basket, which the wheels of his dog-cart had wrecked, sending the results of a day's labour into the dusty road.

"You beast!" squealed Jimmy, the youngest.

"Wonder where you learnt to drive?" shouted Hughie.

Burney, conscious that the face beneath the tumbled hair was responsible for the accident, wanted to go back and apologise. His sister, who was with him, would not hear of it.

"It's only those rowdy young Fergusons; and perhaps you've forgotten that that's one of Papa's gates."

"Who are the Fergusons?"

"New arrivals. They live in that house at the end of the village that was to let for so long, and that every one said was haunted. Don't you remember? They've turned the place upside down."

"That girl's got a lovely face."

"My dear boy, her hands were as brown as a gipsy's. There are two more brothers, and they all nearly got turned out of church two or three Sundays ago. They drive their father and mother crazy. They're a disgrace to the place."

The idea of the girl with the beautiful face getting turned out of church pleased Burney. There was character and atmosphere about it.

"What ever for?" he asked.

"I don't think it was quite her fault, because Mr. Cutworth says she's of great use in the parish; but she's devoted to those little imps, and takes all the blame for whatever they do."

"Do you know her?"

"Oh yes, we've called, and they've called. Papa likes her—admires her spirit."

The next day Captain Burney met Catherine Ferguson in the village post-office, once more with her two impish attendants. She appeared supremely unconscious of his presence. The two children nudged each other as they recognised him, and, with venomous, gnome-like gestures, threatened his unconscious form with mimic battle. Their sister,

turning from the counter, caught them in the act, and the three made a hurried and hysterical exit.

Burney's sisters insisted on there being the usual entertainments to celebrate his return, and, at his suggestion, but much against their inclination, invited Miss Ferguson to tennis. They had a dear friend who was just the partner that Providence and their superior judgment had selected for him.

"One good thing, Jack, if we do ask Miss Ferguson, you won't think her so beautiful after half an hour's conversation."

But Jack felt hopelessly in love; and Miss Ferguson took to doing her hair quite neatly and wearing gloves in the afternoon.

In three weeks they were engaged.

The imps wept and gnashed their teeth; going so far in the first bitter hours of their resentment as to discuss Burney's assassination in a disused well. But then their future brother-in-law went up to town, and brought back such a variety of diverting articles that they forgot the villainous and double-dealing nature which they had ascribed to him, and could quite have forgiven him if he had not made such a ninny of Kate.

It was only later, when the excitement of the wedding was over, and their dignity as the bride's pages was a thing of the past, that their indignation was fully roused; for it appeared that this stealer of other people's sisters was about to take their beloved playmate to India, the land of jungles, tigers, and all sorts of flesh-creeping horrors.

Jimmy, a boy of vivid and fertile imagination, had a dream in which the huge tiger-skin that lay before the drawing-room fire, suddenly came to life, and immediately it had done so the drawing-room itself

vanished, and he was pursuing the tiger, which held his sister in its jaws, towards an adjacent jungle. What astonished him most was the fact that Catherine did not seem at all alarmed, but smiled sweetly as she was borne away, calling out some directions about waking up, which struck Jimmy as being rather silly considering that he was wide awake and running as fast as a very refractory sock—which had to be pulled up every now and again—would allow him. However, she never ceased to urge him to wake up, which finally he did, to find his sister crying bitterly and dressed ready to start for her journey.

Hughie, already aroused, was clinging to her neck with one arm while he struck wildly at Burney with the other, in a perfect tempest of rage and grief.

Catherine Burney and her husband went straight away to Benaputta, where they spent many happy days in making the bungalow suitable for a married residence.

Life had gone on from day to day since their arrival with the same monotonous routine. The advent of Jackie had stirred the station as nothing else had done, since the reappearance of Captain Burney with a wife.

They made as much of the christening festivity as possible, and the baby's first birthday was almost a public holiday. He might have been the heir-apparent to a throne by the homage he received from his four white slaves, not to speak of the adoration of the natives.

Mrs. Burney wondered the while she was crooning to him what had become of his Ayah.

The bungalow was so very still, and except for the boy who was working the punkah, and the man asleep on the verandah steps, there was not a native servant

about. She went out somewhat impatiently and gazed towards the young lieutenants' quarters, where her husband was smoking a cigar.

She had been rendered vaguely nervous by the rumours of discontent amongst the native troops, which were already common talk. The affair at Berhâmpôr was still fresh in everyone's mind. Callers at Benaputta from adjacent stations had brought all sorts of stories of the propaganda which was being carried on in the villages, and bazaars of the big towns. Most of the European element refused to believe that matters were critical, but there were some who, possessed of an instinctive sympathy with outraged native tradition, saw deeper, and realised how far-spreading an agitation might become which had for its origin a suspected attack on the religious system of the nation. They raised warning voices, but in vain. Captain Burney was one of these. He was religious by nature, in a broader, deeper sense than was admitted to be respectable in the fifties. Had it not been for his reputation as a keen sportsman, a capable officer, and a thoroughly good fellow, he would have been set down as a free-thinking crank; but "crank" would have been obviously a misnomer for a man whose brain was so cool and well-balanced. His religious sentiment, however, had naturally led him into a keen examination of the complex religions which surrounded him in his Indian life, and he had thus been able to arrive at an understanding of the natives which seemed to his comrades pure genius. To analyse a nation's religion is to put the national character under a microscope.

Burney had more than once spoken of his fears to his wife, and had suggested the removal of herself and the child to a place of safety; but she would not

hear of it, partly because she held her Christian faith unquestioningly, and was unable to follow her husband through the maze of argument by which he had convinced himself of the danger.

To her limitations native prejudices were—well, only native prejudices. She would no more have questioned the morality of gospel missionary work than have turned Mohammedan.

But to-night some of her husband's fears had entered into her soul, and she felt nervous and unhappy as she waited impatiently for his return.

She called aloud to the Ayah, but there was no reply. She went out to the servants' quarters at the back and found them deserted. What was the matter?

Then she laughed at herself for being a coward, and, taking a book, sat down by her child's side. Her thoughts would not concentrate themselves, try as she might. She was wondering what the imps were doing—whether they still thought of her. It was May-time at home, and she had a sudden longing to be there with her husband and child.

Her head fell back and she dozed. Half asleep, in a waking dream, she had a fantastic vision. The entire British army in India paraded past her; cavalry, infantry, and guns, went by with absolute regularity, tramp, tramp, tramp.

She could see that all the men's faces were very pale and had a oneness of expression, as if they were possessed by a single intention. There was a look of expectancy in their straining eyes, as if they were making for a point already well determined upon. Then the whole army had gone, and she stood listening intently to the horses' hoofs which still rang in her ears. Even when the last horseman was out of sight the sound remained.

She started and woke up. A horseman was galloping along the great road which came from Lucknow. She listened intently. Closer and closer came the sound till the rider could not have been more than a hundred yards away. She rose and went out on the verandah, and as she did so a man on horseback rounded the corner and pulled up in front of the compound.

At the distance she could see that it was an Englishman in uniform, and she ran down the path and met him almost as he swung out of the saddle.

"Mrs. Burney!" It was young Braithwaite. He was stationed with the main body of the regiment some twenty miles off, half-way between Benaputta and Lucknow.

"Mr. Braithwaite—what's the matter?"

He was trying to pull himself together, but great beads of sweat stood on his forehead.

"Don't be alarmed, but there's been a horrible affair at Mirut. Where is your husband?"

"He walked over to Mr. Hervey's quarters directly after dinner."

"I'll go and fetch him, and then we'll come back here. Please don't look so startled. It'll be all right, you know, only the Chief thought I had better come and tell you." He was afraid he had frightened her unnecessarily, and yet he had not told her the whole truth. He was tying his horse to the gate.

"We'll be back in five minutes," he said.

Catherine Burney returned to the bungalow with a sinking heart. The bearer, who had also been roused, looked at her curiously as she passed him. From her he looked to the figure crossing the parade-ground. Then silently and swiftly he stole out of the compound to the quarters of the native troops.

Besides Captain Burney and his two lieutenants there was not a single European in the place.

Catherine Burney took her son out of his cradle, and held him closely to her. She noticed that the punkah had ceased working, and, on going to look, found that the boy had disappeared.

In a few minutes her husband returned with the three young men.

They were all talking earnestly, and as they met her on the verandah she could see that they looked white.

"Jack! what's the matter?"

"Braithwaite has brought us some bad news. There's been trouble at Mirut. The Sepoys have mutinied and killed everybody in the place, and it appears the other natives helped them. We're afraid the movement is spreading."

"I hear things look very black at Lucknow," said Braithwaite. How black he hardly cared to say before Mrs. Burney. "Can you trust your men?" he added, turning to Burney.

"Can't say. Don't know enough about them. They're a new lot. Been in my hands such a short time." He reflected for a moment, and then said with decision, "They must be disarmed at once."

"To-morrow——" began Hervey.

"To-night. What's that?"

Across the parade-ground, from the men's quarters, came a growl. As they stood listening, it grew and grew. They went to the verandah.

The native troops were swarming on to the parade-ground.

They stood looking at one another blankly.

Mrs. Burney drew close to her husband. The child in her arms was still asleep.

"They're making for my quarters."

Almost as Hervey spoke a howl of disappointment reached them.

"I must go down and try to stop them," said Burney.

His wife made a movement of alarm and was about to dissuade him. By an effort she controlled herself. He was right.

"I can provide revolvers all round."

"I have one with me," answered Braithwaite.

Mrs. Burney, anxious to show the men that she could be of use, went inside and, laying the child in its cradle, brought the revolvers and cartridges from her husband's den.

As she emerged again on to the verandah, the men on the parade-ground were being harangued by a Sepoy sergeant.

Burney drew his wife towards him and put his arm round her reassuringly. She could feel that in her absence they had been talking about her. It was the thought of her and her child that was troubling them.

The man who was addressing the soldiers constantly pointed towards the bungalow as if urging them to attack it.

Burney was dissuaded from going on to the parade-ground. It would have been suicide.

The advisability of a general flight was put aside. Flight without horses would be impossible, and there was only one available, that on which Braithwaite had arrived, the others being in the stable some distance from the bungalow. There was nothing to be done but to face it.

By this time the mutineers were streaming towards them. Braithwaite went down and took his horse round to the back, out of their sight, regaining the

verandah as the mutineers reached the compound. Led by the sergeant who had been addressing them, they came waveringly up the path. Till this moment the Englishmen had kept out of sight.

Half-way towards the bungalow the mutineers paused, and then Captain Burney stepped from behind the blinds to the centre of the steps.

"Is that you, Mir Rao? What is the meaning of this?"

There was silence for a few seconds, then Mir Rao turned and spoke to his followers. They raised their guns, and the words "Look out!" had hardly left Burney's lips when a deadly volley was poured into the bungalow.

By a miracle Burney remained untouched, but though the others were out of sight the bullets pierced the thin grass blinds, and Hervey fell shot through the head. The child within set up a frightened cry.

Mrs. Burney ran back into the room and placed the cradle out of danger. Attempting to pacify him she became aware that the little white bedclothes were stained with blood. With a cry of alarm she took the child in her arms to see where he had been hurt. The thumb of the right hand had been shot away. Tearing her handkerchief into strips she bound the wound sufficiently to stop the bleeding. Though the child was convulsed with pain and terror she was obliged to leave him and go back to the men.

Braithwaite and Wallace were already carrying Hervey into the room. As the light fell upon him they saw where he had been hit, and they laid him quietly upon a couch and covered his face.

"Put out the lights!" Burney spoke in a sharp, quick voice. His wife did as he directed.

Burney had not moved from the top of the steps.

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His wife hastened out to take her place by his side. All this time the child wailed dismally.

"Give me the cartridges. I will load," she said, as the men took their places behind the blind.

"Stand back, Burney, for God's sake! They're going to fire again."

Burney stepped back, and they all knelt down, assuming that the men in the compound would aim high.

Again a bullet found its mark, and with a groan Braithwaite fell into the arms of Wallace, shot through the heart.

Then, with a yell, the mutineers made for the steps of the bungalow and began to swarm up them, Mir Rao leading. Catherine held a revolver fully loaded in her hand, and the wound of her child having roused the tigress in her, took deliberate aim at Mir Rao as his head rose above the level of the verandah. Wallace and Burney stepped out to repel the attack at the same moment. Wallace received a bayonet thrust, and fell headlong among the black, surging throng, stretching out his arms with a last, dying effort to bear down those beneath him.

Burney emptied his revolver; and checked for the moment, and seized by a sudden panic, the mutineers fell back pell-mell, leaving their leader dead on the verandah steps.

Burney had time, with the assistance of his wife, to drag Wallace back on to the verandah. He was dead, having been stabbed through and through after he had fallen among the Sepoys.

Hervey lay in the bungalow with a bullet through his brain, Braithwaite was gone also.

"My God, Kate!" he said, with a sob in his voice, "they have killed them."

There was another howl from the Sepoys.

Captain Burney and his wife turned and entered the room. She seized the child, who was crying piteously with the pain of his wound. As she did so his Ayah came through the inner door.

"Quick, mem Sahib, the horse ready. You must go."

They went through to the back of the bungalow, fastening all the doors behind them.

The Ayah's brother, one of Burney's saices, was holding the mare.

Burney leapt into the saddle, and his wife was lifted up in front of him with the child in her arms.

The Ayah, even in this dreadful moment of haste and terror, bound her scarf round the child and mother together, so that she could carry him with the smallest amount of difficulty.

By this time they could hear the mutineers in the verandah, and the two natives stole away.

There was no gate to the compound at the back, so Burney was compelled to put the mare at the fence, which would have been easy had it not been for the additional burden; but the animal, seeming to know what was expected, took it flying.

The mutineers burst through in time to see Captain Burney galloping away on the high-road. A yell of fury rose from them.

One of the Sepoys raised his gun and fired. For a moment Burney swayed in his saddle, struck between the shoulders. Then for the time he recovered himself, and they were soon out of sight.

Undoubtedly the mutineers would make for the stables and pursue them. The country around afforded little chance of escape, such as might have been possible had there been forest or jungle. Braithwaite's

mare soon showed signs of fatigue, and although his wife was still unaware that he was wounded, Burney could feel the blood soaking through his shirt.

As the moments flew by he realised that his wound was more serious than he had imagined, and he felt himself growing weaker and weaker from loss of blood. His head began to swim. The mare gave signs of distress, showing that the spurt was only the result of the short rest she had had at the bungalow. She was beat, and began to breathe painfully, her pace slackening.

There was danger in proceeding like this. If the pursuers were to catch sight of them, it would be all over. They must find some cover. They were approaching a part of the country where the road became more uneven, the rocks more numerous. Burney drew rein beside an opening between two miniature cliffs of sandstone.

"Kate, we must stop a bit. The mare's done, and I'm afraid they've hit me."

His wife gave a sharp cry of alarm. She had not connected his slight swaying in the saddle with the shot fired after them by the mutineer. Besides, he had given no sign.

"Jack, you are wounded!" She slipped to the ground, and slowly and painfully Burney dismounted. His face in the blue light looked ghastly. He stood leaning up against the horse, gasping for breath, his head sunk on his breast. Suddenly his wife raised her head in alarm.

Some distance off they could hear the sound of horsemen. The pursuers were upon them.

Luckily they were out of sight, having just rounded a corner.

"Quick, quick! Come, Jack."

She tried to lead him to the path between the rocks.

"The horse's footsteps," he said in a faint voice. "They will see."

His wife grasped what he meant. If they were to lead the mare down the path those following would detect, by the sudden cessation of her hoof-prints, the exact spot where they had struck off.

Catherine took the crop which the saice had pressed into her husband's hand, and which he now held limply. She struck the mare with all her strength. The animal dashed away at a gallop.

With his wife's help Burney staggered a few yards down the path. To the right of them there was a little natural basin surrounded by boulders. It was out of sight of the road ; they entered, and Burney sank on the bank of sand exhausted.

The child was whimpering piteously. Taking off the shawl the Ayah had given her, Catherine wrapped it round him, and laid him on the sand. She then turned to her husband. His eyes were closed and he seemed to be hardly breathing. With an effort she managed to get him out of his mess-jacket. He groaned heavily as she did so. His shirt was drenched with blood. She tore a flounce from her muslin skirt, and endeavoured to staunch the wound.

As she was doing this she heard the horsemen pass on the road outside.

What was to be done? The Sepoys would most probably overtake the mare and guess that they had struck off somewhere on the road.

"Jack ! did you hear them? Jack !"

The hand she had seized fell helplessly into the loose sand. The body gave a long-drawn shudder

and settled down. The eyes remained staring fixedly at the stars.

Catherine Burney had seen death more than once, and even had she not done so there is that about death which will not be mistaken.

"Oh, Jack, Jack!"

With a convulsive sob she drew the head and shoulders across her knee, the blood on his shirt patching her gown with great, sodden stains. Sobs shook her from head to foot, but her eyes remained dry.

The child's wails grew louder.

She stretched out her disengaged arm and held him close to her breast.

Hour after hour she sat on till the burning heat of growing day conquered her.

They could not remain there to be scorched and starved to death. The child was crying for food.

Slowly and painfully she rose.

Binding the scarf round the dead man's face, she dug with her hands as well as she could, a trench in the sand, some two feet deep, and laid the body in it. Covering it up, and kneeling by the thin layer that divided them, she moaned out his name till the child's cries of hunger dragged her away. Something had to be done to get him food. The wrench of tearing herself away from where her husband lay was terrible.

At last she rose, and carrying the child, still crying with pain and hunger, she went down the narrow path by which they had come the night before.

It would clearly be madness to walk along the high-road. She returned along the path past the little nook where her husband lay. After stumbling for some way over uneven and rocky ground, she

emerged on a sandy stretch, at the extreme limit of which—about half a mile off—she could see a village, a mere collection of mud huts with thatched roofs, clustering together beneath a few straggling trees. It was, however, the border of a more hospitable, less burnt land. She must ask for food. The villagers would probably kill them. For herself the danger was nothing. Were it not for her child she would have welcomed death.

Instead of making straight for the village she directed her steps to a small clump of bushes some distance off, almost hidden from it by the growing undulations of the ground. She felt that she had not strength enough left to carry the child so far. She went back a little way until she found some cool shade in which she could lay her babe—a small cave in the sandstone, sheltered by bushes.

The pain of the wound, and the lack of the necessary attention, together with being exposed to the glare of the sun—instead of lying in a cradle cooled by the swaying punkah—had produced a high state of fever, and the curly head tossed restlessly from side to side, while he lifted his little maimed hand every now and then vaguely and indefinitely towards her, as if undoubting that she were able to take the pain away.

“Yes, Jackie, mother knows, and mother's so sorry. Mother's going to get Jackie's breakfast.”

She had been stumbling along beneath his weight, and was obliged to rest before starting for the village alone.

To her intense relief he fell asleep, the little body shaking every now and then with a long-drawn sob.

She made her way to the nearest hut. Through the open door an old woman was visible. The hut

itself was more pretentious than the average, and the people were evidently well-to-do.

The village seemed deserted. She went and stood in the doorway, and as her shadow fell between her and the light, the old woman gave a cry of alarm. Catherine Burney remembered that she had some money in her purse, and she held up a piece of silver, asking at the same time for rice and milk.

She could make herself fairly understood, and the woman consented to let her have what she wanted, charging exorbitantly.

As she was getting the food there was a shout outside, and two horsemen galloped up.

Stirred perhaps by pity, or realising that in the event of the Englishwoman being taken she would get nothing, the old woman thrust her back into the gloom of the room. She then went and stood in the doorway and spoke to the men.

Catherine managed to gather that they were scouring the country in search of her husband and herself.

She had with her the revolver she had used on the verandah, and which she had since loaded. She grasped it firmly, determined to make one effort to reach her child should the woman betray her; but the old creature professed utter ignorance.

The men rode on into the village.

The old woman laid her finger to her lip, squatted in the doorway, and feigned sleep. From the corner where she sat, Catherine Burney could hear shouts and cries from many voices. Evidently the villagers had come in and were searching with the men.

What if they found her child?

No, there were no shouts from the direction in which he lay.

An hour went by—two hours—and still the old woman kept her place. For Catherine Burney to move would have brought about the destruction of both her baby and herself. In her agony she sat listening with straining ears.

Later, an old man came up to the hut door. He was about to pass in when the woman stopped him, speaking earnestly and in an undertone.

The man started, and replied angrily. They argued, and she evidently succeeded in persuading him, for he entered the hut and handed Mrs. Burney some goat's milk. Exhausted though she was she put it aside. How could she eat and drink while her child lay out there, terrified and hungry! Hour after hour passed.

The old man came and went more than once. The woman and he cooked their chappattis over a small bonfire outside the door in the brass lotas.

They offered some to Catherine Burney, and she again refused.

At last the long day was past. Night came, and the village was silent. Cautiously the old man went out and reconnoitred. The couple were touched by the horror in the stranger's eyes.

There were streaks of grey in her hair when Catherine Burney, carrying the food, went out to seek her child. Her heart was broken, and her very figure shrunken. There was a mockery in the contrast between her haunted, haggard face, and the delicate white dress she wore.

The maternity in her kept her strong, but she was moving as in the unreality of a dream.

Like a spirit she sped over the space that separated her from her child. The woman had advised her to bring him back till something could be done.

A few yards from the spot where she had laid him, she paused and listened. She had almost expected to hear his cry. The silence was so intense that horror rose up in her throat and almost choked her. What if the little life should have given out beneath the terror of that day of loneliness? She ran forward and sank on her knees.

"Jackie! my baby! my little one—Ja——"

There was a terrible pause, and then the woman commenced hunting silently, awfully; tearing apart the bushes, scraping with deadly, almost animal fingers at the sand, without word or sound—excepting now and then a sharp-drawn breath like a sigh smothered at its birth—going over the ground once, twice, thrice—searching.

A scream cut the night air like a knife again and again—the heart-sickening cry of stricken motherhood.

Then Catherine Burney was speeding along, stumbling, sobbing, over the road she had come that morning to the little hollow where her husband lay.

"Jack! our child—our baby—they are killing him—they are torturing him. I want you—I——"

Again the screams rose, till they reached the people in the village.

* * * * *

Northward through Nepaul went two Brinjaris towards the mountains of Tibet, selling to those who would buy the trinkets and gauds of Southern and Central India.

In the woman's arms lay Catherine Burney's child, tanned deep by the sun, but still white when placed beside the children of the country.



Far away to the north they travelled, the child laughing gleefully at the woman, who kissed and fondled it. Its right hand clutched playfully at the bright gold of her earrings, and the woman kissed the healing wound comfortingly. The child still wore its little white nightgown. Round the waist the woman had bound a bright-coloured scarf. The flaxen curls grew unchecked and luxuriant. When they rested for the night they watched his gambols, and whispered to each other that he was of some better and brighter world.

One day they were overtaken by a storm. The rain came down in cataracts. The three were drenched ere they found shelter in what was a mere hole in the face of a hill, a place some shepherd had made.

The storm passed as suddenly as it had arisen, and the sun, shining out before its finish, made a glorious rainbow. Leaving their shelter they passed over the brow of the hill.

Beneath them lay an encampment.

In the open space surrounded by tents stood a group of strangely dressed men, and as the three appeared on the crest of the hill there arose from them a great shout. The child laughed and clapped its hands at the rainbow which encircled it and the Brinjaris as a frame, and the group began to move swiftly towards them.

The tents, the men, and their dress, were strange to the Brinjaris, and they turned in flight. Two youths, clad in weather-stained green woollen tunics bordered with fur, intercepted them and headed them back to the tents.

Trembling and fearful, the woman clasping the child tightly to her breast, they were soon surrounded.

"Two Brinjaris carrying a child white as the soul of the Buddha," said one, as they were borne towards the camp by the crowd.

"The Living Buddha is found!"

"And upon the right hand there shall be but four fingers, and by this ye shall know that it is he. Thus said the Oracle."

"No miracle like to this has ever been!" shouted another.

With cries of astonishment and admiration they crowded round the child, bending down and worshipping him, and laying their foreheads in the wet grass. *

They admired the delicacy of his skin, the symmetry of his build, his eyes, which they compared to the blue of the heavens. Curiously they examined the gilt regimental button which was still suspended round his neck, supposing it to be a charm. The child laughed gleefully and fearlessly, stretching out his hands towards them. Another shout rent the air.

"He knoweth his own people!"

"See, he stretcheth out his hand in blessing to us!"

An old man came forward and, with a gesture of authority, commanded the others to stand back. * They formed a semicircle round the bewildered Brinjaris, the woman still clasping the child tightly to her bosom.

The appearance of the old man was striking in the extreme. He was tall, clean shaven, with close-cropped hair and the tonsure. He was dressed in a red woollen garment, which left one breast and shoulder bare. In this his costume resembled that of many others of the party. It was the dress of a Buddhist monk.

He spoke a word or two to one of those near them

who disappeared for a moment into a tent, reappearing with a mantle and mitre-shaped hat, which the old man put on. He then recited a prayer in a low voice. By degrees the others joined in.

The scene was full of Eastern beauty—the many-coloured dresses of the kneeling semicircle of monks, Tibetans and Chinese, the background of tents, the two Brinjaris, and the centre of all, the laughing, gleeful English child, above their heads the fading rainbow, far away northwards the snows of the Himalayas.

After a time the praying ceased.

The old priest spoke gently and firmly to the Brinjaris. An expression of amazement and awe came into their faces. They bowed their heads submissively.

At a gesture from the old man the two youths who had arrested the flight of the Brinjaris brought into the centre of the semicircle a small box made of ebony and inlaid with ivory. There were also to strengthen it great clamps of silver.

The old priest himself reverently opened it, at the same time telling the woman to place the child on his feet.

She did so, going down on her knees and restraining him by his sash from moving more than an arm's length from her.

From the box the old man produced a book, a cushion, a silver teapot, a steatite cup, and a richly-worked gold saucer. A youth brought forward another cup and saucer of commoner make.

The child was then released.

Breathless, those standing around watched him. He toddled forward, and sitting down by the steatite cup, rattled it playfully against the saucer.

There was an ejaculation of delight.

In turn he examined the teapot and the cushion, taking no notice of the teacup and saucer of commoner make which the youth had placed with the other.

Cries of joy arose from all sides. At a word from the old man the others began to strike the tents, and in an incredibly short space of time the party were ready to start.

"Tsang-Lo!" cried the old priest.

"Tsang-Lo!" shouted the others.

The Brinjari, dejected himself, was vainly endeavouring to console his wife, who wept bitterly.

The old man handed them some pieces of money which, both refusing to take, he threw on the ground at their feet.

The road northwards ran some hundred yards from the camp, and soon the cavalcade, with the child in its midst, was moving swiftly along it.

The two Brinjaris stood watching till the receding group were lost to view. Then the man looked at the glittering coins on the ground and, unseen by his wife, gathered them up.

CHAPTER I

"TSANG-LO at last!"

The speaker looked down upon the town at his feet. The sedan chairs emptied themselves, and the rest of the party joined him.

"Eminently picturesque!"

There was a murmur of assent, and the travellers stood and took in the view.

They had the whole city below them, some three miles away.

It was packed closely on a piece of flat ground at their feet, which was practically an island, the main stream of the river flowing on the side furthest from them, a backwater shutting it off everywhere else from the mainland.

The extensive burial grounds lay away from the town beyond the backwater, between them and the city, which was entirely surrounded by a strong wall.

There were four gates with drawbridges, north, south, east, and west. The travellers were facing the north gate.

The south gate led into the country on the opposite side of the river, where, on the right, the land sloped up to a steep hill, the sides of which were covered with the cells and temples of what was evidently a Lamasery, or Buddhist monastery.

"Still another monastery! They cover the land like mole-hills."

David Haviland handed his glasses to his wife, who stood next to him. She took them and gazed across the town and the river at the buildings on the far-off hillside.

"It is evidently a very rich one," she answered. "One of the largest, I should say. There are thousands of cells and three large temples."

"Especially important Living Buddha, I suppose," remarked a beautiful girl.

"Lord! what an extraordinary people! Nevertheless, their enthusiasm for their religion sometimes makes me blush for so-called Christians. What do you think, Blake?"

The man he addressed was a small, spare creature in glasses. He wore a curious, hybrid, Anglo-Chinese costume, and his head gave gruesome signs of an attempt to adopt the native coiffure. That part which was shaved had been somewhat neglected, and was covered with most unbecoming stubble, while the copse, so to speak, which was the beginning of the pigtail, stuck out defiantly.

He moved his pince-nez aggressively forward, and answered—

"I never see one of these organisations of the devil without a shudder."

"Come, come," said Haviland gently. Then, after a moment, "We may as well rest here—the only bit of ground possible to camp on within sight."

"I believe," said the youngest man in the party, "these Chinamen would cultivate the stone pavement if there were nothing else to practise agriculture on." And he looked round at the spreading fields of barley, maize, and rice.

"You are quite right, Fraser," said Haviland, and he laughed—a deep, musical laugh full of sincerity and good humour. His wife, the Catherine Burney of former days, put her arm round the girl—her step-daughter—as they watched the coolies unpack under the directions of their faithful henchman, Tu-Su.

Mr. Blake fussed about, as was his nature.

Stanley Fraser pulled at his pipe and gazed at Ruth Haviland, the occupation of his leisure moments. Not that he received much encouragement, and at times he regretted the impulse that had induced him to join the mad missionary and his wife in this hazardous expedition. He had pretended professional enthusiasm as the reason for spending his consular leave in this journey to Tsang-Lo, but in his heart he knew that Ruth Haviland was the cause and that there would be little leisure for statistical inquiry.

The Chinese servants prepared the meal.

"It's perfectly wonderful," said Stanley Fraser, after a pause, "what those beggars can carry. We couldn't be better off if we were at a Shanghai hotel."

"I sometimes think," answered Haviland, "that one does this sort of thing a little too comfortably nowadays. It robs adventure of a good deal of its proper flavour."

"You are more traveller than missionary, or you wouldn't say that," retorted Fraser, and Mr. Blake snorted.

Haviland was silent. In Fraser's remark there was a vague reflection on his cloth, and he felt that just a suspicion of resentment was necessary. He knew that the accusation held some truth. The comfort of their travelling arrangements, however, was not so much of his seeking as his wife's. It was

her pride and pleasure that he should feel as comfortable as if he were still at the Mission Station.

It was twenty-eight years since the tragedy at Benaputta, and Catherine was still active and young enough to travel over Asia with her husband.

There were streaks of grey in her hair, and in her eyes there was a deep and abiding sadness which could not be driven out. She had schooled herself to bear her great sorrow alone, but now and then she could not help speaking to her husband of her lost child.

All these years she had lived in doubt, and though those around her had become convinced that he was dead, she refused to accept it as truth.

With the return of peace and order she had gone back to Benaputta. She had lived in the district for over ten years hoping against hope. Then David Haviland, who was in charge of a Mission Station near the village where she had lain concealed, asked her to be his wife. He was a widower with a little girl, four years of age.

He was going to China, and he pointed out to her the futility of remaining in the place where the poignancy of her grief was ever recurring. It was a wrong to herself. The story of her child's loss was known far and wide throughout the country, and she could not help his recovery by staying where she was.

She had a great affection for Haviland, and she consented to marry him. They had worked much together, and she respected his tolerance and inexhaustible energy in the cause of good.

Her sorrow had developed the religious side of her character till she had, unconsciously perhaps to herself, become somewhat insistent on her point of view

of Christianity, and would have become more so had it not been for the absolute lack of bigotry in her husband.

The increase in his tolerance which years had brought with them made her at times a little uncomfortable. He seemed to regard with equanimity heresies which were to her very real and terrible things.

Directly Ruth Haviland's schooldays were over she came out to join them.

No two temperaments could have been more suitable for deep and lasting friendship than those of Catherine and Ruth. They were both without a trace of affectation, and Ruth's temperament, which was innately sunny, acted as a check to those gloomy reflections which were bound at times to take possession of Catherine.

On the other hand, no girl could have had a more sympathetic or sensible companion.

David Haviland had looked forward to his daughter's coming with some trepidation.

Neither he nor his wife had suggested it. They had good reasons for waiting till she expressed a desire to do so. A girl brought up from the age of four till nearly nineteen in England would naturally regard them as strangers; at least, such was their impression.

To their amazement the girl's letters were full of enthusiasm at the idea of coming out. She wrote to Catherine now and then. She was too sweet-natured to do otherwise, but she held an idealised picture of her own mother in her heart, and was too loyal not to feel some hostility towards the usurper.

In ten minutes Catherine had conquered her.

She saw that her stepmother's character was in-

capable of the least vulgarity of assumption. She also saw that the sincerest friendship was offered her and that there would be no fictional stepmother to create a gulf between her father and herself.

When Haviland saw them together he smiled happily.

From that day onwards the three were a trinity of good fellowship.

It was true that Haviland was by nature more of traveller than missionary. The product of an Evangelical country rectory, his early religious teaching had been strictly bounded by the high stone walls of Calvinistic dogma.

He had no idea of the broader and sweeter vision which lay beyond those forbidding walls. To throw the least doubt on the authenticity and literal meaning of the New Testament would in his father's house have been considered hideous blasphemy. Had his son done such a thing it would probably only have been wholesome fear of the law that would have prevented the gloomy old man from removing him to the plains of hell-fire—with the prospect of which he was wont to rouse the pleasurable anticipations of his congregation.

His son was given little or no opportunity of exercising his intellectual free thought till he had chosen his vocation, and—to his father's unspeakable joy—announced that he felt a distinct call for missionary work. He was still a raw, inexperienced lad when he landed in India under the auspices of the Asiatic Gospel Mission. That there were other religions in the world founded on anything but suggestions of the Evil One he had not the faintest conception.

He appeared to himself as a plutocrat, come to

distribute largesse from the illimitable resources of his own religious riches. But this was a long time ago, and the long-legged, awkwardly built Evangelical youth had become the broadly built, deep-thinking man of fifty-five, whose Christianity, in the eyes of his colleagues, had a somewhat too muscular character, and whose beliefs—could they have probed his mind—would have struck them as being in a highly unsatisfactory condition.

It was not, however, till he left India that his examination and analysis of the great religions by which he was surrounded had gradually undermined his faith in the sole inspiration of Christianity.

With this belief—and for years almost unconsciously to himself—had gone his faith in dogmas which he would at one time have conceived it blasphemy to question; yet, facing himself, he had one day to admit that he had become a doubter, and it brought an unpleasant sensation of being slightly a hypocrite. Closer study of the origin and comparison of religions had brought him to a condition of mind in which he was very uncertain whether he could still work as a missionary—not to speak of his misgivings as to the advisability of the work itself.

* Unable to make up his mind, Tsang-Lo had been suggested to him; and in the state of unrest in which he was, the idea of movement and adventure was a grateful one.

His looseness of dogma had not passed altogether unnoticed, and would have stirred his co-workers to action, had he not some years before become possessed of a very comfortable private income. It was unusual to have a comparatively wealthy man in their midst, a man, moreover, who was ready to complete the hideousness of an iron church out of his

own pocket, or to rescue this or that Mission school from financial collapse. More than once some of the most bigoted had contemplated testing his beliefs, but somehow one of their number always stole a march and rendered the thing impossible by sending in a subscription list.

Had he not inherited his unexpected fortune he might have given the work up, but it seemed to him that to do so would be disloyal.

It was perhaps because missionary work in China had promised a more exciting field that he had left India, where it was comparatively plain sailing.

Eight hundred miles inland, protected only by the letters which his own efforts had obtained from the authorities at Peking, and relying on the strong and exceptional individualities of himself and his wife, life would be full of work worth doing.

They had both felt scruples about keeping Ruth with them for more than a visit. There were none of the opportunities which a girl of her age has a right to expect, and Catherine pointed out how much better placed she would be in London under the care of some chaperone who would take her into society.

"After all, my dear, you are more or less of an heiress, and one or two rounds of the social whirligig are your due."

"As heiress, I can afford to dispense with them. I know what you mean: you think I ought to marry. Well, I shall leave the marriage-market open to my less wealthy sisters. I like being with you. I like studying the Chinese, and so far I can stand the climate."

This conversation took place at the Mission House at Chang-King. Her stepmother added—

"I was thinking more about this expedition to Tsang-Lo that your father is contemplating."

"Well, you are going, aren't you?"

"Of course I'm going."

"Well, then, why not I?"

"Well, my dear, the Chinese in this place have grown to like us more or less. At any rate, they leave us alone. We none of us have the remotest idea of what may happen at Tsang-Lo. It's quite an experiment. They may fall upon us directly we show our faces. There are sure to be unpleasantnesses of one kind or another."

"Well, and if anything happened to you two I might just as well be under the ground. I don't want to be left upon the earth as a remnant of what has been. Besides, I love adventures."

Stanley Fraser was disappointed on hearing that Ruth had decided to go to Tsang-Lo. He had contemplated being her escort to Shanghai, but he resolved to change his plans and spend his consular leave with the Havilands.

Catherine had a shrewd suspicion of the reason which prompted him to do this, but although she did not look with great favour on his attentions to Ruth, she could not put any obstacle in the way of her husband having the company of another man with whom to talk and smoke, Blake hardly counting. He was taken because Haviland was obliged to have another missionary and he was the only one available, having just come out from England.

Their journey so far had been free from dangerous adventure, although the news of their errand seemed to travel faster than they did, for in more than one place they had met with discourtesy and abuse.

This, however, was nothing to hinder them, for

they held the indomitable theory of the right to go anywhere which drives the English race on.

Haviland decided not to continue their journey till the next morning. He maintained that providing those with him had healthy constitutions they would best be kept in order by making friends with the climate.

"It is defiance that does the mischief," he remarked. "If people would only bow to the exigencies of the climate instead of trying to go their own wilful way, they would soon become its master instead of its servant. The great thing is not to do too much. They should take a lesson from the Chinese. They are a marvellous race in the appreciation of individual limits. In one sense there is no such industrious race in the world. Look!" And he waved his arm around. "I wonder what other people could have carried agriculture so far with such primitive means."

"When I was in England I thought the Chinese a picturesque people, and liked them. Now I live among them I hate the sight of them."

"Just as much, no doubt, as they hate the sight of you," said Haviland, turning to Fraser who had spoken.

"I can't help their ignorance." And Fraser spoke in perfectly good faith.

The ghost of a smile played round Haviland's lips. He did not derive the unmixed pleasure from Fraser's companionship which his wife had anticipated.

The next morning the whole party set forward again. As they drew nearer they could see that the Buddhist Monastery was even larger than it had seemed the day before.

"Dangerous place for a Mission Station," said Fraser.

Haviland did not answer. It was when he was brought face to face with some such practical proof of pious zeal that he began to feel conscious of officiousness. What were they doing in a land studded with temples, beautiful inside and out as the art of their builders could make them?

"Idolatry!" whispered the remnants of a Christian conscience.

"Rome — pigments and tinsel," argued back Intellect.

"Brutal superstition," said the remnants of an Evangelical training.

"What about the doctrine of Eternal punishment — fairly brutal—eh?" retorted Intellect.

"Rome and Lhasa—corrupt, both. But which, beneath the accumulated dirt of ages of evil thinking, holds the truth?"

"Faith," asserts the Western.

"Reason," cries the pure Buddhist.

Who shall decide?

Haviland's wife, however, had no doubts as to the inspiration of their mission. She was prepared to admit that Buddha, Lao-Tsze, and Confucius were well-meaning creatures, but without Divine guidance.

On a nearer approach Tsang-Lo suggested medieval Europe.

"Most unpromising," Haviland said.

The passers-by stopped and eyed them with as much astonishment as a Chinaman's face ever expresses.

Certainly no such thing had ever been seen in Tsang-Lo before.

The party held a consultation as to what should be done next.

"I think we had better remain here till we see

what sort of reception we're going to get," said Fraser.

"Quite the wrong thing. We'll make a demonstration of fearlessness by going straight through the town and pitching our camp near that Monastery. If we show the least sign of fear, they are safe to take advantage of it."

The procession reached the suburbs, or rather graveyards, of the city. By the time they arrived at the North Bridge they had quite a large following.

"If they show any disposition to throw anything," said Haviland, "get out and face them. If they persist we five had better push forward and leave the coolies to bring the baggage on. If it's destroyed the Governor will have to make it good."

The Governor was spared the trouble and expense, for the whole party passed through the narrow, filth-strewn main street with its gaudily painted shops, its innumerable swinging sky-signs and lanterns, and its hideous smells, in safety.

The side streets, courts, and alleys sent forth their contributions of sightseers to watch the barbarians and their attendants through the city.

As the main street itself was only some eight or nine feet wide, progress, though safe, became difficult.

All was pervaded by the sickening opium smell, which dwells like a living presence in nearly every Chinese city.

As they approached the other end of the town the more fashionable quarters lay to their right—the western side. Some of the houses had balcony-galleries on the first floor, shaded by blinds; and here and there an arm, with a sleeve of some exquisitely brocaded and embroidered material,

lifted a blind, and the pale, inscrutable face of the owner peered down into the street attracted by the noise of the mob accompanying the procession.

Did any realise the significance of the first appearance of the barbarian in their streets after so many centuries? One or two young Chinamen of the higher class paused in their saunter, and held their fans so as to shade their eyes from the sun while they examined the train of sedan chairs with languid interest. Some carried gaily coloured umbrellas. Here and there they passed gaudily dressed soldiers.

As they emerged from the city through the South Gate, most of their inquisitive followers tailed off. They had the strongest objection to going to an inn in the town, and it would perhaps be a matter of some difficulty to find a place for their camp. At the same time, it was quite possible that so far inland the aversion to the Europeans would not be so marked as it was nearer the sea-board, where the knowledge of their power and numbers made them a thing to be feared and resisted.

They met many Buddhist monks coming from and going to the Monastery. These were enveloped in large, red woollen scarves, and bore themselves with an unusual austerity of manner. They scarcely paused in their silent walk as they whispered a salutation, although one or two betrayed some surprise at the presence of the strangers. They passed a flight of stone steps over which was a superbly carved gateway surmounted by a gleaming, gilt, and dragoned roof. This was evidently the entrance to the precincts of the Monastery. On the steps were seated some little boy Lamas, and Haviland could not but notice the exceptionally clean and well-cared-for look of the small ascetics.

They rounded the base of the hill on which the Monastery stood, and, crossing a stream, found themselves in the country beyond, Tsang-Lo hidden from sight. Monastery Hill, as they called it, lay between this stream and the river, and was on this side exceedingly steep, being a sheer precipice for two hundred feet from the top, whence the slope grew more and more gradual till it reached the stream, the land on the opposite side of which was broken, and covered with wild flowers. There were stone memorials placed here and there, and a small country house, enclosed by walls, stood about one hundred yards from the stream. The chairs were put down on the path, but they looked about in vain for sufficient space for an encampment. Some distance off there were some labourers in a field. Tu-Su was sent to interview them.

In the meanwhile the dozen or so of the mob who had followed them out, and who had steadfastly refused to answer any questions, continued to stare at them with the blank, maddening gaze of the Chinaman. Once or twice, with consummate impertinence, they commenced to investigate the sedan chairs, and only Haviland's decisive manner of throwing the delinquents about like ninepins stopped further degradations. They evidently looked upon them much as English villagers would look upon gypsies.

The progress of Haviland and his party had so far not been near any town of importance, and if the citizens of Tsang-Lo were going to regard them as an exhibition and entertainment for their leisure moments it would be uncomfortable.

While they were waiting for the return of Tu-Su, two Buddhist monks hurried up.

Advancing towards the party one of them made a courteous gesture of greeting, and said—

“I see ye are travellers, and strangers to this place. Perhaps ye do not know that in our monastery there is a Living Saint of great power. Will ye not return and prostrate yourselves before him? He will certainly receive your adorations with favour.”

Haviland paused for a moment to consider his reply. It would no doubt offend to refuse, but it might be better and wiser to adopt a bold course from the first.

Had he been an ordinary traveller his inclination would have lain in the direction of doing nothing to rouse the religious bigotry of the monks, but after all he was a missionary at work, and his duty was clear.

Catherine, whose knowledge of Chinese, though fair for an Englishwoman, was limited when compared with the unusual grasp of the language possessed by her husband, asked him what the Lama had said.

Haviland told her. Catherine unconsciously drew herself up as if with pride at what she knew her husband's answer would be. Q

“Tell 'em we'll come later—much more politic,” said Fraser.

Ruth made a slight movement of impatience at the suggestion. It was not that she shared the conscientious desire of Catherine to witness for what she conceived to be the truth, but the idea seemed unpatriotic.

Daily contact had reduced Catherine to the condition of not listening to what Fraser said.

“I have a Chinese tract,” said Blake, looking dubiously at Haviland. “If you think——”

"We worship one God who is above all other gods. We cannot do as you ask us."

The monk who had spoken, and whom, by his physiognomy, Haviland had at once concluded to be of Tartar origin, flashed indignant fire from his eyes. He looked about keenly, taking in every detail of the party.

"Why are ye here?" he asked.

"We bear letters to the chief Mandarin of this district from Peking."

The monk was about forty-five years of age, and was treated with the greatest respect by his companion. Some five foot ten in height, he bore himself with a dignity which made him appear taller.

He wore a yellow robe almost to the feet, with hanging sleeves, fastened at the right side with gilt buttons. Round and round his waist was wound a long, red scarf. Over all was a red jacket with a collar of purple velvet. His head was clean shaven, and he wore a yellow, mitre-shaped cap.

His face bore an expression of the greatest determination, and there was an aggressiveness in his manner which suggested religious intolerance.

Whatever awe he may have felt at the mention of the authorities at Peking, there was certainly no sign of it in his face.

"Ye have no doubt a purpose in travelling so great a distance?"

Again Haviland thought it best that there should be a perfect understanding from the first.

"I have been sent by my superiors to see if this is a suitable place in which to practise the great religion to which I belong."

"We have come to speak the truth about the one living God, to lead you out of darkness into light."

It probably never struck Catherine that to the man before her she appeared much as a Salvation Army rantei might have done to herself.

The monk looked at her inquiringly, almost contemptuously.

When Stanley Fraser understood what had been said he was wrathful, but could hardly express his irritation before such a virile character as Haviland.

As he said afterwards, everything was the result of this tactless beginning.

He moralised on the more effective subtlety displayed by the missionaries of Rome.

He ventured at the time to express some of his misgivings to Ruth, who explained that they were not out entirely on a pleasure trip.

Having given another comprehensive glance around, the Buddhist monk turned and left the place without any parting salutation. They watched him down the path and saw him disappear round the bend that led to the Monastery.

"I am afraid we shall have our work cut out," said Haviland.

"These millions of Chinese souls—they weigh upon my conscience." Mr. Blake looked as though he longed to possess a magic tract which would convert them all.

"I have never seen a Living Buddha," said Ruth.

"A great many of them are of such extreme sanctity that they are seldom seen outside the inner places of the monasteries. They are, however, sometimes to be met with in travelling."

"What is a Living Buddha?" asked Fraser with the ignorance of his surroundings which distinguishes the Englishman in China. They all looked towards Haviland.

"It is very difficult to say exactly what he is. He is the Spiritual Head of a Monastery, supposed to be of great saintliness and to possess miraculous powers. In a sense, he would be a fragment of the perfected spiritual substance always reincarnated as the Head of a particular monastery. When a Living Buddha dies, the Augur is consulted, who says that the soul of the dead saint has migrated to the body of a child. An expedition to go in search of him is then organised. The place and person are usually very definitely described."

"It sounds like the story of the wise men journeying to Bethlehem." It was Ruth who spoke, and Catherine looked at her with a slightly shocked expression. Such an analogy almost amounted to bad form.

"The soul of a Living Buddha, by the way, nearly always migrates to some part of Tibet."

"But there are exceptions," said Catherine. And then she added, "It is dreadful to think of people living in such idolatry. A man worshipped as a saint!" She shuddered at the idea, and her face grew sad. To her the conversion of the heathen was a very real, pressing work.

They looked up at the precipice, which was crowned by a Buddhist temple of unusually majestic proportions. From where they stood they could see that it bore the impress of newness, and the gilt roof flashed back the rays of the sun. On one side of it was a pagoda tower rising some five stories, on the other a large building, which from where they stood would have looked bare but for the sinuous grace of the roof.

"Let us be thankful that we were born in a Christian country," said Mr. Blake.

CHAPTER II

TU-SU returned after a prolonged absence, with the owner, not only of the ground on which they stood, but of the country house. This, it appeared, was uninhabited and to let.

Tremendous and excited bargaining took place between Tu-Su and the owner, who began by asking ten times the amount he expected to get. He only came down to a reasonable figure just as the patience of everybody was becoming nearly exhausted. Tu-Su absolutely refused to give an inch, financially or argumentatively, and having won the day and secured the place on quite reasonable terms, led the way to it in triumph. They proceeded to inspect the house.

It was built in an oblong, and consisted of a main building and two wings, forming a courtyard. Opening on to the courtyard was a verandah which ran round the three sides of the house. The other sides of the house which faced the open country had neither windows nor doors. At the other end of the oblong, facing the main building, was a wall with a gate surmounted by an ornamental arch.

It was built, as most Chinese houses of any pretensions are, with great æsthetic beauty. The red-tiled roof curved downwards to the eaves, which terminated in gilt dragons, the reptiles each seizing one of the four corners of the house with its claws, as

if intent on pulling it to a different point of the compass.

Beneath these decorated eaves were little pictures in black and white. Solid wooden pillars supported the verandah beneath.

On two sides of the courtyard were what would serve as bedrooms for Blake and Fraser. There was also a room for Tu-Su and the boy Lo-Fen—the only other Chinese servant they intended to keep. The house was in a very fair state of repair, the plaster being singularly clean. The carved, ornamental screens on which the portières hung were quite elaborate. To complete their good fortune the house held a certain amount of furniture. There were of course no wooden floors. There were no glass, but only paper, windows, through which the sun found its way, but with nothing like the glare and intensity with which it shines through the glass windows of the West. The light came through the yellow and red medium with a soothing and harmonious effect.

After the long, tedious, and scorching days in the sedan chairs the cool shadows of the house were heaven.

Tu-Su explained that the proprietor's great disinclination to letting it had been caused by the probable objection of the Chief Mandarin to foreigners settling down in this district.

Haviland told him to explain to the man that he would see the Mandarin himself, and that after that there would be no difficulty, or that if there should be, and the action of letting the house to them were likely to get him into trouble, they would at once vacate it.

The man was evidently not at all easy, for he hung around, and more than once gave symptoms of a

desire to change his mind and cancel the bargain. At length, however, he disappeared and left them to set the house in order.

They paid off their coolies, who, with the ceaseless industry of their race, immediately set off on their return journey.

Tu-Su and his assistant produced a meal as if by magic.

Catherine was fascinated by this house set amidst such pleasant surroundings. To Haviland, with the cessation of the movement and bustle of travelling, returned instantaneously the state of feeling which had caused him to welcome change so eagerly. Literally, he no longer had any stomach for the work. He was willing to go in amongst the people, and to be an example to them by trying to live a higher life; but the mission of distributing the tidings of the Gospel had ceased to impress him with its regenerating influence.

The Chinese have been surrounded for thousands of years by that in religious thought which is as beautiful as anything we can give them.

Personal probity is the only religious example which can teach them.

CHAPTER III

TU-SU and Lo-Fen were from Shanghai, and knew little of the country in which Haviland and his party now found themselves. Tu-Su, unlike his namesake, the celebrated lyrical poet, was by no means of a romantic temperament. He had been with Catherine and her husband ever since their arrival in China. He had become devoted to their interests, and was in every way reliable.

At the Mission House his word had been law, the domestic arrangements being almost entirely in his hands. He had an absolute genius for anticipating every wish of his master and mistress.

As a Chinese Christian he felt none too comfortable so far away from the spheres of British influence, for, as he well knew, the dislike of the Chinese for the barbarian is as nothing to the resentment and prejudice for their own countrymen who have "found salvation." The austerity of his religious principles was, however, such that he was prepared to stand by them to the bitter end.

His assistant, Lo-Fen, was a smart boy of his own training, also a Christian, but prepared to deny the fact whenever it threatened danger. The weakness of his faith caused considerable disquietude to Tu-Su and his mistress. These matters did not affect

Haviland so keenly, and if his wife and the devoted Tu-Su could have ascribed a fault to one whom they held to be so eminently perfect they would have said that it lay in a too liberal endurance of Chinese unbelief.

Tu-Su was not Haviland's conversion, or he might have shown a more tolerant spirit. He was a bequest from the former tenant of the Mission House; and, though feeling for his second master a devotion which the first had never inspired, he held firmly by the doctrines of his first spiritual guide, who had assured him that the whole three hundred and sixty million of his countrymen were destined to contribute materially to the final bonfire.

Tu-Su's English was in a very backward condition, and it was a source of the greatest irritation to him to hear his godless assistant overcoming by leaps and bounds those difficulties which he had never been able to surmount.

When Lo-Fen was refractory—and that was not seldom—there was only one person in the party who could bring him to reason, and that was Ruth. He was devoted to Catherine, but she lacked that imperious touch which made Ruth worshipped and feared by him.

He got on fairly well with Tu-Su except when they played morra—a game in which one of the players raises both hands with a certain number of fingers extended, instantaneously lowering them again. The other player endeavours to guess the number of fingers extended. Whenever Lo-Fen played this game he lost his temper.

Ruth was as delighted with the house as her stepmother, and decided that they would be exceedingly comfortable, till—as she laughingly remarked

to Fraser—the natives accommodated them with permanent quarters in the river.

Fraser thought this attitude unnatural. He secretly wondered why a girl with good financial prospects should be tramping about China in such a way as to be mistaken for a dowdy missionary. He used the epithet in its esoteric sense. Her worst enemy could not have accused Ruth of being anything but the perfection of grace and style. He sincerely hoped that she would allow him to take her home to some nice fox-hunting county and civilisation.

He realised that it would be highly impolitic to put the question now, as in the event of a refusal the position might become ridiculous—for him, at any rate.

Haviland, true to his instinct for research, was already considering the ways and means by which he might pay an exhaustive visit to the Monastery. First of all it was necessary to call on the Chief Mandarin of the district, who was of the Second Class and wore the red, carved coral button.

It was above all things essential to conciliate this individual, and Haviland, in his letters from the Imperial Court, had credentials such as few missionaries could show.

He naturally left Catherine and Ruth behind, going alone with Fraser. It was unnecessary, in fact, impossible, to take Blake, whose appearance grew more and more weird every day. With the tuft representing what was to be his pigtail he bore a startling likeness to a crested and anæmic bird. He implored them to send a barber to remove the stubble.

Haviland had a superlative knack of getting on with the Celestials. If the sense of superiority was innate in him, as in most Westerns, he was not so

sure of its logical basis but that he could suppress the evidence of it when in their company. Not that he had any exaggerated notions of the Chinese character. He quite realised that with them the barbarian is a person to be fooled to the fullest extent possible.

He was somewhat sorry that he had sent the coolies away so soon, as it would not have done any harm to pay the first visit in state.

Fraser was already bracing himself up for a course of professional inquiry, the results of which should be embodied in a report that should shed glory on himself, revealing the superiority to his fellows which any but an obtuse-minded Home Government would have perceived long ago.

Haviland, despite his letters, could not expect too much active protection, as missionaries do not bribe, neither did his superiors permit its being asked for.

He and Fraser entered the town the next morning.

They were soon attended as before by a large mob, who accompanied them to the outer gates of the Mandarin's official residence. With exquisite Chinese incivility they crowded upon them, mauled their clothes, came and stood full in their path, while the children walked on ahead, much as the ragamuffins accompany the band in St. James's Park. The little girls, pale and languid, forgot for a moment their aching feet, and a faint look of excitement came into their eyes as the foreign devils went by.

The house stood in the centre of about three acres of ground, surrounded by a six-foot wall, surmounted by tiles. They passed up the steps of the main entrance through portières on which were magnificently embroidered life-size figures, looking a little way off, in the gloom of the hall, like live things.

They were ushered into the presence of a young man of aristocratic and languid bearing. He was elegantly dressed in richly worked blue satin with a black silk bordering, and fluttered a small blue fan. He was a secretary, and proposed to receive them in his Chief's stead; but Haviland, who knew what an effect the report of such scant courtesy would have, insisted on seeing the great man himself.

After one or two perfectly courteous objections—to which Haviland answered that, considering the influential quarters from which his credentials were derived, it would hardly be etiquette to present them to an inferior official—they were shown into the presence of the Carved Coral Button himself.

The reception-room was similar to those which Haviland had seen elsewhere; the floor was stained and varnished, the rich carvings of dark wood, the formal chairs placed stiffly in the manner of our early Victorian fathers. Here and there was a ceramic of exquisite design and workmanship. The walls were hung with strips of painted, embroidered silk.

At the other end of the room was the high, narrow seat of honour, uncompromising in its discomfort. It was covered with two hard, flat cushions of scarlet cloth, between which, on the seat itself, was placed a miniature table, about the size of a large footstool, on which were cups and pipes.

The Mandarin received them with civility, and without betraying the fact that an actual meeting was what he had wished to avoid. They were offered tea and pipes. A perceptible smile ran round the brilliantly dressed and picturesque group in attendance. The appearance of the two Englishmen was to them comic in the extreme.

"Very indecent!" said a middle-aged man standing on the right of the official.

"Poor things! There was not enough cloth to finish their clothes."

To their confusion Haviland showed that he understood perfectly what had been said, and laughed heartily, whereupon every one present became perfectly grave and courteous.

Hearing that he was a missionary, the Red Button asked—

"To what sublime religion do you belong?"

Haviland explained that they were Christians.

"Ah well," replied the Mandarin, as if bidding him to cheer up, "religions are many, reason is one. We are all brothers."

Haviland devoutly hoped that he might carry the theory of brotherhood into practice.

He stated perfectly straightforwardly his intentions in coming to the neighbourhood.

The Mandarin looked thoughtful.

Behind him stood a young military officer with a curiously interesting personality. He turned and made some remark to him in a low voice, which Haviland failed to catch, and the young man bowed in acquiescence.

The Red Button was a man whose face spoke of contradictions in character. The upper part was singularly intellectual and concentrated, the lower suggested weakness. He was evidently one from whom decisive conduct must not be expected.

He looked at the missionary keenly and with interest, certainly not antagonistically.

"You may have heard," he said, "that Tsang-Lo has become the centre of a great Buddhist revival."

52 The Living Buddha

Haviland nodded his head, as if in courteous request for the Mandarin to explain himself further.

"The movement is the result of the extraordinary and saintly personality of Attava, the Living Buddha who rules the Monastery at Tsang-Lo. He draws men to him as a magnet the needle. The people in this district relate the most marvellous stories of his extreme sanctity and miraculous powers."

The eyes of all in the room were bent on the missionary to see the effect of the Mandarin's words.

Haviland, as usual, dominated the situation. Fraser seemed to have no personality for them.

The Mandarin continued—

"His influence grows daily, and truly I believe they begin to fear his displeasure more than the Law. Not that I can complain, for—so far—he has made my task easier, and the people of Tsang-Lo have increased in obedience to the Law."

"That should be the result of all religions," answered Haviland.

"Still, it is not a favourable spot for your undertaking to preach the religion of the Lord of Heaven."

"Why so?"

"You might come in contact with his followers. There might be trouble."

"You say yourself religions are many—reason is one."

"The vulgar cannot see that. And," he added, flashing a keen glance at Haviland, "your own people do not talk so."

Haviland realised that the subtle Oriental already foresaw difficulties and possibly very serious complications.

"What is your own opinion of this Saint?"

The Mandarin smiled, perhaps a trifle disdain-

fully. He belonged to the aristocracy, and naturally his deity was Confucius, the god of manners:—although the Chinaman neither worships Confucius nor his ancestors in the sense that a European understands the word worship. It is a glorified reverence for tradition and its chief exponent.

With reference to the movement which was the subject of conversation, and as a follower of Confucius, he entertained a profound contempt for what seemed to him the hysteria of religion.

“Is he a great teacher?” Haviland continued.

The Mandarin fanned himself thoughtfully for a moment.

“It is difficult,” he answered, “to judge of a man’s face half an inch from his nose. You must be some distance off. That is my position as regards the Living Buddha.”

“We shall look to you,” said Haviland, as he rose to take his leave, “to make it known that we are under the protection of the Imperial Government.”

The Mandarin, who had been secretly astonished at the powerful credentials which Haviland—a mere missionary—had been able to produce, gave a courteous assent, and to the Englishman’s astonishment, asked Fraser and himself to dinner.

They were escorted back through a courtyard, where rugged, artificial rocks surrounded a pond strewn thick with lotus leaves, into a garden ablaze with rows of resplendent camellias, fuchsias and azaleas.

Two young men, evidently colleagues of the languid secretary, were strolling up and down the paths, the brilliant embroidery of their jackets heightening the feast of colour. Some distance off,

from behind a wall, a vermillion shuttlecock rose spasmodically into the air, intervalled by the resonant tapping of the battledore, and bursts of treble laughter.

Figures of mythical beasts and birds carved in grey granite were placed here and there amongst the brilliant blossoms in such a way as to give them a strangely real personality. Round the garden were pavilions with elaborately carved roof-ends and doorways.

The two Englishmen paused to take in fully a scene so essentially Chinese.

"For all his civility and his invitation to dinner, that Mandarin," said Haviland as they reached the street, "would have been delighted to bundle us out of his district. His instinct tells him that two energetic and proselytising religious parties mean trouble. He concealed his irritation very well, though."

"Not the least maddening trait," answered Fraser, "of an absolutely maddening people is their beastly secretive natures."

"You think," said Haviland with a dry smile, "it means national dishonesty."

"Oh, my dear Haviland, don't use the word dishonesty—it's too mild. Of course the Chinese are dishonest."

"I wonder what a Chinaman would think if he took a holiday tour round the English hotels!"

This ambiguous line of argument in favour of the Chinese always annoyed Fraser. He thought he would have a dig at his companion.

"That man is quite right, you know. There'll probably be no end of trouble. Depend upon it this Living Buddha chap is some beastly ignorant,

fanatical, bloodthirsty creature. We shall all be murdered in our beds before we can wake up."

"Hope so," answered Haviland serenely.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I prefer to be murdered before waking up."

Fraser's temper was getting a little out of hand.

"You must admit that religion is the whole trouble."

"Of course it is," answered Haviland promptly. "I believe there are people in England who say that missionaries create no trouble at all, and, in fact, that the Chinese like them. I suppose," he continued with a grim smile, "that's why they murder them. Not that that's a point against the missionaries. You can't bring about good without a struggle, and a struggle involves trouble. I'm not a bigot, you know, Fraser, but it's no crime to give offence in a good cause."

Fraser was silent, and after a minute or two Haviland continued—

"Of course the most irritating thing is the ignorance of people at home of where the real grievance of the Chinese lies. If there had been nothing else but the Foo-Chow massacre by the French in 1884, or their conduct in 1862 when they massacred ninety-six Chinese men, women and children at Canton, or the Roman Catholic Cathedral at the same town—built in all defiance of Feng-Shui——"

"It's difficult to keep pace with unreasonable prejudices like that."

"What?" said Haviland almost hotly. "A good deal of superstition has crusted round the idea, but its basis—that everybody should have an equal share of air, light, and water—is something, the social sublimity of which Europe has never come within

a hundred miles of. Besides, the land itself was practically stolen. If you rob a people, and strike at their religious prejudices you've done the two things to rouse their worst passions; and, when these happen to be accompanied by an extraordinary indifference to pain which breeds brutality, you've got something you didn't bargain for—and it's absurd to cry out."

"But what would you do?" asked Fraser. "Leave them in guilty impunity?"

"Decidedly not. And, that's just where the grievance comes in. We are neither one thing nor the other. We never push our retribution home. We take up the attitude of a strong man, and to the Chinaman have only the resources of a weak. As for the other nations of Europe—especially the French, German, and Russian—it may seem insular, but I think that if ever nation had cause of complaint the Chinese have against them. So she has against America. I think a good deal of the supineness of English Governments is due to an exaggerated sense of justice."

Fraser listened hopelessly. He felt that it was much better to believe your country absolutely in the right, no matter what she did. At any rate he was quite certain this was the only policy possible when abroad.

"I suppose it's all Confucius," he said, sighing.

"Nothing of the kind. It is convenient for other sects to say so. Confucius only wanted people to take what was good in tradition, and live up to it; and crowned his teaching by advising all 'not to do unto others what they would not others should do unto them.'"

"But that's in the New Testament," said Fraser.

"It shows," answered Haviland, "how truth is eternal, for Confucius said it 500 B.C. It's a tremendous question, this problem of how to eradicate the Chinese prejudice against us. Take one instance, I believe that—apart from their conservative dislike to everything foreign—the doctrine of transubstantiation has had much to do with rousing the anger of the ignorant."

"How so?"

"Well, with all respect, this is the way a Chinaman at Hankow put it to me. I give his own words. He said, 'They tell me that in your Church the priest takes a piece of bread, pronounces incantations over it till it becomes the body of your God, and then eats it. If he eats his God will he not surely eat our children?' You see, it's difficult for the average Celestial to realise that, though Christians, there is such a striking difference between the Protestant and Roman Catholic. You might as well catechise the average Englishman on the intricacies of Buddhism."

Fraser knew from experience that it was impossible to rouse anything approaching fanaticism in Haviland, but this capacity for gazing at four sides of a question at once confounded him.

"A great Buddhist leader might do wonders for this country."

Fraser gave it up. Haviland's character was beyond him, more especially as he knew no man—for all his breadth of view—more capable of coming to a swift decision when it was necessary. He had an uncomfortable sort of feeling that Haviland did not entertain the very highest regard for his abilities.

In one sense he was right—in another he was wrong. Haviland recognised in him the superlative

quality of his race : the capacity for pegging away till the thing to be done was accomplished. ' He admired his courage and his honesty, but he did wish at times for something which could be dignified by the name of intellectuality.

The Philistine may be an excellent work-a-day creature, but he is poor company as an assistant in extracting the sweetness and beauty of a strange land.

There was a certain resemblance between Catherine and this young Englishman in their uncompromising Anglo-Saxonism, but Catherine took the keenest delight in beauty. Perhaps she drew a rather hard and fast line as to the moral in beauty, but the love of it was there, as strong as it could be.

CHAPTER IV

THEY were accompanied as far as the gate by the same crowd, ever following, ever gazing with the usual immutability of expression, which—when taken in the aggregate of mobs and crowds—settles on the brain, a nightmare picture of numberless yellow faces ever staring, staring, staring.

The crowd, however, displayed the greatest good humour—not that it was any sign on which to build a permanent sense of security.

To the European there is no mob so treacherous as the Chinese. This is merely because of their impassivity. It is the quality of the race to conceal the passions and emotions which may be animating it till they find vent in action. The rising of the storm is not the sudden phenomenon that foreigners who have suffered from the unexpected imagine. In some ways they are indeed a nation of Chesterfields; in others nothing can exceed their vulgarity.

Haviland's methods, even in his most zealous days, had never been to rush the work of proselytising. Before anything else was done the people must get accustomed to the sight of them.

Some hundred yards after they had passed through the South Gate and over the bridge they met a procession coming towards them. In front was a monk

on horseback, then came a number on foot. In the midst was borne a palanquin, very simple in workmanship and without any of the gaudy colouring and devices which distinguish those belonging to the higher dignitaries, yet so rich and chaste were its appointments, and in so serious and respectful a manner did the train accompanying it bear themselves, that it was evident they were in attendance on some important personage.

"I wonder if this is the Living Saint himself?" said Haviland, as the procession approached. At this moment some peasants whom the palanquin was passing, went down on their knees with their heads in the dust. "I thought so. It is the Living Buddha."

They drew back a little to allow the monks, who were in sufficient numbers to monopolise the whole path, to pass.

On seeing them a monk stepped back to the palanquin and said something to its occupant. The procession came to a standstill, the palanquin being exactly opposite the two Englishmen.

"I wonder what's going to happen now," said Fraser; and, as if to show his contempt for contingencies, he produced his cigar-case.

"Don't do that," said Haviland briefly. "It may offend them."

"Better show we don't care."

"Better show that we can be civil."

Fraser returned the cigar-case to his pocket.

The curtain of the palanquin was drawn aside, and perhaps for the space of half a minute Fraser and Haviland found themselves being surveyed by one of the most remarkable-looking people they had ever seen. A head in shape and pose kingly and beauti-

ful. The uncut hair, almost flaxen in colour, fell thick and luxuriant to the shoulders. The beard, as smooth as the hair itself, curled like that of the statues of Jove. But what caught and held Haviland's attention most was the absolutely un-Asiatic cut of the features. The brows were powerful and concentrated; beneath them the light blue eyes seemed almost to glitter with the intensity of their gaze. The nose was straight and sensitive. The face had in it something of the pictured Gabriel, and it would have been even more like had it not been for the strong repression and asceticism which were stamped unmistakably on it.

Held firmly in his right hand was a long staff in the form of a cross.

His shoulders were covered by a purple silk cloak resembling a cope.

Sitting forward, erect and immobile, he gazed upon the strangers as if to fix them indelibly on his mind. Then the curtain was drawn and the palanquin moved on. Several of the monks cast furious glances at the Englishmen for remaining standing in the presence of their Saint.

Stupefied, for the appearance of its occupant had astounded them both, they gazed after the palanquin in silence.

Fraser was the first to speak.

"That man's not a Chinaman nor an Asiatic," he said.

Haviland started as if waking from a dream. He hardly caught the import of Fraser's remark, but he felt vaguely annoyed at his familiar way of speaking of the man they had just seen. He knew that he had been more impressed than ever before in his life.

The one searching glance which had been flashed from those wonderful eyes into his own told him that their owner was no mystical Oriental acting as a puppet in the hands of others. The power and intelligence of his expression showed that he was dominator of the situation.

The monk who had drawn aside the curtain was the same who had invited them to come and worship at the Monastery, and even his fanatical, overbearing nature had seemed tamed and subdued by the strengthful gentleness of the Living Buddha's manner.

Apart from the interest which the Saint had aroused in him as a man, Haviland could readily believe that the influence of such a being on the religious life of Tsang-Lo and its surroundings would be considerable.

How so unexpected an individuality came to be a Living Saint was a mystery.

They reached the house without exchanging any further views on the subject.

"We've seen him," said Fraser, as the two women came out to meet them.

"Seen whom?" asked Catherine.

"The Living Buddha."

"One Living Buddha is very like another," she answered. "Sleek and contented-looking most of them."

Haviland had sunk into a long chair, and was already puffing away at his pipe.

"What do you think of him, father?"

"I think," said Haviland, "that he is the most extraordinary-looking man I have ever seen. In the first place, he is totally unlike anything one would have expected."

"Looks a wretched charlatan," said Fraser.

"How can he help it when there is no truth in him?" said Blake.

They had forgotten his barber, and he found some assuagement for his bitterness of spirit in gloomily contemplating the certain damnation of the Saint. To add to his depression Ruth had, by an uncontrollable impulse born of a keen sense of humour, pulled the incipient pigtail, and although she had apologised abjectly the action had hurt his dignity terribly.

"I don't think he looked the least bit of a charlatan. I can only describe him as radiating power and sincerity."

Had he dared Fraser would have said, "Bosh!" He had the soul of a Sadducee.

"Surely you must admit that the whole thing was theatrical?"

"To the Englishman all studies but those in black and white are theatrical."

Fraser held his peace. He hated the abstruse in conversation, and hardly grasped what Haviland meant.

"He is fair," said Haviland, "with long hair and beard. I don't quite understand that," he added reflectively.

"I thought all Buddhist priests had to wear the tonsure," said Catherine.

"So did I. But this man doesn't. He has blue eyes that pierce one through and through, and he carries himself like a king."

"Probably he comes from the North, if his skin is as fair as you say."

"Must be something of the kind," interjected Fraser.

64 The Living Buddha

Ruth stood with clasped hands looking up at the Monastery which towered above them.

Haviland had been eloquent in his description.

"Wonder where he was going?" said Fraser. "To do a little shopping?"

There was an uncomfortable silence. All had been too much impressed for the joke to sound in good taste.

"Going to the Mandarin possibly. - Like some European medieval bishop he was probably on his way to bid the temporal power beware of laxity. Although I'm bound to say he hardly gave me the impression of a man seething with bigotry."

"But I don't suppose the Mandarin cares a bit about him or his Buddhism. A thousand to one he's a Confucian and nothing else."

"And all the more likely as an educated man to avoid offending what might be a very powerful enemy. You heard him say that his own power was becoming almost secondary. You see, although I've heard there are Mohammedans in Tsang-Lo I don't suppose they are numerous enough to count. And then they've grown used to them. But we are a new danger, and ten to one they've heard all sorts of dreadful stories about us."

"You mean that this chap will think we want to cut him out—to spoil his market."

"But we do," said Catherine simply.

"Of course, of course," answered Fraser hastily; "but there's plenty of time for that."

"The great thing," said Haviland, "would be to go and see him—that is, if one could get at him and talk to him alone."

"Our duty lies straight before us. We can only do it and leave the rest to God."

Fraser disliked to hear Mrs. Haviland talk in this way. It was, to say the least of it, creepy.

Then they sat and mused, Fraser and Ruth after a few minutes rising and wandering away together.

Mr. Blake was looking for Tu-Su. He wanted him to go and find a barber. His head was being tickled outrageously by the wiry shoots pushing their way up into life.

Catherine's chair was very close to her husband's, and she put out her hand and laid it on his. He pressed it gently. There was an infinite sense of companionship between them.

"Do you remember what day this is, David?"

He looked at her inquiringly for a moment, and then his face softened.

"I had forgotten," he said gently.

"Jackie's birthday," she said, her eyes filling. "I have been praying for him all the morning. It cannot be wicked to pray for a person when you are not quite sure——" She paused as if expecting him to answer.

Haviland could almost have wept at the pathos of the theological point.

"Is it wicked?" reiterated Catherine.

"My dear, of course not."

"Oh, if one could only have been sure! It is always that terrible feeling that he may have grown up in the middle of dreadful surroundings. This morning when I woke and remembered the day the same sort of misery which I used to feel at the time when I lost him came over me. Some of the nightmares that filled my brain during the weeks I was lying in that hut with those old people returned stronger than I have felt them for years."

She paused again. The burning sun shot through

the loose tiles of the verandah like shafts of fire. All around there was intense heat and a great stillness.

Catherine began to speak again, dropping her voice a little.

"I've never said this to you before, David, but I want to tell you that though all these years both you and others have always told me that my child is dead I know it is not so. I have never said this before, because it would have seemed as if I wished to increase my sorrow instead of lessening it; but to-day I feel more sure of it than ever—so sure that I must tell you." She paused, and her husband saw that her cheeks were wet with tears.

"Catherine, you are wrong. Think! Everything was done. Believe me—it is so."

Catherine made no answer, but her lips moved as if in prayer.

That night, while all in the house slept, Haviland woke with a start.

A vague feeling of uneasiness, which he ascribed to the newness of his surroundings, drew him from his bed.

He went outside. From the different rooms came the measured breathing of the sleepers.

He went to the gate and looked out.

Down by the water he could almost have sworn that he saw the figure of a tall man outlined. The next moment it was gone.

After a few minutes he fastened the gate and returned to his room, pausing on the verandah to look around him.

The house and courtyard were bathed in moonlight, which covered the hillside with a soft, blue glow. The Monastery towered above, clearly outlined against the sky.

CHAPTER V

THE Mandarin's invitation was probably due—as the higher classes in China regard missionaries with contempt—to a mixture of two causes. One was the impressive personality of Haviland, and the other the eagerness with which the Mandarin would grasp at anything to enliven the tedium of official existence at Tsang-Lo.

Haviland had given promise of being a very entertaining guest.

Mr. Blake was not at all sure that it was a right and proper thing for one who had come out to convert the heathen to compromise with their flesh-pots. Had he admitted the truth to himself he would have granted that these stately officials, with their rustling robes and impassive countenances, filled him with a certain uneasiness not unmixed with awe. The impressive ceremony of their manner made him turn hot and cold, having no particular dignity of carriage, or grace of demeanour, with which to meet it. It was something which was not in the contract for salvation, and worse than martyrdom. Haviland had attended too many Chinese dinner parties for this one to be a novelty. His object in going was to propitiate and secure the friendship of the Mandarin. He had no liking for

leaving Catherine and Ruth alone in the somewhat lonely country house without other protectors than Tu-Su and Lo-Fen—devoted though he knew the former to be, and was glad that Blake would be with them.

Fraser did not particularly appeal to him as a companion on such an occasion. His Anglo-Saxonism was too pronounced for anything to impress him but the fact of his own nationality.

The Mandarin dined at five. They proceeded to his house in chairs, the inevitable crowd accompanying them to their destination.

They were carried through the garden right into the inner courtyard, where the camellias and fuchsias stood in their large pots. There were already four or five chairs from which the occupants had just descended.

Instead of being shown into the audience chamber where the Mandarin had received them in the morning, they were ushered into a room apparently more lived in, where sat their host surrounded by some four or five guests whom he had invited to meet them.

There was a general introduction and salutation, and hot tea was handed round. It appeared that they were waiting for one more guest, a very great man indeed, who lived, by the Emperor's orders, on his huge estate some miles out of Tsang-Lo. He had till the last few years been a high Government official and a great favourite at the Court; but some glaring speculation, which had consisted in robbing members of the Royal family instead of the poor, had very nearly resulted in the loss of his head, and only the greatest influence had prevailed in securing a remittance of the sentence to seclusion on his family estate, or within a radius of twenty miles.

The Red Button was evidently of opinion that the return to favour and power of this individual was not unlikely, and was consequently doing everything possible to propitiate him.

Later he arrived with a large number of servants. He was a handsome-looking man of about fifty years of age, tall and stout, and with great dignity of bearing. The expression of his face was at once cynical and acute. He certainly was a personage.

He greeted his host in the usual florid manner, complimented him on the deeds and virtues of himself and his ancestors, and wished him every happiness in all the relations of life—even to his down-sittings and uprisings. After his eye had taken in the company generally and individually he seated himself in the midst of his gorgeously embroidered silk robes next to Haviland.

He evidently felt the heat, and he fluttered a small fan incessantly. He wore one large ring on his thumb. His finger nails, very long, were black with dirt, and formed a curious contrast to the delicacy and richness of the material in which he was clothed.

Haviland had often wondered at this peculiarity, common even amongst the richest and most educated Chinese.

"The Divine Confucius tells us that a sad face is not necessarily a symbol of a virtuous heart, but that it is possible to be cheerful and virtuous too.

Having thus opened the conversation somewhat irrelevantly, and paid a becoming deference to the classics, he continued: "You are well versed in Chinese, I am told?"

Haviland made some such remark as he thought would please the man before him, to the effect that

he who was thoroughly versed in Chinese would have little more to learn.

Cheng, for such was the exalted person's name, proceeded to ask him a variety of questions which showed considerable penetration and intelligence.

"None of your countrymen, as far as I can remember, have ever visited Tsang-Lo."

"I believe we have the honour to be the first," replied Haviland courteously.

"You are very pertinacious," said Cheng, without, however, implying by his tone the least discourtesy. "Undeterred by the experiences which your people have endured all over the Empire you come to a town where no foreigner has been within memory. It is very wonderful."

Haviland was surprised at the tone in which he spoke. He had already formed some judgment of his character, and concluded that he was an opportunist, probably not siding with the bigoted Conservative party in their dislike of the foreigner, yet not having convictions or moral fibre to jeopardise his interests by an adherence to a progressive policy. A very able man—a stupid blunder, committed from a sense of over-confidence, had relegated him to obscurity. He chatted pleasantly, and showed a wide knowledge of men and affairs.

China always reminded Haviland of the Sleeping Beauty. He did not pretend to know what particular agent was likely to awake her, and he certainly did not share the enthusiasm of his colleagues who believed that doses of Scripture teaching would purge her of her impurities. He believed that the enigma of their stagnation was an economic one.

There was once a missionary who had worked it

out entirely to his satisfaction that it was a question of the women's feet.

For theories as to the inherent barbarity and cruelty of the Chinese nature he had a profound contempt. From the point of view of history it is such a very few years since the tortured limbs of heretics writhed in the open spaces of Madrid and a score of other great European cities.

In England the mode of hanging was till quite recent times a barbarous one. The days when criminals swung suffocating in Tyburn fields, surrounded by a gloating mob of thousands, and perhaps with God's sunshine to add an additional ghastliness of contrast, are not so far distant, nor are the times when the almost tender years of childhood were not secure from this hideous death. The Chinese have not anything worse to show than the Newgate Hannah More discovered. The pillory, too, could be a terrible death enough, not to speak of the marvellous ingenuity with which our almost immediate ancestors, and more especially their priests, designed tortures that turn the heart sick to look back upon.

And Haviland could not but remember that it was the rise of free thought, not to say atheism, and the spirit of intellectual enfranchisement brought in their train, which were mainly instrumental in putting an end to such horrors. Who will say that Christianity has not decayed in Europe during the last hundred and fifty years? Who will deny that this one hundred and fifty years has been a very day-dawn of sweetness and light?

Europe has emerged from the bondage of dogma and authority, or is in a fair way to do so. Why not China?

Perhaps the vastness of its numbers has something to do with the slow pace at which the mind of the nation works.

After all, is their dislike to the foreigner more remarkable than the intolerance of the Anglo-Saxon towards colour?

The Chinese condition is that of medievalism, but with certainly more of repose and culture than distinguished our own middle ages.

"Do you propose to trade here?"

Haviland explained that he was a missionary, indicating Fraser as a consular official travelling on his own account to gain information of possible markets.

"There is in your bearing," said Cheng, "that which does not suggest the missionary." Haviland felt that there was that in his brain which did not suggest the missionary either. "You remind me of an English statesman who once came to Peking on a special mission. Have you been to Peking lately?"

"Not for two years."

Cheng sighed. "It is dull," he said, "this mere existence, after a busy official life. One cannot help sighing for the pleasant society and delights of the capital."

"The country will not allow so valuable a servant to dwell in idleness all his days. Your reputation as a statesman is too secure."

Cheng's face lighted up. It was pleasant to hear flattery in this far-off corner of the Empire. He, however, replied—

"One is soon forgotten, one is soon forgotten," and he shook his head dolefully.

The whole company, which included the military Mandarin of the day before, being now assembled, the

host led the way to the dining hall. It was a pleasant, cool room with an exquisitely carved and inlaid ceiling. Priceless china bowls containing fuchsias, azaleas, and camellias stood about, filling the air with perfume. The room opened on to a verandah which overlooked the inevitable lotus pond. Cheng was evidently in a jovial mood, and intended to enjoy himself.

Opposite to him was a small, lean old man with a hungry eye, to whom he merrily said—

“What says Confucius—‘In thine old age beware of greed.’”

All present laughed.

Hot, wet cloths were handed to each guest—a by no means undesirable attention on such an oppressive day.

The table was covered with every imaginable kind of Chinese dainty in dishes and saucers—fruits, vegetables, minced meats, flavoured seaweed of more than one kind, soup made from the edible swallow’s nest, and sweetmeats galore. Into all these dishes the chopsticks descended rapidly.

Haviland was exceedingly skilful in using the latter, Fraser only moderately so.

Samshu, a fiery spirit—a species of arrack—was swallowed in tiny quantities at brief intervals throughout the first portion of the meal. The more solid dishes followed. Pork, variously cooked, duck—very high indeed—ham, sweetened with a kind of treacle, and mutton—the latter a great luxury. It being early summer, there was dog fried in oil with garlic and water-chestnuts—which, however, neither of the Englishmen tasted, even Haviland’s mind finding a limitation.

Cheng chattered incessantly, and Haviland found great entertainment in his store of anecdote.

The young military Mandarin conversed quietly with Fraser and the Red Button.

The wine was then handed round, and every now and then the hot, wet cloths removed the perspiration from the faces of the guests.

The young Mandarin drank little, but smoked incessantly.

"This reminds me of old days," said Cheng, "of my youth, when life was good and all the world a fair—a dinner party of choice and sympathetic spirits! Do you remember, Li Mao-Lin?"

The little old man with the hungry eye grunted. His host had just extracted a choice morsel from his own bowl and put it in his.

"You have kept your youth better than I," he replied.

"Ah, when you were young you were accounted virtuous. I drank deep of life. That is the medicine that gives one youth. You remember the exquisite Aleute? She whose feet the poet Lota-ra said were like little birds?"

The lean man mumbled, and took a draught of wine.

"Well, well," said Cheng, taking a whiff from the opium pipe which a boy handed to him, "those days are past and over."

By and by the conversation drifted into other channels. Fraser could not but admire the ease with which Haviland adapted himself to his surroundings, and the perfect tact with which he managed to mingle anecdotes, some against himself and his people, others against their host's countrymen.

"You say we Englishmen generally get what we want," he said, *à propos* of a remark from Cheng. "I will tell you of a very clever viceroy who was a match

for us. He was applied to successively by many Christian missionary bodies for the right to build on a certain piece of land. Now there were weighty reasons why he could not point-blank refuse, and others just as weighty why he could not assent. So one day he called the disputants together and said he was unable to decide between their different claims, but that if they would go away and arrange amongst themselves who was to have the land he would accept their decision. That is fifteen years ago, and they have not made up their minds yet."

There was a roar of laughter.

"Why not the first who applied?" said Fraser, of the official mind.

"Because," answered Haviland, "those who applied last had undoubtedly the largest stake in the community."

"Your nation must be exceedingly prosperous," said Cheng, "to be able to send out missionaries to other countries. We must hope for the time when the Living Buddha of Tsang-Lo will be able to return the compliment." The remark was made with such perfect courtesy and good humour that it was impossible for the two Englishmen not to smile broadly.

"We Chinese," continued Cheng, "will never understand how it is that your different religions, professing to be one, cannot agree."

"Perhaps," answered Haviland sily, "it is because we are in earnest. Sincerity is the soul of disagreement."

"An admirable remark," said Cheng, whose complaisance grew with repletion.

"Then we may expect a multitude of sects to arise in Tsang-Lo, for at present the Buddhists are very much in earnest," said the Chief Official.

Haviland pricked up his ears.

"Is the change then so remarkable?"

"The monastery at Tsang-Lo," said the little lean man, speaking almost for the first time, and very quickly, "is one of the most remarkable facts I have ever come across, but it only shows what the power of one man's will can do. I remember," he continued, "when the present Living Buddha was brought home, a little golden-haired thing like the dream of an angel. All were surprised at his appearance. There were some who wondered whether a mistake had not been made. Dear, dear! you would hardly recognise the monastery as it was then. The buildings were going to wrack and ruin, and hundreds of Lamas lounging about—very worthy men, no doubt, but terribly lazy."

"He is responsible for all the present improvements?" asked Fraser.

The little lean man nodded.

Cheng was getting somnolent. The wine was good, and before the tea had arrived on the scene he had certainly drunk too much. He was complaining to Fraser of the ingratitude with which the Imperial Government had treated him, his lamentation interspersed with what sounded suspiciously like hiccups.

Haviland and Fraser were beginning to weary of the hard, high, uncomfortable chairs. The light was dim, and the older of the two Englishmen found himself studying the pale, emaciated face of Pao-Tung, the young Mandarin, which rose, wraith-like, from his jewelled dress.

"Such devoted service, such devoted service," Cheng murmured. "Never was I anxious to hasten the hour of repose and leisure, remembering what the great Confucius said—that he who does so will gain

neither. Enemies everywhere, and nothing but fair-weather friends. Twelve months' meditation amidst the tombs of my ancestors have scarce sufficed to console me." Almost a tear stood in his eye, and had he been other than the aristocrat he was, and a Chinaman to boot, he would have wept. "The statesmen of your country do not meditate amongst the tombs of their ancestors?" he asked, with a strangled hiccup. Haviland smiled broadly at the idea of a certain English statesman noted for corpulence and Foreign Policy meditating on the top of his ancestors' sarcophagi.

"Remember," said Haviland, "what also fell from those inspired lips when he spoke to the suicide of Tse—'while there is life there is hope.'"

The table was a gruesome sight, covered with *débris* and food stains, and the atmosphere was full of scents anything but pleasing.

They all made a move to the verandah, where the air was cool and agreeable.

Cheng seated himself in a corner and nodded.

The young Mandarin looked somewhat uneasy, as if he were anxious to get away. He was probably hungering for the opium couch.

"That is our greatest grievance against the foreigner," said the lean man to Haviland, indicating the young Mandarin, from whom they were standing some distance. "Opium, the drug with which the nation is gradually smoking itself into idiocy and bankruptcy."

"Why should we be held responsible?"

"Was it not the Westerns who first brought us the cursed drug?"

"But they do not make you smoke it," answered Haviland. "Surely we are not to blame for that. A

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few traders introduce a beneficent drug. The nation misuses it. It is the latter who create the market."

"You will never make the people of China understand that."

"I am beginning to wonder whether the people of China will ever understand us, or we them," answered Haviland a little sadly. "Perhaps," he continued—his face brightening at the idea—"it is the difficulty of two civilised peoples each endeavouring to persuade the other that it is barbarian."

The little man smiled somewhat grimly.

"Tell me," continued Haviland, "how was the Living Buddha able to achieve such a reformation?"

"When he came of age he shut himself away from the world for many months. They say that during that time he was communing with the angel-Arhats. Certain it is that when he emerged from his retirement he formulated doctrines which infuriated the older Lamas. But he had the youth on his side and fought his way."

"What were the chief innovations?"

"The cleanliness of the body, the activity of the body, and the health of the body, as being necessary to the cleanliness of the mind, the activity of the mind, and the health of the mind."

Haviland marvelled inwardly. If the Living Buddha had been able to enforce habits so alien to the native mind he must indeed be a wonder for all ages.

"He reproached them with the condition of their temples and dwellings. He said that it was not enough to lounge about all day repeating formulas, and that a life of reflection was only possible for those who had conquered every other detail of existence. Of course the monastery is far from being

anywhere near the ideal that he has set up, but it has improved and is improving."

"Strangely enough," interposed the Chief Official, "the people in the whole country round accepted him at once as a great teacher. It almost seems as if from this monastery a newer, purer Buddhism were about to arise. Its fame is spreading to all parts of the Empire. Then there was Ching-Lu."

"Ching-Lu?" cried Cheng, waking from a doze with a start. "Ching-Lu is a madman."

"Why so?" asked Haviland.

"A young man of almost Royal blood, wealthy, handsome, to put on the rags of a Buddhist monk, and that right out here, almost beyond civilisation! Though I make ten thousand obeisances to you for saying so much of your district." And he inclined his head sleepily towards the Chief Official.

"What about his wife?" asked Fraser, convinced that a Chinaman of Ching-Lu's age and position must have had a wife—if not wives.

"That is the strangest part of all," answered Cheng. "Ching-Lu's wife is beautiful. She is like a little figure of ivory stained with the juice of flowers. He is said to have loved her more than most men love their wives, and that she shed more tears when he became a monk than ever she did when they bound her feet."

"She must indeed have loved him," thought the Englishman simultaneously.

"She came to Tsang-Lo to plead with him, and when she saw him coming towards her in the dress of a monk, swooned away into the arms of her attendants."

"What did he do?" asked Fraser.

"They say that he looked at her very long and

very lovingly, then turned and went his way to the monastery with heavy feet."

There was silence for a moment, which Cheng broke.

"I said he was mad," he cried complacently. "Now am I right? What an establishment he had! What a collection of art treasures! I remember the first fête he gave—a thing to dream about, impossible to describe. And the funeral rites of his venerable father and mother—magnificent! He would throw off an ode as easily as he would defeat the most accomplished wrestlers. His conversation sparkled. He must be mad. They ought to have locked him up." Cheng, at the thought of so much wanton sacrifice of the good things of life, shook his head dolefully and gradually dozed off again, the folds of his comfortable chin increasing in number as his head fell more forward in sleep.

Haviland and Fraser began to take their leave, and were fulfilling the ceremonies considered good form, and thanking their host for a very pleasant evening, when a secretary entered hurriedly.

He handed a document to the Chief Official, at the same moment indicating that it was for Cheng. It was a letter from the Imperial Court.

When they had succeeded in conveying this fact to Cheng's somewhat clouded brain he turned pale, and his hand shook visibly as he undid it.

Haviland wondered whether it was a polite request that he would come up for execution immediately, but on finishing it Cheng's face lightened.

"The Son of Heaven," he said, making a respectful obeisance at the name of the Emperor, "commands his miserable, wretched servant to proceed at once to Peking and resume office."

And the miserable, wretched servant swelled with importance.

CHAPTER VI

ON leaving the house the next morning Haviland found Ruth again attentively examining the Monastery.

"Is it the building or its chief inmate that interests you?" he asked. Ruth started.

He had come up behind her silently, his step on the grass making no noise.

"Both," she answered. "I was wondering whether perhaps the new quickening impulse which must come some day to regenerate China may not spring from such a source. Perhaps the day of miracles is not really past."

"You think the Chinese want a new prophet?"

Ruth nodded her head.

"I sometimes think," said her father, "that it is the people who preach to the prophet, and not the prophet to the people. Perhaps it would be more correct to say he springs from the exigencies of the situation."

Haviland had a habit of embarking on a sea of supposition when alone with his daughter. She understood him.

"I am going to call at the Monastery to-day."

"Couldn't we all go?"

"No, I intend going quite alone. I wish to see this Living Saint by myself, to take his measure."

When Catherine first heard of her husband's decision she grew alarmed. The antipathy to ordinary travellers was great, but against them as missionaries the feeling would be intensified. If they all went they would at least have the satisfaction of knowing what was happening.

"It would not be fair," said Haviland, "to say that most Buddhist Monasteries are loosely conducted, but at any rate I expect to find exceptional discipline in this one, and I don't want to run the risk of taking you and Ruth."

"Why not take Mr. Fraser?" began his wife. Haviland made an imploring gesture. It was of all things the one he wished to avoid. His wife understood him and desisted.

Fraser was shaving in his room close by, and had heard Mrs. Haviland's suggestion.

"Of course I'll come," he shouted.

Haviland gave a comical look of despair, and Ruth went off into silent laughter.

The disinclination of any member of the party to be left alone with the young consul was great.

As regards Ruth herself, she could manage to endure him for a few minutes at a time, but his companionship had absolutely no attractions for the two older people.

"My dear Fraser, I particularly wish you and Blake to stay and look after the ladies. I want to feel that they are in safe hands."

It was the turn of Catherine and Ruth to look dejected.

"Of course I should be delighted to look after the ladies, but at the same time I should like to see that chap again."

"I think they would be less likely to object if I

went alone." Haviland meant to go alone, and there was that in his voice which conveyed his decision. Fraser was heard no more, excepting to announce a minute or two afterwards that he had chipped a piece out of his cheek, and to demand court plaister.

Mrs. Haviland's idea of her work as a missionary, was to commence proselytising wherever she might be ; but Haviland would not hear of this, and forbade anything of the kind till he gave permission. It was as well the people should get accustomed to having them in their midst first. He also left directions that nobody was to venture into the town during his absence.

Towards evening, the heat of the day being over, he left the house alone ; and crossing the poppy-field, rounded the base of the hill and found himself at the foot of the steps which formed the entrance to the Monastery. He passed up them, underneath the ornamental arch, into the land of soul culture.

The Monastery consisted for the most part of numberless small alleys and streets formed by the cells of the monks, with here and there open spaces.

Haviland was astonished at the extent of the Monastery. Large as he knew some of them to be this one seemed in comparison colossal, and there was an air of spick and span-ness which was remarkable.

The cells stretched away to the right, cornerways and some of them he could see from an eminence at which he arrived, were almost down on the river brink. Many which he passed were evidently of quite recent building, a fact in itself extraordinary, and speaking largely for the galvanised religious life of the place.

Haviland computed that it was quite possible that

there might be over six thousand monks resident. No wonder the Mandarin had shown such a strong desire to avoid giving any offence to the chief of this bigot horde.

As soon as he entered the sacred ground he almost stumbled across several devotees, young Lamas, who were doing the circuit of the Monastery, prostrating themselves full length at every step.

In the open spaces prayer-barrels were moving with automaton regularity.

No one objecting, he pursued his path upward, passing innumerable monks, who by their silence and numbers conveyed to Haviland a strange, wide sense of melancholy.

As he neared the summit the cells became fewer and larger. He was evidently entering the more official part of the establishment.

Two Buddhist temples, with the umbrella-roof tiers of their pagoda towers rising one above the other, stood about three-quarters of the way up.

Across the evening air came every now and then the sound of marine conches blown to announce some point in ritual.

When he reached the second Temple he paused. Around it was gathered a large concourse of pilgrims, and Haviland, accustomed as he was to the colour and variety of the East, stood and took in with amazement and curiosity the motley collection of Mongols, Tartars, and Tibetans, who seemed to have come from every quarter of Buddhist Asia to do reverence to this new star in their religious firmament.

There were Lamas from the Holy See of Lhasa herself, as likewise picturesquely clothed Tibetans from the Border States; the Manchu, haughty and

supercilious, conscious of belonging to the ruling race, Chinamen proper from Hainan to Peking, Mongol-Tartars, fur-capped and dressed in stained woollen garments, people from the country of the Oitous and from the plains of Koko-Nor, and Eluiths. There were Lamas of every kind, from the coarse-visaged, filthy monk of some degenerate, corrupt Lamasery to the delicate-featured, almost effeminate, young monk of Central China.

All alike bore on their breasts amulets, some in cases encrusted with turquoises and coral, a few of the precious jade itself. There were men ragged and travel-stained, their half-starved features full of exaltation and religious fervour. Every conceivable head-dress was represented, from the pig-tail to hair done in endless, twisted, fine plaits.

It was the custom of all warlike pilgrims to lay a weapon at the feet of Kwanyian, the Goddess of Mercy. This was in the Temple on the summit. It was a symbol of the abnegation of the lust of blood. A pilgrim to whom Haviland spoke informed him that there was a huge store of such weapons.

Haviland was naturally the object of much curiosity.

A Tibetan, richly dressed, with hair and ringlets like Da Vinci's John the Baptist, but ornamented with jewels, and with gaudy rings on his fingers, stepped out of a group and attempted to examine the texture of his dress.

Haviland gave him a look of wounded dignity which sent him back shamefacedly to his comrades. Every one carried a rosary and told his beads constantly, bringing to the scene a strange suggestion of St. Peter's.

The Temple itself was painted brilliant red and

yellow, and the motley-coloured crowd in front looked as if dressed with the express intention of falling in with its colour scheme.

Upon the rich feast of colour-tones the evening sun fell with an all-mellowing effect. Haviland felt, as he always did amidst such surroundings—a magpie amongst birds of paradise.

Numbers were ascending the steps and entering the Temple. Haviland followed and found himself in a large outer hall where holy water and rosaries were being sold.

Round this hall stood images of Divine beings. The lofty roof was supported by ornately carved and decorated pillars.

Haviland threw into his bearing every reverence, as was his custom when dealing with the religions of other people.

Certainly there was everything in this spacious and lofty entrance hall—its groups of Lamas, its dim, religious light, its statues and images—to arouse the æsthetic side of a religious nature.

The variety of types amongst the monks belonging to the monastery itself was also remarkable.

There was the Manchu, the Tartar, the Chinaman proper—all three correct, reserved, and dignified—and the Tibetan from the land of priesthood and ritual.

The sun came in and striped the place with orange bars, lighting up here and there the gorgeous robe of some dignitary.

Several boy-Lamas walked through in orderly procession.

The scene with its background of painted walls was rich and subdued in colouring.

Haviland passed into the Temple itself, which bore

a startling resemblance to Christian places of worship. There was the long nave, bounded on each side by the double row of pillars, beyond which were the side aisles. There were superbly worked gilt and silver screens dividing the body of the Temple from the chancel, and here and there, on each side, recesses for worship, with burning lights and Buddhistic images.

Beyond the screens he could see several statues of the Buddha, a gigantic one at the extreme end of the church, jewelled and glittering. In front of this image was the table of offering.

From the ornate and brilliantly painted roof hung the Temple banners of painted and brocaded silks, the largest having in its centre the figure of Gautama surrounded by innumerable kneeling saints, each a miracle of fine embroidery. It was in its lack of solidity, such as Western cathedrals possess, that it suggested a certain flimsiness, the light woodwork and delicate decorations increasing this effect.

The Temple was thronged with Lamas and pilgrims. Four youths, with features of the utmost Oriental delicacy and hair curled and waved wondrously, walked down the central aisle, censuring the air as they went, till the clouds of perfumed fire rose in waves to the roof, producing a grateful sense of mysticism and devotion. From somewhere outside came the blast of a trumpet. Then another, and another.

From the hall without, borne aloft, entered the Living Buddha.

Haviland, who had never seen a Buddhist service on this scale, had not expected his entrance, and lost the opportunity of further studying his face as he was carried towards the chancel, followed by a pro-

cession of panoplied priests, to the singing of a choir of boys.

The procession passed through into the chancel, and from where he sat Haviland could just see that all were standing till the chief figure had seated himself on a throne, raised high above the floor. Then all murmured the three Buddhistic forms—

“I go for refuge to the Buddha.
I go for refuge to the Law.
I go for refuge to the Order.”

The service proceeded, and there rose a great hymn, a cry for the presence of the Buddha.

The boys and young monks swung their censers till the Living Buddha sat enthroned on the clouds which hid the roof from sight. A magnificent mirror held by two priests was raised on high to catch a reflection of the spirit as it descended.

The trumpets, bells, and drums mingled with the voices of the singers.

Above the heads of the throng of worshipping Lamas were raised mystical symbols. Then the Living Buddha descended from his throne and poured water, mingled with saffron and sugar, over the mirror, which an aged priest wiped each time with a silken cloth. Several monks caught the trickling liquid in their hands and marked their shaven crown, their forehead, and breast. They then swallowed the remaining drops, as mystically swallowing part of the Divine Being whose image has been caught in the mirror over which the water has passed.

Haviland, with at all times a greater share of self-possession than falls to the lot of most men, was

strangely moved. It was such ceremonies, which he had heard argued with deep theological knowledge and conviction by Buddhist priests, that had often raised a doubt in his mind as to the need for replacing so beautiful a faith. What better had he and all his missionary brethren to give than this creed which was based on the same exquisite story of sacrifice and renunciation?

He could remember landing, a raw youth, at Bombay, under the impression that all he had to fight was ignorance, and yet he met everywhere priests of other religions before whose theological knowledge his own seemed paltry and small.

And now the older he grew the more he had to confess sadly to himself that his steps had become less and less certain.

The strain of his meditations was broken by a voice.

The Living Buddha had come down from his throne, and was standing outside the gilt screen talking more especially to the pilgrims, who perchance might never hear him again.

He was advising them to go for example to the simple facts of the life of the Buddha, and the lives of all the other sages of the earth who had founded themselves on sacrifice and contemplation of the Divine purpose. It was impossible not to be thrilled by the tones of his voice which, never raised, penetrated the most distant parts of the Temple.

He explained that the first battle man had to fight was with himself. It was not sufficient to burn a certain number of lights before the figure of the ever glorious one. The best illumination that they could make in his honour would be the sacred flames arising from the burning out of their own sinful

desires. He bade them seek sorrow that they might find joy.

Then he spoke earnestly of the duty of mankind to the lower animals, explaining that even the lowest were their younger brethren. To inflict pain on an animal was perhaps worse than doing so to a human being, because in most cases its means of defence were less. But even this could be carried beyond common sense, and the best way to avoid having to destroy the lowest kind of life was to practise absolute cleanliness in their persons and dwellings. Cleanliness of mind and body was the highest worship.

Once or twice as he spoke the brows of some of the Lamas grew dark. In preaching the truth he was attacking much of the orthodoxy which was a mere distortion of the original Buddhist faith.

His sermon—for such it was—lasted but a few minutes. In that time the distilled essence of his inspiration fell from his lips in phrases that burnt themselves into the hearts of his hearers.

He was once more raised aloft on the shoulders of the monks and borne through the incense-laden air, past where Haviland was sitting, into the entrance-hall.

On all sides the monks prostrated themselves. His face looked tired and worn, but deified with spirituality.

Haviland waited till the procession had had time to leave the Temple and convey the Living Buddha back to his own dwelling.

He then passed out through the entrance-hall, which was now almost deserted, into the evening air, and resumed his climb towards the summit where the Chief Temple stood. He had not gone far before

he became conscious that several of the monks had forsaken their attitude of indifference to his presence, and were shadowing him at a few yards' distance. Finally he reached an open place at the top opposite the largest Temple, the one immediately visible from their house. As he stood looking around him one of the young Lamas disappeared into the larger dwelling which stood side by side with the Temple.

Haviland had with him his field-glasses, and from where he stood he took a sweeping view of the Lamasery as it sloped away and extended itself, gradually attenuating, along the river-bank.

Someone touched him on the shoulder. He turned and found himself face to face with the Tartar monk who had visited them on the day of their arrival. His manner was even more aggressive.

He greeted Haviland with a forced smile. "Thou hast come to worship our Saint?" he suggested in a voice artificially softened.

Haviland shook his head.

"I told you before that the religion which I practise does not admit that men can ever attain to such perfection as would entitle them to the worship of their fellows."

The Tartar monk had spoken to him in pure Pekinese, a fact which slightly surprised Haviland, but which made conversation easier.

The monks who had gathered round them waited in silence for Haviland to further explain himself. Had he spoken what was in his mind he would have said that it was above all a burning curiosity to see once again the individual whose saintship he was denying; but he merely continued—

"I have come to explain to the official heads of

your Monastery that I wish to live on terms of friendship and goodwill with you."

The smile died out of the Lama's face.

"And yet thou hast come to preach the religion of the Lord of Heaven. Thy religion and ours cannot agree."

Haviland was not so sure of this; but, as servant of a missionary society, he acquiesced.

He ventured on a bold stroke.

"I should like to see your Superior myself."

"He will not receive a barbarian."

"Have you asked him?"

"No, but he will not see thee—I know it." The monk spoke impatiently, and there was something in his voice which convinced Haviland that he was himself not at all certain that the Living Saint would be so intractable.

"Go and ask him."

The monk looked furious, and there was a movement amongst those around, who had hitherto stood impassive.

"It is impossible. Thou shouldst not be here at all." He spoke roughly.

Haviland squared his shoulders and frowned.

His six feet two, massive frame, and sweeping beard were impressive. Those around shrank back a little. Still, things might have taken an unpleasant turn had not at that moment another figure come on the scene.

There appeared on the top of the steps of the Temple a young monk. Haviland was distant from him some dozen yards, and he could see that the gentleness of his bearing and the eminent refinement of his appearance suggested the highly bred Chinaman.

The turbulent Lama seemed subdued at once and went forward to greet the newcomer as he descended the steps.

The young man asked him one or two questions, evidently with reference to Haviland, for after listening for some seconds he raised his hand with a curious sweetness and dignity as if deprecating further explanation. He then approached Haviland, who had time to notice the earnestness and sadness in his face. His movements were graceful, and suggested the Chinaman more accustomed to Court etiquette than the fellowship of the priests of a creed considered somewhat plebeian.

He was dressed with the utmost simplicity that Lamanesque custom permitted. He looked taller than he really was by reason of the liveness of his figure and the dignity and grace with which he bore himself.

Haviland wondered how he came to be amongst such people. The Monastery promised to be a remarkable revelation.

He greeted the Englishman courteously and listened to his request. He was silent for some moments, evidently thinking deeply over the advisability of doing as he was asked.

"Come with me," he said, and moved towards the building next to the Temple.

The Tartar monk followed them, and as they were entering the young man turned and said—

"It is not in the abode of holy men that a stranger should receive discourteous treatment."

The Tartar slunk back a little, but followed them into the building.

They entered first a vestibule surrounded by images on pedestals. The young monk ushered Haviland

into a room on the left. It was absolutely plain and almost destitute of furniture.

Asking him to be seated, he left him in the care of the Tartar, who appeared occupied with gloomy thoughts and only glanced towards him once, in no friendly way.

After some minutes the other returned and asked Haviland to accompany him. They went out, followed by the Tartar.

Going to the extreme end of the vestibule his guide opened a door on the right, and they entered a large whitewashed room. Like the one they had just left, it had in it little or no furniture.

Passing through this the young man opened a small door, and Haviland found himself in a long gallery open all one side to the air of heaven, with the landscape spread out for miles, like a framed picture.

At one end was another of the innumerable statues of the Buddha, this one being peculiar by reason of the eyes being filled in with rubies, conveying to the face a strange, lurid reality of expression.

The Saint himself was seated on a chair, which was placed on a small dais at the other end of the gallery. Beside him was a table on which lay a book, evidently a volume of devotions.

His dress, now that the purple cloak was removed from his shoulders, was a white woollen garment that reached to the ground. At his feet lay a couple of huge Tibetan dogs, savage brutes of almost untamable natures.

As Haviland entered they sprang up with a growl. One had almost leapt the length of the gallery, but a word from the Saint brought him back, and he lay down again submissively.

Haviland had been told of the extraordinary power

he exerted over animals. Behind his chair were two or three elderly monks. He motioned to them to stand a little apart and, fixing his eye upon Haviland with the same piercing glance as he had done the day before, invited him to take a chair some few feet from his own, on a level with the room.

From where he sat Haviland could see that the gallery looked directly down on to their house. The Living Buddha waited for him to speak. The young monk had taken up his position behind the Saint's chair.

Haviland saw the glance which he cast upon the seated figure of the Master, and was irresistibly reminded of John, the best-loved disciple.

The Tartar stood away at the other end of the gallery by the image.

The Englishman felt himself being largely impressed by the spirituality of the atmosphere. The Holy Father himself could not have conveyed to the most superstitious of peasants a sense of greater apartness than did this extraordinary being.

All waited for Haviland to speak. He never forgot the picture that was left on his mind at that moment. The long gallery built on the very edge of the rock, with the sheer gulf beneath, the vast expanse of landscape where twilight drew her grey curtain slowly across the rice- and poppy-fields, the silent monks, and the majestic figure of the Saint with the dogs at his feet—the extremes, spirituality and brutality. After a pause, in which there was something solemn, Haviland explained that he appreciated the favour of being received, that he only wished to express to the Superior of Tsang-Lo Monastery how deep a respect he felt for religious-life wherever he might find it.

As he said this a flash of appreciation crossed the still face before him. But, continued Haviland, believing—as he and those who sent him did—that theirs was the purest revelation ever vouchsafed to man, they were driven by duty to go forth and preach it wheresoc'er they could.

As he spoke he knew that the one before him understood and was listening sympathetically.

"Thou art of the religion of the Lord of Heaven?"

The voice sounded through the gallery like the clang of a bell. So peculiar was the effect that Haviland listened to the dying vibrations as if it had been a musical instrument.

He nodded his head affirmatively.

"Thou knowest that they accuse those who profess thy creed of impious and brutal practices?"

Haviland was considering how to answer, when the Living Buddha—as if speaking to himself—continued—

"But the spirits of evil clothe themselves in many shapes and speak in many tongues."

Haviland found himself gazing at the face, studying every feature, almost with a purpose, with some design as yet unsuspected even by himself.

"I know that they say these things of us," he replied, "but our lives are the best answer. That which is said is mere accusation."

"What doctrine dost thou preach?" The Saint turned with startling suddenness, and fixed his eyes on the Englishman.

"The doctrine of the one God, Creator of all."

The young monk bent forward and said something into the Buddha's ear.

"They say," said the Saint, "that thou teachest that there are three Gods."

Haviland felt that they were on the brink of a theological argument which he was hardly prepared to grapple with at the moment.

He, however, answered—

“God is Triune.”

“True,” said the Saint. “One day we will speak more of this. Thou art the first Lama of the Lord of Heaven that I have met.”

He rose and went to the side of the gallery, beckoning Haviland to follow.

“That is thy dwelling, is it not?” He pointed to the house below.

The rustle of the wings of night could almost be felt. A few more minutes, and darkness would settle on all around. The birds in the tree-tops below were indulging in one vast concert ere they slept. Haviland raised his field-glasses to his eyes while the Saint watched him wonderingly. Seeing his quiet curiosity the missionary handed them to him, explaining how to adjust them.

In the field below Catherine, Fraser, and the Chinese servants were nowhere to be seen. Ruth, a solitary figure, with hands clasped behind her, and with eyes upturned to the spot where they were, was standing motionless by the bank of the stream.

A slight tremor shook the frame of the Buddha. Haviland turned, and as he did so his glance became riveted on the hand which held the field-glasses.

The thumb of the right hand above the joint was missing.

Haviland looked and looked, watching to see the fingers move and show him that it was due to some peculiarity of the way in which the hand was held. He felt himself growing dizzy, and still the Saint looked out upon the field below.

Then, almost in a moment, the night rendered the glasses useless and he handed them back.

Haviland watched the hand as it relaxed its grip.

He was right. The thumb was maimed.

Then his eyes stole up to the fair beard, the majestic head, the deep, blue eyes.

He found himself murmuring under his breath—

“My God! my God!”

He staggered back into his seat.

The Saint came forward to his assistance and motioned to a Lama, who brought him something which he held to Haviland's lips. Haviland was himself again in a minute, with what was almost terror tingling in every nerve of his body.

When he had quite recovered the Saint made a gesture to show that the interview was at an end.

“I try to teach those whom I lead that love of one for another is the object of all creed; but, remember, the love of man for his religion is still a human love and it has the human weakness of envy and jealousy.”

He raised his hand as if invoking a blessing on the head of his visitor.

Haviland, bewildered, unable to speak, went out.

CHAPTER VII

THE young monk followed Haviland from the room, conducting him back to the ante-chamber, from which the Tartar monk had disappeared.

Here he offered his guest tea. Haviland accepted it gratefully.

The young Lama who was attending them withdrew, and they were alone.

"When I was at Pekin I met many Englishmen. They are an interesting race."

"You do not belong to Tsang-Lo?" asked Haviland.

"I came to Tsang-Lo on a visit to my uncle, who was then governor of the province. I visited this monastery from curiosity, and I have remained here ever since."

A great desire to solve the problem thoroughly prompted Haviland's next remark, which was almost an impertinence.

"You were rich?"

"I am the head of my house, and they are the Ching-Lu."

It was, as Haviland had guessed, Ching-Lu, of whom Cheng had spoken at the Mandarin's dinner-party.

"But surely you have given offence to all your friends?"

The young man looked pained, and Haviland hastened to change the subject.

"But you must have met my people, the missionaries?" He was wondering if the young man had ever been brought into contact with the Gospel preachers. So earnest a seeker after truth would hardly allow Christianity to pass unexamined.

"I have heard them preach. I have read their books. It is a strange creed. It asks for the faith of a little child." He paused for a moment, and then added thoughtfully, "If that be so, then why do we become men and women?"

"That surely is one of the things to fight against—a vain reliance on our own power."

"To rely upon a power which we must not even attempt to explain is to condemn the national religious character to inertia. No man has a right to accept blindly what he cannot accept in reason." He looked at Haviland earnestly as if almost yearning for him to answer at length, to cast a light upon some yet unseen pathway.

But the Englishman was too astute a man to suppose that the mere "straight-from-the-shoulder" Gospel preaching would impress this subtle Oriental mind.

"You do not find us as reasonable as Buddhism?" he asked.

"Not as the real Buddhism, the pure Buddhism that with my Master I shall preach—which shall pour new blood into the dry veins of my country, and make her live."

This almost Royal Prince in the simple dress of an ordinary Lama, shorn of his titles, proclaiming his Divine ideals, astounded Haviland. And all the time the young man was framed by the personality

of the Saint in the other room, the God-like figure with the maimed hand and the English blue eyes.

Ching-Lu left him at the entrance of the building, indicating that the way out of the monastery, though some distance, was perfectly straight.

Haviland walked down the hill as in a dream. What curious chance had brought him and his party to Tsang-Lo, and how was the problem to be worked out?

Was this man with his burning eyes and immense religious influence indeed Catherine's child?

The thought was so whelming that he stopped and bared his brow to the cool night air, pressing his hand to his temples.

It was the eminent possibility of the thing which staggered him.

As he went along, the cells on each side were dark and silent. Reaching a stretch of the road thrown almost completely into shadow, he became aware that some one was following him. In his highly nervous condition he found himself tingling all over at the mere thought. He paused and looked behind him, peering into the shadows.

At that moment some one touched him on the shoulder. He turned with a cry.

It was the Tartar monk.

"Why do you follow me?" asked Haviland sharply.

"There is a monk lying sick in my cell. He is a pilgrim from afar."

"Well?"

"In Peking I have seen the barbarian physicians cure those who were at death's door."

"But I am not a physician."

The monk looked at him anxiously.

"But perhaps thou canst cure him,"

It was true that Haviland knew something of medicine, but he hesitated to follow this man who so far had shown no friendliness.

"He will die if thou dost not come."

Haviland thought for a moment.

What the man was saying might be true.

He made a gesture of compliance, and the monk, bidding him follow, went on in front. They struck off from the main street, and after winding in and out of the rows of cells for some time found themselves near the river. They went on for a little distance, keeping by the river-bank, till finally they stopped at a cell which was almost at the extreme limit of the Monastery.

The monk cautiously opened the door and went in. Haviland followed.

From the roof swung a lantern. In a corner, on a plain straw mat, with his head supported by a hard cushion, lay a young monk, whose dress differed somewhat from that worn in the Monastery at Tsang-Lo. He was in a high state of fever. His head rolled from side to side with automatic precision. His eyes were fixed. He was evidently delirious. He was talking aloud, the words coming out singly like pistol-shots.

Haviland went over and knelt by him.

After a few moments' inspection he shook his head doubtfully.

"I am afraid," he said, turning to the monk, "that he cannot last very long."

"Canst thou do nothing for him?" asked the other brusquely.

Haviland rose.

"Nothing," he said.

The monk went and leant over the delirious figure. Then he knelt down and placed him in an easier position.

"He must live—he must live," he murmured.

The Englishman, unwilling to appear indifferent, again knelt and took the sick man's hand.

As he did so he gave a cry, loud and deep, which rang through the cell, bringing the Tartar monk to his feet, and even startling the sick man to momentary stillness.

The sick man's hand, which Haviland had dropped as though it had been an adder, lay motionless, outstretched.

The thumb was missing above the joint.

Then Haviland looked at the man's face, and saw that he was very fair. Not the fairness of a Western, but still several shades lighter than the average Oriental.

At the cry the monk looked at him in amazement, and drew back into the corner of the cell as if almost expecting Haviland to attack him.

At that moment there was a knock at the door.

So tense had been the strain, that though it was the lightest of taps it affected them as if some one had struck a heavy blow.

They gazed at one another like criminals.

The Tartar, who had placed a heavy wooden bar across the door, went and removed it.

The Living Buddha entered, followed by his disciple.

"There is a sick man here," he said. "Why hast thou not sent for me?"

The monk made no reply, but stood aside.

"The man is dying. He cannot live." Haviland found himself speaking in a harsh, strange voice.

The Saint hardly seemed to notice his presence; but, drawing a small stool to the man's side, sat down and studied him attentively. Once it seemed to Haviland that his gaze rested on the mutilated hand and wandered back to his own; but, if it were so, the movement was so momentary that it was impossible to be certain.

Then he placed his hand lightly over the man's diaphragm, and remained motionless as a statue. The young monk closed the door and stood against it almost as still as his master.

The Tartar watched with haggard face and a hunted look in his eyes.

Thus they waited for fully an hour. It seemed to Haviland a century.

Once or twice the sick man spoke vaguely, indistinctly: but the immobile figure, seated there in the dim light of the cell, never moved or stirred. Whenever the sick man rambled the Tartar drew near him, listening anxiously.

By degrees, to the Englishman's amazement, an extraordinary change came over the sufferer.

The head ceased to roll monotonously from side to side, the fixed stare of the open eyes relaxed, and the lids slowly and mercifully veiled the fevered eyeballs from the light. A damp sweat broke out upon his brow, and he slept.

And while Haviland was marvelling at the change, the healer had risen, and he and his disciple were gone.

Haviland, after a few moments' stupefaction, crossed to the corner where the pilgrim lay, and examined him attentively.

He was right. The man was well.

Suddenly the night outside became full of strange, weird sounds.

He went out. The darkness and gloom of an hour before had disappeared.

The roof of every cell was illuminated with red lanterns, as were also the temples.

The monastery, vaguely outlined by the fantastic and restless light, would have looked weird enough for that reason alone; but, in addition, on the rows of roofs which rose like terraces far away up the hill-side, the Lamas were seated in their state mantles and mitres, looking in the red light like countless victims of a Spanish Auto da Fé in the midst of their funeral pyres.

Six thousand voices rose to heaven in one vast chant.

The effect was stupendous, and Haviland moved through the illuminated alleys as through the infernal regions.

Reaching the steps that led out of the monastery he was about to descend when two huge, ferocious dogs sprang out of the gloom and barred his way. They were chained, but had length enough to form a complete barrier.

While he was debating what to do, a monk who evidently acted as porter came out and held one of them back, allowing him to pass.

Soon after he regained the house.

The others met him anxiously.

They were alarmed at his pale face and agitated manner.

In reply to their questions he sank back into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER VIII

THE Tartar, the instant Haviland had left his cell, replaced the bar across the door.

Returning to the side of the young monk, he bent over him, and studied his face anxiously.

He guessed by his dress that his visitor was from Tibet, but it was the face which claimed his attention.

The Tibetan was some twenty-nine or thirty years of age. He was clean-shaven, but his brows and lashes showed almost a reddish tinge, as did also the slight down that covered his limbs. The forehead was powerful, and the lines of the mouth—even in sleep—gave evidence of strong determination.

More than once the Tartar lifted his hand, and examined the mutilated thumb attentively.

The sleeper's appearance displayed more and more, as the moments sped by, returning vitality.

Finally, having given one last look round—as if the events of the night had unnerved him somewhat—the Tartar assumed his robes and mitre, and leaving his cell, mounted by a short ladder to the roof and joined the rest of the Monastery in their nocturnal prayers.

After some time the prayers ceased, and he returned to his patient, who still slept.

The best part of the next day had gone before he woke.

The Tartar was not in the cell when first he opened his eyes.

Slowly the consciousness of his whereabouts began to return to him. He stretched out his hand feebly, and took a long, deep draught of some cooling drink which the other had placed by his side. Then he lay back and his eyes closed as if he were too weak yet to face the effort of waking life.

The opening of the door roused him with a start. Seeing him awake, the Tartar, who had entered, put his finger to his lips to enjoin silence, and then, replacing the bar before the door, came over and sat by his side on the stool which the Living Buddha had used the day before.

The convalescent looked at him inquiringly, and the other said hastily, as if to spare him the fatigue of questioning—

“Thou art in the Monastery at Tsang-Lo.”

The blood rushed to the pale cheeks and the sick man half rose.

The Tartar placed his hand on his shoulder, and firmly but gently laid his head back on the pillow.

“I found thee lying by the roadside. Thou wast unconscious. Thou wast saying that which it was not good for ears other than mine to hear.”

The half-closed eyes opened wide upon him in terror, and he hastily added—

“Have no fear. What thou hast said is in the grave of my own thoughts. Be at peace. Thou must sleep, and when thou art stronger we will talk more of these things.”

The Tibetan gave a sigh of relief. He was still

very weak, and almost immediately sank again into a deep slumber.

For another day and night the Tartar attended him, and nursed him back to strength.

He had, as usual, fulfilled his official duties near the person of the Living Buddha, but neither by the Saint himself nor by his disciple had any mention been made of the sick man in his cell.

On the evening of the third day the Tartar entered and found his patient almost well.

He went outside, and after looking cautiously round to see that no one was about, once more sealed the door.

The other watched him attentively.

He had been waiting anxiously for the moment when the Tartar would speak.

The gentleness and the care with which he had been treated had astonished him. In fact, in the Tartar's manner towards him there had been something deferential, almost humble, which was little in accord with his harsh, overbearing nature. The Tibetan noticed that he came and stood at his feet, a little away, an implication of respect.

"Thy hand is maimed."

The Tibetan was silent.

"Thou art fairer than thy countrymen."

The young man still made no answer, but his eyes grew brilliant with anticipation.

"Thou hast been a long time reaching Tsang-Lo."

"I should have been here sooner had my people brought me hither."

The Tartar fell to his knees and bowed his head in the dust.

"Master!" he said in a low, tense whisper.

Then there was silence for a few moments, and again it was the Taitar who spoke.

"I knew," he said, "that this was a punishment sent upon our holy Monastery—that this man was some wandering devil who had blinded the eyes of our messengers. They said he had the form of an angel. I knew it was a device of the evil spirits. Even as he grew to manhood he showed his hatred for our ceremonies and customs. He talks of purifying. He would lead us all to our destruction."

He paused for a moment, and then continued in a gentler, more exalted manner.

"But thou hast come to thine own, to set thy house in order."

"How shall I proclaim myself?"

The Tartar paused, and thought deeply.

"We must walk carefully. His influence upon those here is great. Should'st thou rush out and proclaim the truth they would laugh even though thou should'st show them the same proofs which he gave. But why has this misfortune been sent upon our Monastery?"

The young man bade the other come and sit near him. Then, having cooled his lips with the drink which the Tartar held to them, he began—

"I was, as thou knowest, the former Superior of this Monastery. When I died my soul fled to its new dwelling, the body of a child in Southern Tibet. It had been foretold to me in my former life that the punishment for a certain sin which I had committed was that I should wander, disinherited, for some years. This has been so. The embassy sent from the Monastery to bring me home in honour was misdirected by evil influences. I was brought up in our faith by an ancient Lama who, dying, told me that I

was the Living Buddha and the rightful Superior of this Monastery and bade me come and claim my place. I was then nineteen, and for ten years I have travelled, sometimes hoping, sometimes almost despairing, of reaching Tsang-Lo. That I am protected by supernatural power I am sure, for I have been snatched from death a hundred times.

"Once, when the caravan I was with was crossing the pass over a terrible range of mountains, I missed my foothold and fell over the side of the precipice. Those with me thought I must have been dashed to destruction; but, peering over, they saw me caught in some overhanging bushes, whence they drew me up with much toil and labour. I have been wrongfully imprisoned for theft, and have narrowly escaped the executioner's sword."

While the sick man recited his adventures the face of the Tartar showed the keenest emotion, even horror, as if he were hearing the details of some terrible blasphemy.

"I arrived within a mile of this place when I was struck down, and I remember no more."

The Tartar told him of his cure by the Living Buddha.

"Then," said the young monk, "he must have been forced to do this by some power stronger than himself. I have almost reached the end of my weary pilgrimage, but from what thou sayest the most difficult part is to come."

"There are those among us who are not over pleased with this so-called reformer. Those that he has gathered round him from afar, and the younger Lamas, have faith in him; but that is because they are inexperienced and see not the danger."

"Little by little," said the Tibetan, thoughtfully,

The Living Buddha I I I

"we must let the truth become known, and—believe me—sooner or later this cunning devil will give us reason from which to argue our cause."

"The most dangerous of our foes is Ching-Lu."

"Ching-Lu?" repeated his hearer.

"He is the impostor's favourite Lama, a Chinaman of high birth who—like the Lord Buddha himself—has given up all for what he considers to be the truth. If we could win him to our side," he said thoughtfully, but then added after a moment or two, "that were impossible. It is the magic of the usurper that has won him over. He has confused the man and his doctrine."

For a long time they talked; the Tartar explaining carefully in all its details the body politic of the Monastery, telling him how up to a certain age the Living Buddha had listened with avidity to the teaching of those whose duty it was to educate him in the ritual of the faith and its meaning. How, suddenly, having out-distanced his instructors in grasp of matters theological, he had shut himself up for six months and reflected, unaided by book or human brain, on religious philosophy. How, on emerging from his retirement he had called the Lamas together and denounced what he called their impurities and lack of zeal.

How since then he had governed the Institution with an iron hand, excommunicating relentlessly those whom he deemed unfit for the religious life, and setting up almost a new faith, vainly imagining himself another Tsong-Kaba—Tsong-Kaba, the Tibetan reformer of the Buddhist faith, who would have scorned and denounced his heresies.

"Thou art right," said Makah the Tibetan. "All this show of wisdom is but a prelude to the striking of

some deadly blow at our religion. The time he shut himself from the world was no doubt spent in studying witchcraft."

The Tartar acquiesced. For years he had been in a state of passive revolt.

Before the Living Buddha had attained his manhood the Tartar had been a person of some consideration in the Monastery, but owing to his aggressiveness and intolerance he had been shorn of most of his power. Yet, if he had been honest he could not have said that the Saint had dealt harshly with him, but the consciousness of his own incapacity to fight against this indomitable will—always exerted with the greatest possible gentleness—had only exasperated his narrow, bigoted nature and rendered him more than ever blind to the beauty of the Master's character.

Makah showed signs of fatigue, and lay back.

"I will remain here as an ordinary monk," he said, "and study the place and its inmates. Sooner or later I will devise some means by which to prove the truth."

The Tartar did not explain at the moment that there was another and very cogent reason for his dislike of the present ruler.

The Monastery had been formerly noted as one where the most startling, magical ceremonies were to be seen, but with other reforms Attava had sternly repressed the practice of this evil side of occultism.

It was the most dangerous reform which could have been attempted, and it had taken all Attava's power and magnetism to meet and quell the storm which his action evoked.

The place was rich in manuscripts dealing with such practices, and these the Living Buddha had

gathered together and placed no one but himself knew where.

To discover the whereabouts of these treasures had been the Tartar's aim, and it had been borne in upon him, putting many small evidences together, that they were concealed in an underground place beneath the gallery in which the Buddha had received Haviland.

Ignoble himself, the Tartar could not believe but that the Saint had obtained sole possession of this store for his own evil purposes.

In the new claimant to the Budda-hood, whose pretensions he believed in from the depths of his fanatical soul, he saw a man of a different stamp, and one more likely to deal in those things which his ignorant and mystical mind confused with spirituality.

The fact that Attava had never to the Tartar's knowledge made use of the treasure he possessed, proved nothing in his favour. He was no doubt keeping everything for an emergency.

Thus, whatever the Living Buddha did was twisted and turned by the Tartar to his disfavour.

CHAPTER IX

HAVILAND'S party, all eagerness to hear what had happened at the Monastery, were compelled to wait till the next morning. He refused to tell them anything the same night, excusing himself on the score of fatigue.

He threw himself on his camp-bed, but although worn out with the tension of the night's adventures, it was some time before he could sleep. With the exception of his inward struggles on matters religious he was accustomed to share all his thoughts with Catherine, and there was a strange sense of loneliness about having to fight out the problem which had been placed before him, alone. Neither Fraser nor Mr. Blake were possible as confidants. Once or twice the idea occurred to him to explain matters to Ruth, but this he also rejected. There was nothing for it but to bear the strain of things himself.

The idea of Catherine being so close to what might prove to be her child terrified him.

His imagination began to run riot amongst contingencies.

The memory of the resemblance between the two mutilated hands came back to him, imparting to the events of the evening an additional strangeness, indescribably weird and fantastic. He could not put

it out of his head that it was no mere coincidence, that there was some mysterious, esoteric connection between the two men.

And then it struck him that the sick monk was every whit as likely to be his wife's son as the other—that is, if he were not wrong* in the matter altogether.

The first thing to do was to make inquiries, and find out from which part of the country the Living Buddha had come. It might be quite possible to trace the father and mother of both, the Saint and the other. He prayed that it might be so.

Should it prove otherwise what remedy could be applied to so great a misfortune?

Commonsense told him that it would be better to leave matters as they were, to take Catherine far away from the place of danger, and to keep her in ignorance ever after.

But some moral law, acting instinctively within him, forbade this course.

He went over again and again the possible results of the revelation.

Then, as before, he became vaguely conscious of a presence stirring the silence of the night outside; and, rising, went quickly out down the verandah to the gate to see who was moving about.

This time he distinctly saw the tall figure, which had been only shadowy on the previous occasion, disappear amongst the trees by the side of the stream.

On the impulse of the moment he ran forward, and, reaching the spot, walked in and out of the bushes and trees searching.

But, as before, there was nothing; and, telling himself that it was the result of his highly-wrought condition, he returned to his bed and fell asleep.

The next morning as he lay in a daze, the recollection of the events of the night before slowly coming back to him, he heard Catherine singing gently to herself in the verandah outside, the verse of a hymn that was often on her lips—

“Can a mother's tender care.”

She sang the verse through, and he raised himself on his elbow to listen. It had for him, after the discovery he had just made, a weird, plaintive significance. She had often told him of having sung it to her baby the night of the Mutiny at Benaputta.

He was obliged to give an account of his visit.

This he did, only suppressing two points, the fact that the Buddha's hand was maimed, and consequently the coincidence that the young monk should have been mutilated in a precisely similar manner.

The other three looked alarmed when he reached that part of his recital which dealt with his being followed by the Tartar monk, but when he came to the matter of the sick man's restoration there was a cry of incredulity.

“You really mean to say,” exclaimed Catherine, “that he was in a high state of fever and that this Living Saint, by merely placing his hand on his diaphragm, restored him to the normal condition—that he absolutely grew better before your eyes?”

“I can only tell you what I saw,” said Ilaviland. “There was no mistake about it. I have been convinced for a long time that there is in these Monasteries a large knowledge of hypnotic science.”

“It must be something of the kind,” said Mr. Blake, “for are we not told that the days of miracles are past?”

Mr. Blake flattered himself that he, at any rate, was sufficiently versed in the Scriptures to be able to face any untoward event.

A barber had been found and had arrived with his brass bowl and scarlet stool, and now the bald part of his head shone in the shadow of the house. He looked like an infant, born of immense age.

Fraser gave it as his opinion that it was some piece of preconceived trickery, carefully designed to deceive Haviland.

"It is just possible that it may be so," answered Haviland, "but personally I don't believe it. The whole thing was too real, too convincing. There is nothing whatever of the charlatan about the man or his surroundings."

"It may have been a mere coincidence. Perhaps these people knew when the crisis would occur, and took advantage of it."

This suggestion of Catherine's sounded more likely. But although Haviland admitted the plausibility of such a theory he was inwardly persuaded that what he had seen was not to be explained away by ingenious cynicism.

In Mr. Blake's ears the whole story sounded a little blasphemous, and the Living Saint was in his eyes assuming the proportions of the devil. He was not at all certain that it would not be the best way to rush into the Monastery and hold a prayer-meeting forthwith—hysterical conversions having great weight with him.

Let them have faith and nail their texts to the mast.

His zealous imagination at once conceived a picture of the Living Saint, convinced of his own

imposture, sitting at his—Mr. Blake's—feet, and studying the Word like a little child—about the only person Mr. Blake was competent to teach.

It was a sore subject with him that neither Haviland nor any of the rest of the party would listen to his impromptu dissertations.

As far as he could see Haviland's visit had been a mere waste of time, especially as further inquiry elicited that he had not even left a tract. He stood too much in fear of his colleague to venture an open protest, but he showed that he was pained and not a little shocked.

These six thousand souls dwelling in organised heathenism might be fired to a conversion that would influence the whole country.

To Mr. Blake's idea it was merely a question of ignorance.

Something of this he ventured to mention to Ruth. He had noticed her standing in an attitude which had become a favourite one with her, her hands clasped behind her back, gazing up at the Monastery, pondering over the personality which had so impressed her father.

"I am afraid, Mr. Blake, that we are a little too sure of being on the right path."

Mr. Blake was more than ever shocked. Such a sentiment, coming from so young a girl, was most distressing. He would have preferred to hear her swear.

"I cannot imagine," she continued, more to herself than to the anxious little figure by her side, "that a man at so early an age should have attained such great influence over these six thousand monks without some special Divine inspiration."

"A Buddhist monk—with Divine inspiration?"

Mr. Blake looked for developments of what surely must be sunstroke. Haviland's laxity was evidently playing havoc with his daughter's soul. It was all very dreadful, very dreadful indeed.

He chafed under the restriction which Haviland had imposed for the moment as regards missionary work.

It was only natural that Mr. Blake should fall in love with Ruth. If he had noticed in her character a tendency towards missionary zeal he might have asked her to be his wife, but he felt that her sympathy with his work was not large.

At the Mission Station she had been more than interested in the school and the children, but when it came to questions of dogma, and its necessity for the salvation of the Celestial soul, it was something quite outside her nature or temperament.

It was so little convincing to her intellect, and her attitude towards it so absolutely negative, that it was impossible to draw her on the subject.

In Catherine he found a more sympathetic listener. Her faith was undoubted—and her dogma uncompromising.

The whole party were being left curiously alone by the Chinese.

Tu-Su was the only member who was permitted to venture into the town, and he announced that there was little or no antipathy to them; in fact—so far—the people did not seem to have realised in any way that it was a missionary expedition.

Groups certainly came out and inspected their dwelling, but apparently in an altogether friendly spirit.

If they should be in any way attacked the house was admirably suited to defensive tactics, and

Haviland had not failed to make such arrangements as were possible for this contingency.

The barber, who came out to help turn Mr. Blake into a Chinaman, was quite surprised that they did not go about the town more freely. He was a cheery little individual, and his art had succeeded in endowing his customer with a small appendage about a couple of inches in length and about the circumference of a rat's tail.

Haviland, although freely admitting the sanity and common sense of the Chinese dress, had never brought himself to adopt it. He had an æsthetic objection to the dress without the pigtail, and he had never been able to regard the assumption of the latter with equanimity.

Reflecting on the passively civil treatment they were receiving, they all agreed that—as is very often the case—the first foreigners to visit the place might be tolerated, if they were not actually welcomed.

They were rendered somewhat apprehensive by receiving a visit from the young military Mandarin, who came as representing the Red Coral Button.

His manner was even more still and languid than at the Mandarin's dinner-table. The opium was evidently doing its work rapidly.

Apparent as was the influence of his vice, it was yet impossible to be with him and not to feel that he possessed natural capacity of a high order; and, though the degrading habit to which he was a victim had robbed him of much of his vitality, he bore an unmistakable air of authority.

He arrived when the whole party were at breakfast, and at what would be considered in Europe an unearthly hour—6 a.m.

He was borne into the courtyard in a most unmilitary-looking palanquin.

Haviland thought it most probable that he possessed all the bigotry and prejudice against the Europeans which distinguishes the most intolerant of his countrymen. His outward bearing, however, was one of perfect courtesy and charm. He took the seat which was offered him, while the soldiers who had accompanied the palanquin grouped themselves behind him.

He had come, he explained, from the Red Coral Button, who hardly thought Tsang-Lo would suit their health.

This was his chief's polite way of informing them that their presence was undesirable.

Already the people at Tsang-Lo were murmuring. This, he wished to point out, was the work of the Lamas. The common people—there was just the faintest expression of contempt in the young aristocrat's voice as he alluded to them—held peculiar views about the Christians. For himself, he did not know—and probably if he had been honest would have added, and did not care. But they—the common people—believed that Christians sacrificed babies and indulged in other barbarous practices.

This part of the young man's discourse Haviland took a somewhat mischievous pleasure in interpreting to Blake.

"He's accusing you, Blake, of eating babies."

Mr. Blake nearly bounded out of his chair. He fixed an indignant glance on the young Mandarin, who moved not a muscle.

Haviland was not as surprised to hear the news of growing dislike to them as the others. The inscrutability of the Chinese character was altogether too

well known to him. Still, he shared their feelings to a certain extent.

Haviland explained that as yet they had met with more than usual civility, and further pointed out that they had not even begun the work for which they had come to Tsang-Lo.

The young man listened quietly without betraying the least symptom of personal interest, and answered that there was nevertheless a growing feeling, and that—much as he desired to protect them—the Chief Official could not be answerable for the fickle temper of the mob.

“The Lamas are all-powerful in Tsang-Lo,” he concluded.

“But the Lamas are our friends. I have the Living Buddha’s personal assurance that his people shall not create any ill-feeling against us.”

The young man fanned himself gently.

“When did a Lama learn to tell the truth? It is they who are creating the mischief.”

He was looking towards Ruth, as though for the first time her personality had impressed him. The fan ceased to flutter.

Catherine noticed the intentness of his gaze, and—knowing the opinion one of his caste would have of foreign women—flushed painfully. Ruth herself was listening to the conversation almost excitedly, with parted lips.

Fraser thought she had never looked more beautiful, and Mr. Blake felt that in defence of such a being he would become endowed with the strength of a hundred Chinamen. They both experienced some resentment at the keen attention with which she was listening to the decidedly interesting young Chinese aristocrat.

"You yourself say," continued Haviland, "that his influence is all-powerful."

"Perhaps. So long as he encourages them in fanaticism."

"Yet even here in Tsang-Lo they have called him a reformer."

The young man was silent. He felt that it was so. After a moment he replied—

"Still, there may be bigots whom he has been able to convince."

Fraser, though by no means a coward, murmured that he thought they had better clear out of it.

Haviland for one moment was inclined to seize so good an opportunity.

The people, the young Mandarin resumed, might break out at any moment; and, although the Chief Mandarin would of course do all in his power to protect them, accidents might occur.

Haviland suggested, with a somewhat grim smile, that in case of violence they would look to the young man and his soldiery for protection.

At this the officer looked thoroughly astonished. That anybody should rely upon him or his force had suddenly never entered his head.

Haviland decided that they would remain where they were; and their visitor having received his answer, mounted languidly, after a graceful farewell, to his chair and was borne away.

"We shall have to keep a sharp look-out," said Haviland.

"I really can't see what good we're doing here," muttered Fraser, for the hundredth time.

Two days before, Haviland would almost have felt inclined to agree with him, but now the case was different.

None of them were of a nervous temperament, but they were surprised to hear, after Haviland's description of his interview with the Living Saint, that the Lamas were working against them.

"Either the man was a hypocrite, or he pretends to more power than he really possesses," said Fraser.

"I don't think he's a hypocrite, and you cannot expect a man to entirely eradicate religious bigotry from six thousand souls."

CHAPTER X

IT was the evening of the same day.

It had been oppressively hot, and now a cool breeze had arisen which was eminently refreshing to the Europeans, who had been able to do nothing but gasp through the burning hours.

Haviland, to Catherine and Blake's great joy, had given permission for the missionary work to commence forthwith. He had come to the conclusion that they could not possibly return without trying their luck, and if a house could be found in the town they would take it and hold services, and commence such school work as they were able, taking the risk.

To Catherine the danger was nothing. She had faced similar peril too often.

Blake, who had yet to be tried, was from the depths of his inexperience enthusiastic.

Fraser thought the whole proceeding needless and rash.

What conversation there had been during the day had turned on the subject of the Mandarin's visit.

"As far as one can make out," said Catherine, "there have never been any Christians in the place at all, and they will dislike us more and more as their prejudices are fed from other towns."

Ruth was silent, and wandered away towards the bank of the stream. Catherine called after her—

"Shall I come with you?"

But the girl wanted to be alone, and shook her head as she went on.

"I think," said Fraser, "that I ought to follow Miss Haviland. We should none of us go about too much alone—she least of all."

At Fraser's suggestion Mr. Blake also rose to his feet, but Catherine—who had divined the girl's inclination for solitude—kept them both by her side.

Haviland, brooding perpetually over the problem which had arisen, sat and smoked dreamily, sending clouds of spiritual blue into the quiet evening air.

Ruth gained the trees that bordered the stream, and was lost to view.

She had walked along this path with Catherine more than once since their arrival at Tsang-Lo.

In places the stream had shrunk to such narrow limits that it was not more than she could bridge with a slight jump.

With a sudden impulse the girl leapt across at a point where the channel was at its narrowest.

The land on which she now stood belonged—they had been told—to the Monastery, and she began to climb the bank with a certain feeling of trepidation. Above her the rock, crowned by the Buddhist Temple, dyed scarlet in the sunset, towered threateningly.

She soon left the trees and undergrowth behind, and went on till she was climbing the smooth grass slope which grew steeper at every step.

Looking back she found that the house was lost to view, having imperceptibly in her ascent rounded the side of the hill.

From the grass slope she stepped on to a small rock platform, which looked away down the big river.

The ground beneath her feet was rugged with loose stones and small boulders.

The girl paused for one moment to look out on the panorama at her feet. It was rapidly getting dusk. Tsang-Lo itself was invisible, but the view commanded an enormous expanse of country, and the rice and tea plantations stretched away for miles. Here and there she could distinguish a peasant labouring late in the fields, or along the paths that intersected the chess-board landscape single figures or small groups trudging wearily to their homes.

Ruth looked out on the scene, the communion with creation bringing to her a feeling of peace, mingled with a certain sadness at the great silence above and beneath.

Then she remembered that the others would be anxious if she did not return before it grew dark. She gave one instinctive look around ere she commenced to descend, and discovered for the first time that she had not been alone.

Seated at the extreme edge, and at the further end, was a figure, tranquil, motionless, as if carved out of the stone itself. The attitude was one of earnest contemplation. The eyes looked out over the vanishing landscape with a fixity which was almost solemn.

Ruth knew at once that it was the Living Buddha himself. She gave one glance around to see if he had reached the place by any other approach than the one she had used, but all about the sheer rock rose above them.

Her eyes returned to the motionless figure, unconscious of her presence.

Her father had been right. It was one of extraordinary dignity and spirituality.

Then, as the girl looked, her eyes took a new light.

They shone with brilliance and exaltation, while her figure quivered as the stem of a flower when struck by the breeze.

The Saint neither stirred nor turned his head.

Fascinated, she found it impossible for a long time to move, and then an intense desire to get away unseen took possession of her.

With an effort she turned to go.

The loose stone on which she had been standing slipped, and her ankle gave a sharp twist as she fell to the ground. The slight cry which the pain forced from her drew the attention of the seated figure.

The girl was on her knees, a mist of pain before her eyes, as the figure rose.

Seized by a sudden hysteria she stretched out her arms as the white-robed form, uncertain, mysterious to her wavering sight, came towards her.

* * * * *

In thinking it over afterwards she could not be quite sure that she had not opened her eyes once to find herself being carried across the stream in the arms of the Saint.

When next she opened them she was lying on the bank of the stream opposite to the Monastery, and Catherine and Haviland were bending over her anxiously, while Mr. Blake and Fraser were in the background.

They had thought her absence somewhat long and, night coming on, had gone in search.

They carried her back to the house; and, after her ankle had been bathed and bound by Catherine's gentle hands, she was asked how the accident had occurred.

Her foot had slipped, that was all. She did not

know how she could have been so foolish as to faint away so thoroughly.

Fraser and Blake were present at the moment, and a curious reticence came over her, sealing her lips as to her meeting with the Living Buddha.

She felt that later, when alone with her father and Catherine, she would find it easier to tell the story. She knew that it was not so much the accident to her foot which had made her faint as the chaos of emotion which the meeting had aroused.

When she did tell them she found it even more difficult than she had expected, and stumbled through the story lamely.

Haviland, remembering the wraith-like figure which he had seen in the night by the river-bank, connected the two facts, and wondered whether the Living Buddha was able to reach from above the place where Ruth had seen him.

Tsang-Lo seemed to breathe the mysterious.

Neither he nor Catherine ascribed Ruth's agitation in telling the story to the true cause, but put down the girl's shining eyes and flushed cheeks to a slight fever brought on by the accident.

But Ruth lay wakeful throughout the night, though the throbbing pain of her foot was subdued by the memory of the being she had met, and who had flooded her life with light and beauty.

CHAPTER XI

THE Living Buddha had carried Ruth to the place where her friends found her. Almost as he laid her on the ground, he heard their voices approaching and withdrew hastily.

Climbing the hillside he soon reached the rocky platform on which he and Ruth had met. The scene beneath him was slowly becoming indistinct and blurred in the gathering gloom. Walking to the extreme edge of the platform, to the spot where Ruth had first seen him, he stepped out on a narrow ledge which led along by the sheer face of the cliff, narrowing, and ending abruptly. Half-way along this parapet was a small fissure, just large enough to admit of the entrance of one person at a time. Entering, he turned, and, rolling a huge piece of rock which seemed to move on a pivot, closed up the entrance to the fissure completely.

He was in a space hewn out of the solid stone, about half a dozen yards square. It was pitch dark, but he walked as if every inch of the way were known to him. He hardly had need to pause in order to feel for the first of a flight of steps which began at the far end, and which he commenced to ascend. Here and there a shaft of moonlight shot through a small opening in the rock, and lit his path for a yard or two.

After climbing some sixty or seventy steps he pushed up a trap door, and, ascending through it, found himself in a circular place faintly illuminated by a reddish light from above. He felt at the wall before him, and, touching a spring, pushed back what now showed as a panel, through which he passed into the inner place of the Temple. The room he had just left was the hollow interior of a pedestal, on which was seated a huge figure of the Buddha. The opening was at the back of the pedestal, and had a small door in the wall opposite to it—about a yard away—entirely hidden from the rest of the building. This opened on a private way to his own dwelling.

The Living Buddha gained the gallery where he had interviewed Haviland.

Millions of stars were by this time scintillating in the heavens.

The life of this curious personality had been spent in the acquirement of self-control. He had seen the necessity for it early, if he were not to become one with the corrupt system around him. His passions were supremely under control ; yet he was but man, and for the few moments he had held Ruth Haviland's unconscious form in his arms his whole being had vibrated with a strange, new emotion.

According to the prejudice in which he had been brought up she was, a barbarian.

He smiled somewhat at the description as applied to the light, delicate form which had lain in his arms, a perfumed spray of blossom from the human tree.

He naturally contrasted her with Chinese women, and, remembering Ruth as he had seen her for one moment before she fell, poised with the perfect grace of her free, untrammelled physique, the comparison was all in her favour.

The manhood was stirring within him. Suddenly he realised that the citadel of his strength—his sympathy for all, and his repugnance to special affection which brings with it the inevitable taint of selfishness—was being assailed:

He put from him the memory of the girl's face, and taking up a book of devotion which lay near, fixed his thoughts upon it.

Then almost ere he knew it he had traversed the length of the gallery, and was looking down at the house below, still and silent in the moonlight. These Westerns who had suddenly come into his life—who were they? Ruth he recognised as the girl whom he had seen through Haviland's field-glasses. His eyes on that occasion had lingered upon her with wonder.

The man who had visited him had impressed him forcibly, not so much by what he had said as by a suggestion of a stronger and broader humanity than Attava had been accustomed to deal with. He had felt from the very first moment of seeing him a great impulse of sympathy. The Englishman's creed might be narrow, but it was easy to see at a glance that the real man was full of strength and tolerance.

Each moment of the interview between them the Living Buddha had become more conscious of the superiority of type which Haviland represented. He had more than once found himself wishing that the Englishman would repeat his visit. To send and ask him to do so would be impolitic. He was aware that already many of the Lamas were becoming incensed at the presence of the foreigners.

The religious enthusiasm which he had stimulated among them would, he knew, when it became a

question of opposing another creed, lend additional bitterness to the prejudices of the more narrow.

As he stood, deep in thought, looking down on the English dwelling, he was roused by the voice of Ching-Lu, who had entered unnoticed, and was standing at his elbow.

The two idealists made a striking contrast. It is possible that had Ching-Lu not been brought into contact with the Living Buddha he would merely have remained dreamily contemplative of the many Oriental philosophies. It required the incentive of Attava's enthusiasm to fire him.

"They stretch out their hands further and further."

It was Ching-Lu who spoke.

Attava looked at him questioningly, and his disciple continued—

"This is their way. To-day there are two—three, perhaps four. To-morrow their numbers may be doubled, the next day trebled, and so on. By degrees trouble will arise between our people and them. Already there is some discontent amongst the Lamas."

"Let it be known," said the Living Buddha gently, "that I forbid these barbarians being treated with aught but courtesy. Why do they bring their creed here?"

"They believe," said Ching-Lu "that there is magic in the word of the great founder of their religion. They preach that the world shall be regenerate only when all worship their God. At Ki-Chang their converts have undergone great persecution. Many were tied in sacks and thrown into the river."

"Fools to think that the way of violence is the way of truth. If every man in China were to become Christian to-morrow persecution could not mend it. How can torture reach a man's conscience?"

"With them man perfects not himself—he is perfected by the Creator."

"Man himself is the creator—the eternal," answered Attava. Ching-Lu bowed his head, thoughtfully acquiescent.

"What think they of the truths of our religion?"

"They do not admit that there are truths in our faith. They describe us amongst themselves as sunk in barbarism and superstition."

The Living Buddha's eyes flashed. To him the point of view was ludicrous.

"Know they more," he continued, "of those worlds where thou and I, my disciple, have walked and conversed with the unhoused souls of men?"

"The belief in such worlds they also regard as superstition. The inner truths are sealed to them. They believe that there is one all-powerful Ruler of the Universe, that mankind has fallen away into sin."

"That is true."

"They believe further that the Eternal sent His Son into the world to save man by the sacrifice of Himself."

"A crude symbol of the truth."

"I think," continued Ching-Lu, "from what I have seen, that it is the simple promise of their creed which has converted so many of our people."

"But they know of the Buddha?"

"Their scholars, who seem to have little religion, know of him. Their priests neither know nor care to know. When I spoke to them at Peking they would say that their civilisation was greater than ours, and that this is because of the superiority of their religion."

"And he who came here—is he like those of his race?"

Ching-Lu replied affirmatively.

"Have they not," asked Attava, "a doctrine of eternal punishment?"

"They believe that theirs is the only way to Salvation."

"Salvation?"

"With them the regeneration of the soul is instantaneous, a thing of faith and not of works."

"But that would be unnatural."

"They do not argue about their religion," replied Ching-Lu. "They have faith in it, and continually assert it. It is on account of the way they express themselves about other religions that there will be trouble. They are intolerant as the most bigoted Lama, except that they have the contempt of ignorance, and that they bring to the propagation of their creed the splendid qualities of their race—a race which is not old enough to be tired, but old enough to feel the strength of its manhood."

The Taitar monk appeared at the other end of the gallery. The office he held was sufficiently important to give him access to the Head of the Monastery.

He advanced towards his spiritual chief and prostrated himself.

Though this was part of the ritual in which the Living Buddha had been brought up, it had always been distasteful to him.

Had he been able to discover a flaw in the theological basis for it he would have forbidden it; but as homage to Buddha incarnate it was logical.

He raised his hand in benediction over the prostrate form, and the hypocritical Taitar—who had in reality made up his mind that the man before him

was an impostor, rose to his feet and commenced to explain his errand.

He began by saying that perhaps the Talé-Lama—one of the Living Buddha's titles—had not heard that the barbarians, one of whose number had visited the Monastery some days before, intended to preach their detestable doctrines. If they were suffered to remain, there was no knowing what mischief they might not do. As the Talé-Lama would admit, it was their duty to protect the more simple-minded of his followers from evil influences.

The Talé-Lama's power in the district was in reality greater than that of the Chief Mandarin himself. One word from him and these foreign devils would be sent back whence they came. The chief Mandarin could not refuse, seeing that the influence of their Spiritual Head with the people was a thing to be feared.

The Tartar paused. His plan had been carefully laid in the interests of the man he believed to be the true Living Buddha. If Attava influenced the Mandarin by a threat to stir up the people his moral power would be gone.

On the other hand, should he refuse to do so it would help them to disseminate stories of his sympathy with the Christians, a sympathy which—at the Living Buddha's interview with Haviland—the Tartar had been swift to detect. He had, however, been witness so frequently of the occult powers of the Talé-Lama that he had an uncomfortable feeling that his designs might not be so hidden from him as he hoped.

"I can do nothing except keep my own house in order."

"It will be easy to drive them out now. Later it will be more difficult."

"Even if I wished to drive them forth by violence, my power is not secular. I can do nothing."

"One word from thee——" the Tartar began again.

"I will not speak that word. They who seek to destroy others by force destroy themselves. For the secular powers it is different. They may consider what is expedient. We cannot. Would'st thou have this Monastery where I have taught, and shall never cease to teach, that men should love one another, and that in matters spiritual all must think and believe that which seems to them best, would'st thou have this Monastery the abode of bigots who—afraid that the truth may have more faces than one—seek to destroy by force that which perhaps might share their own glory in the perfecting of mankind?"

"But they may pervert many as they have done elsewhere. This will incense the people against them and their new disciples, and there may be bloodshed. Ought we not to prevent this? Let us remember Hung-sew-tseuen and the Tae-ping terror." The Tartar thought, by referring to the Tae-ping movement, to remind Attava of both the political and religious dangers of Christianity.

The patience of Attava was becoming exhausted. The monk was assuming a tone almost of admonition, and the Buddha raised his hand to enjoin silence. His authority over every member of the order was so unquestioned that the Tartar ceased at once.

"Even were I to foresee that the entire Province would fall under the influence of these barbarians and embrace their idolatrous creed, I would not stretch out my hand to stay them by force. It would be an ordeal designed by the wise rulers of this earth's cycle for the experience and teaching of the people.

For us we can but speak truth and live truth. As for these barbarians, let them be at peace. Those that stir up strife between my people and them shall be punished. It is enough. I have said." His face, which had become rigid and stern with command, relaxed into an expression of exceeding sweetness. He looked for some moments upon the Tartar, as if divining the nature of the man's inward struggles, as if to him were visible the untutored soul battling with its assailants--the demons of ambition, greed and intolerance. His anger was overcome by sorrow and pity.

The Tartar had accomplished the purpose of his mission. He now knew Attava's standpoint, and how to act. He remained, however, with his eyes fixed upon the ground; and, in answer to the Living Buddha's question as to whether he wished to speak on any other subject, said, "Some days ago thou gavest back life to a pilgrim who was lying sick in my cell. He is without, and would give thanks."

Receiving permission to present the stranger the Tartar disappeared for some seconds, returning with the Makah.

The young Tibetan's eyes were ablaze with eager excitement, and he shook visibly.

This, Ching-Lu, who had been silent during the previous interview, attributed to nervousness at coming into so exalted a presence.

The Living Buddha, who was now seated on the dais from which he had conversed with Haviland, appeared not to notice anything unusual.

With an effort Makah, who had been well schooled by his host, made the necessary obeisance.

Ching-Lu noticed its lack of spontaneity, and wondered.

The Saint still gave no sign of surprise, but bent upon the young man the burning glance which had so extraordinary an effect upon all who came into contact with him.

"It gives me joy to see that thou art well again."

The Tibetan was struggling against the influence of a personality that he felt might overpower him. He saw at once—and after his many toils and privations it brought with it a feeling of chagrin—that the man before him was no such vulgar impostor as he had pictured to himself.

For one moment he wavered, almost ready, under the spell of this mellow, ascetic personality, to accept a new suggestion that came into his brain: that this was a great spirit, an Arhât, holding his place till he should come.

He waited breathless, almost expecting to hear the deep musical voice say, "Thy punishment is finished. Enter into thine own."

Impressive as was the figure of Attava, a doubt as to the truth of his own claim never entered the mind of Makah.

For a space he remained silent, and still Attava's eyes were bent upon him, reading, it seemed, his inmost thoughts. The Tartar stood by fearful lest the Tibetan should boldly proclaim his pretensions. He had already discovered that the, to him, real head of the Tsang-Lo Monastery had a peculiar, uncontrollable and impulsive nature; but to weigh against this he had also learnt, as the days went by, of his fidelity to the orthodox tenets of the faith which were in reality the idols which the Tartar worshipped.

Makah answered—

"I am well, and I give thee thanks. This holy brother tells me that by thy miracle I was delivered from death."

"Thy deliverance was effected, not by me but by the fathers of the world through me."

Makah bowed his head with as much of humility as his fiery nature could assume.

Inwardly he was meditating that he should be sitting in Attava's chair, and that to him obeisance should be made.

Attava spoke again—

"Hast thou journeyed far?"

"From the other side of Lhasa."

"What brought thee to Tsang-Lo?"

"The saintliness of the Monastery, and the reputation of its Head, filled me with a desire to see those who people said worship the Buddha in the spirit of old."

There was just the faintest change in Attava's expression. He knew the Tibetan was lying, and his brain was quickly seeking the reason for it.

The Tartar, feeling that everything was not going quite as smoothly as appearances suggested, interrupted.

"This young Lama seeks to join our Brotherhood."

Again the merest shadow passed over the features of the Living Buddha. Since boyhood he had been studying the characters of those around him, and he knew—better than words could tell him—that there was mischief against himself determined on by these two.

He spoke to the Tibetan, however, in the same tones he would have used to any aspirant of unsuspected motives.

"That is not a thing to be lightly decided on. To-morrow I will examine thee myself, and if thou art found of sufficient learning and saintliness, we will joy to receive thee."

He intimated that the interview was at an end, and Makah and the Tartar monk, after prostrating themselves again, withdrew.

As soon as they were gone Ching-Lu said—

"The discontent in that man's face grows and grows. Who is this stranger he has brought amongst us?"

Attava answered—

"Ching-Lu, disciple, beloved of my soul—thou who hast given up all the riches of this world to give by a saintly life some small example—I have a feeling in my heart that we two shall not dwell in peace much longer, but that we shall be called upon to give up even more for the truth."

He paused for a moment, and Ching-Lu, catching something of the sadness of his mood, drew nearer.

"The world cannot harm those who have forsaken the world—they are above the world," he said.

The Buddha rose to his feet, and, speaking with extraordinary energy and firmness, answered—

"Though they tear us to pieces and throw us to the dogs, thou and I, Ching-Lu, will speak for the truth always—always." Then, sinking back in his chair, he intimated that he would be alone.

The young aristocrat left him, moving down the long, moonlit gallery with noiseless steps.

Attava paced up and down unceasingly. Something in the night's events had roused him to a retrospect of his life since he first came to the Monastery of Tsang-Lo.

He could recall nothing before that, although he could sense a deep, formless past which lay behind it.

The first thing he could remember was sitting as a tiny boy on his throne, while monks—seeming to his childish imagination without number—came and knelt before him.

There flooded upon him memories of his unnatural childhood, and how—tired little puppet that he was—it had wearied him.

He could remember with what intense yearning to be with them he had watched the little Lama boys—whose spiritual superior he was—at play.

Once he had run out to join them, and somehow, although he bade them be merry as they were before, the whole life and spirit seemed to go out of the game, and they stood around him, dubious, and serious. The old Lama who was his tutor found him and upbraided him for such a lapse from dignity.

He had been fond of this old man, who had ruled the Monastery till he himself was able to assume the chief control.

With boyhood the instinct asserted itself which taught him to run, and jump, and gambol, with a freer, wider feeling for physical expansion than was dreamed of by those around him. He had longed for human sympathy, but the barrier between himself and the others of his age in the Monastery could not be broken down.

The sense of apartness was always with him, wrapping him round till it began to teach him its lesson, and to assert to the logical side of him that it must have a meaning; and even in early youth was borne in upon him the conviction of a special mission.

The old Lama—the only soul in whom he could

confide and go to for help—encouraged this development of his character with all his strength.

The old man died when he was still but a youth, and Attava found himself face to face with the problem of his own assestion as something higher and better than the average by which he was surrounded. The horrors and coruptions around sickened him.

At the death of his tutor he had suddenly, to the amazement of all, instituted a purer, more spiritual régime, enforcing it on those under him by his own example and self-reliant potency.

He recalled the battles he had fought with his own superabundant animalism, his triumphs over himself—bringing to his soul a happiness which yet had something of melancholy and permanent sadness.

The apartness from those around him whom it was his duty to lead, he had assumed to be the penalty of his Buddha-hood. He never doubted his Divine mission.

Other Living Buddhas might neglect their holy responsibilities; let them retrograde if they would; for him the sense of duty was so strong that he must strive till death to show the meaning of the office.

The first thing he had insisted on was that every one in the Monastery should take some share in the work of preservation and restoration. The decaying Temples, the anything but cleanly cells, the condition of the grounds, all offended the sense of fitness and cleanliness which was racial in him.

By degrees the outer aspect of the whole place changed, bringing a mood which made discipline and greater purity more possible.

The education of the younger monks and boy-Lamas was put on a sounder basis. All vulgar feats

of magic were forbidden. Ceremonies peculiar to the Monastery and degrading to the faith were put an end to.

At first Attava fought the difficult battle of reform unaided, and the appearance of Ching-Lu, with his wide knowledge of men and affairs, seemed to come as a gift from the Arhat himself.

The orthodox party, astounded at the swiftness of his action, found themselves in a hopeless minority ere they could collect their powers for resistance. Besides, they lacked a lever. The Buddha-hood was an all-powerful fact, and for this reason the Tartar hailed Makah's claims with enthusiasm.

At times, alone, desolate in spirit, especially in early youth, Attava had ever felt the help of some unseen, guiding presence.

It was in this very gallery, years before, that there had come to him the revelation which had convinced him of the truth of his mission.

He had been sitting alone in the eventide, fighting with the desire for the life of the outer world, struggling against the temptation to tear off the habit of the order and go where he might join in the passions and emotions of man's existence.

That evening he had almost made up his mind to some such course when, in the growing gloom, a portion of the gallery had suddenly become suffused with a pale, blue light, and in its centre there stood a being so glorious that with a cry of amazement—almost of terror—he had sprung to his feet and fallen on his knees. A voice absolutely free from defect said—

“Attava !”

“Master, what would'st thou ?”

He realised that he had been chosen to receive the

commands of an Arhât, one of those great souls which, having outstripped their fellows in the evolution towards good, remain—out of their own desire to benefit mankind—near enough to the human race to be of assistance to it.

“I have seen thy struggles and I bring thee comfort. Know that thou hast been chosen to give light again to the dying faith in the Lord Buddha. Great is thy task, but if thy spirit fail call upon me and my brethien, and we will hear.”

“Who art thou?”

“One who has shaken off the first five shackles. Soon thou too shalt be free.”

Overcome, Attava had fallen unconscious to the earth, and when his senses returned the Spirit had departed.

But from that day his soul seemed to have gathered a new strength. The visit of the Arhât had convinced him of the reality and truth of his Buddhahood. Henceforth, should he at any time be unfaithful to his mission, he could not plead that its reality and divinity had not been proved to him unmistakably.

The promise of the vision was fulfilled. Many of the temptations by which he had been assailed returned no more.

To-night, however, he had a premonition of a coming struggle: a struggle greater than any which he had yet been called upon to face.

He went to the edge of the gallery, and again looked down on the house, far away below.

A passionate yearning to see once more the girl whom he had carried down the steep hillside, throbbed at his heart-strings.

With almost a cry he stretched out his arms

towards the place where Ruth Haviland lay. Then his training brought him up with the cry half-choked in his throat.

He went back to the chair and sat still, wondering at the new, terrible danger which assailed him.

His head bent forward, and he buried his face in his hands.

Up the hillside, in the long gallery flooded with moonlight, the son of Catherine Haviland wept.

Below, Catherine was praying for the little child she had lost those years ago on that day of woe and terror.

CHAPTER XII

ON his deathbed the old monk had told Attava of that place in the Monastery where the occult documents and records were kept to which only the Living Buddha or his lieutenant were allowed access.

They were deposited in a cave beneath the Chief Temple.

He would see there, so the old man said, things the existence of which he must never divulge to any but his own chosen lieutenant.

One night, when the Monastery was wrapped in sleep, he had descended to examine the place.

He followed carefully the written directions of the old monk, having been warned by him that any failure to do so might result in death.

He went down the passage which led to the rocky platform where Ruth had seen him, stopping at a spot indicated in his instructions. At a first inspection he could see nothing on either side but the solid face of the rock.

Lowering the lantern so as to illuminate the line where the rock and the floor joined, he found three iron rings in a row. To use the centre one meant death. He freed one of the two smaller rings from dirt and rubbish, and pulled, without, however, exerting any effort. Immediately the rock before him

seemed to turn on a pivot, and an opening large enough for him to walk through appeared.

He entered, and almost as soon as he did so started back with an exclamation of surprise.

In front of him stood a gigantic figure dressed in a costume of almost pre-historic time, holding in his hands a huge bow and arrow.

The cave itself was some forty feet in length by about thirty broad, and very lofty.

A streak of moonlight fell through an aperture above, faintly assisting the light of his lantern, enabling him to make out several other lanterns hung round within reach.

These were trimmed and ready for lighting, and before proceeding further he lit them.

At first he could see nothing beyond the gigantic figure at the entrance. Then he saw what seemed to be a richly-dressed presentment of the Buddha, seated on a throne in the centre, surrounded by several smaller figures of acolytes holding censers.

On going near he saw to his amazement that they were not, as he had at a first glance imagined, of stone or wood, but real human forms, preserved by some process so as to retain a life-like appearance. The central figure was the first human body in which the Spiritual Chief of the Monastery had incarnated. The acolytes were the bodies of young boy-Lamas chosen for their exceptional beauty, and placed around to serve the original fleshly garment of the Living Buddha.

Attava never doubted but that this enthroned figure was the same in which he had lived and moved on earth many incarnations before.

At the extreme end of the cave was a large iron

chest, and in this Attava found the garnered wisdom which was his heritage.

Many nights, when every one else lay asleep, he had gone to this place and, with the dead figures round him, studied the secret lore contained in the volumes which he drew from the iron chest.

He, who never used it to perform a vulgar trick, possessed immense occult power and knowledge; but it never occurred to him to use it other than as a means whereby to acquire increasing self-development and a fuller knowledge of the sacred mysteries.

To the cave he brought all those books which he considered would be dangerous in the hands of the more ignorant and fanatical Lamas.

The reason for preserving the figures in the centre of the cave he was unable to understand. Probably the explanation was lost in the mist of time. Yet, without showing the least evidence of decay, the figure and its five acolytes remained undisturbed.

On examining the man with the bow and arrow he found that should any one enter except by means of the particular ring he had used, an arrow would be discharged at the intruder, and the first arrow would be the means of discharging another, the process being repeated twenty or thirty times.

CHAPTER XIII

THE Tibetan Lama was with the Tartar in his cell. He had been admitted to the Order of Tsang-Lo, for although Attava had by means of his occult perceptions been able to see many things in the Tibetan's character which threatened his own person, he was unable to use his knowledge to protect himself.

The two conspirators were met to discuss the exact position in the game they were playing. It had been considered advisable for Makah simply to perform the ordinary routine of the Monastery and not to attempt for the time being to advance his own cause in any way.

This was to be the work of the Tartar.

"There are many who are ready and willing to believe the truth," the Tartar was saying. "Upon those who remember the days before his coming Attava's rule proves irksome, and his indifference to important matters of ritual has scandalised them."

"I have heard," answered his companion, "many of the Lamas complain of these barbarians being permitted to remain in the district. They say that if they will not go of their own will they should be sent hence by force."

"Attava's tolerance of them is well known, and will be our best ally."

"I have thought of a scheme," said Makah, "which would make his lack of zeal in dealing with them even more disliked by the people. Let some person set fire to or damage their dwelling. They will complain to the Mandarin. While they are doing so let it be represented to the people that the strangers attribute the deed to the Lamas. There will be a riot, in which Attava will probably take the part of the barbarians. That the people will never forgive."

They discussed the plan at length, settling all the minor details.

The only difficulty was to find a tool by which the scheme might be set on foot.

"Surely," said the Tibetan, "there are in the city many ruffians who would think nothing of so light a task if they were well paid? We must be careful, however, not to give the man who undertakes it any opportunity of betraying us afterwards."

The Tartar promised to find the necessary instrument. The other, terribly in earnest about securing what he considered his rightful position, would have been willing to find the man and run the risk of an after-betrayal should his tool be caught red-handed. But he saw the wisdom of leaving the task in the hands of the Tartar, a high official whom no one would think of suspecting on the confession of such a man as they intended to procure.

At this moment there was a slight tap at the door. The Tartar rose and opened it, admitting two or three monks.

The Tartar had already added to the number of Makah's adherents, and meetings had been held to forward the restitution of his rights.

The new conspirators had by no means been drawn

from the best classes of the Monastery. In fact, such a course would hardly have suited the Tartar.

As yet the plans of Makah and himself were hardly matured, but they realised that the only way to success was through some violent and swift stroke, prepared in every detail, which should remove Attava, and in which the rest of the Monastery would acquiesce when once the thing was done, more especially when Makah proclaimed himself.

Already the resemblance between his maimed hand and that of the Saint had drawn attention and curiosity.

It had been the first weapon in the hands of the Tartar, and the one by which he had persuaded the monks present to look into the claim of Makah.

Makah explained to them the plan which he and the Tartar had just decided on. He had already, in the meetings which they had held, assumed the leadership. The assumption of this position came naturally to him, and noticing this the Tartar was more than ever convinced of his genuineness.

The Monastery had been parcelled out into so many divisions, which it was the business of each conspirator to canvass. When they had done their work fairly these divisions were to be sub-divided, till all possible adherents had been brought into the organisation.

It was anxious work. One false move would upset all their plans.

The working of the riot in its details was explained to the monks, after which they separated.

Makah and the Tartar calculated that once the passions of the community had been roused by the riot the agitation against the foreigners might almost be allowed to take care of itself. It would certainly not decrease as time went on.

CHAPTER XIV

HAVILAND and his party, all unconscious of the part they were playing in the religious polity of Tsang-Lo, had begun missionary work, and so far without meeting any active opposition.

Even supposing they should ultimately have to abandon their position as untenable it was their duty to leave some mark of their visit.

It was a great comfort to Mr. Blake especially, who, though he would have been furious had any one charged him with being superstitious, firmly believed that words from the Gospel, dropped irrespective on ears that were unable to understand, would not fail, as surely as scattered grain, to bear fruit.

Of course there were the usual number of vagabonds who were willing enough to be converted if there were anything to be made out of it.

Haviland's wide experience detected them at once, but there was no remedy, and Mr. Blake rejoiced much over these degenerate converts, and in his heart of hearts thought Haviland terribly cynical, and even Mrs. Haviland at times a little hard.

They distributed their picture-tracts; and finding a house to let in the town eminently suitable for their purpose, took it and opened their school.

As the weeks went by the numbers of the converts

began to swell, and the class at the school to assume quite respectable dimensions. Haviland believed that one of the great difficulties in dealing with the Chinese in religious matters was the inability of Europeans to appeal to their æsthetic sense through music, the two races in this respect starting from such a different standpoint.

At Tsang-Lo, as everywhere else, the mere commencement of a hymn was sufficient to make even the juveniles display every symptom of having their teeth set on edge. They did not mind Bible teaching or the prayers, but directly the singing began they rolled in agony, while one little podgy and hitherto happy Chinese infant wept with fright.

Mr. Blake's extraordinary appearance was a source of continual merriment to the people of Tsang-Lo, but he was under the firm delusion that he looked eminently Chinese and was entirely conciliatory to native prejudice.

They came to the conclusion that the military Mandarin's visit had been merely an attempt to frighten them, and that they were going to get on famously. Haviland wondered whether this might not after all be due to the Living Buddha's influence.

Ruth's ankle was almost well, but there was a change in her appearance and manner beyond what might have been put down to the accident.

Catherine detected it at once. The girl seemed as though something alien from her surroundings had taken possession of her thoughts, making her strangely quiet and subdued.

The idea crossed Catherine's brain that perhaps after all she had fallen in love with Fraser, who was decidedly in love with her ; but, after carefully noting

Ruth's behaviour towards him, she dismissed it as absurd.

Fraser, however, made all the running he could, and poor little Mr. Blake would no doubt have suffered agonies of jealousy had it not been that he was busily occupied with the school.

Fraser, too timid to take his fate in his hands, appealed to Catherine's judgment and proposed to abide by it.

"If you feel," she said, "that, should Ruth refuse you, the position from your own point of view would not be an uncomfortable one, by all means ask her. If, on the other hand, you are going to make us all uncomfortable by walking about with the announcement writ large on your face that your heart is broken, don't do anything of the kind; because we shall be here for some time."

"I am afraid I shall have to leave soon, in any case—even if I have to go alone."

"Then by all means put it off till the evening, before you go."

"That would be rather awkward," answered Fraser, "because I thought that if she"—he paused quite shyly—"cared about me, Haviland could have married us."

Catherine gasped.

To converse nebulously on the supposition that Ruth might be fond of him was one thing, to talk seriously of the young Consul marching off with her back to European civilisation in the near future was quite another.

Ruth was just able to walk when an event occurred which startled them all.

Things were in an apparently peaceful condition when the first suggestion of anything being radically

wrong occurred. One night the whole establishment was awaked by shouts and cries from the Chinese servants.

Haviland and his wife rushed on to the verandah just as Fraser and Blake emerged from their rooms. The end of the wing where the Chinese servants slept was in flames.

By the lurid glare the loyal Tu-Su was seen struggling on the ground with a burly ruffian, while Lo-Fen, apparently stunned, was lying in the centre of the courtyard.

Before they could reach Tu-Su the man with whom he had been struggling had escaped, and the whole party made superhuman efforts to extinguish the fire. Luckily the breeze was setting away from the main body of the house, and though it was impossible to save the wing which had caught, they were able, as the flames were not in their direction, to prevent further damage. One side of the courtyard, which they had made so trim and cheerful, presented a dismal spectacle of charred ruins.

Tu-Su explained that Lo-Fen had opened his eyes and suddenly become aware that the courtyard was full of light.

Calling Tu-Su they had both dashed out and rushed against two men who were making off.

The first had at once knocked Lo-Fen insensible, and Tu-Su was attempting to make captive the other when Haviland appeared.

Who were the incendiaries, and were they actuated by religious fanaticism, or the idea of loot?

The action was curiously isolated. Had it been the work of a fanatical mob they could have understood it.

An idea struck Haviland. He questioned Tu-Su,

who declared that he was quite certain the man he had grappled with was not a Lama.

They all knew that there is more than one secret society in China whose aims are the persecution of the foreigner. It might have been the work of such a society.

At any rate, it was imperative to make an earnest complaint as soon as possible.

As they were leaving the next morning for the Chief Official's residence, they received a visit from the Tartar monk and a younger companion, whom Haviland instantly recognised as the sick man so miraculously cured by Attava. There were also some monks loitering in the background.

The Tartar explained that the flames from their burning house had been witnessed from the hill, and that he had come to see if there was much damage.

Haviland thought that they might have come forward to help the night before, but supposed that their indifference was due to the frequency of fires in Chinese dwellings.

Haviland, ever on the alert when the Tartar was present, felt at once that there was something behind his solicitude. He eyed the Englishman closely and asked if he suspected anybody.

This was strange, as Haviland had not mentioned the fact that it was the work of incendiaries. He took note of the circumstance, and decided to be upon his guard.

"Perhaps it would be wiser," said the Tartar, "to leave Tsang-Lo. The people do not like foreigners, much less when they come with the avowed intention of luring them from the faith of their fathers."

"We shall not leave Tsang-Lo," answered Havi-

land. "We are not to be driven away by threats of violence, nor by violence itself."

The Tartar gave a bow of acquiescence which was almost deferential.

During this conversation the young Tibetan Lama had stood by, glancing from one to the other inquisitively. He was evidently unable to follow everything that was said, and he asked the Tartar some questions, as Haviland thought, almost sharply. He detected in the manner of the young man a something wanting—the deference which should have been paid by a youthful Lama to one so much his superior in years and position. The Tartar, however, as if acting on his instructions, turned again to Haviland.

"Thou wilt of course lodge a complaint?"

"Against whom?"

The Tartar looked disconcerted.

"I understood thee to say that the fire was the work of incendiaries," he answered.

"I never said so."

Again the Tartar looked confused, and murmured something to his companion.

"It was, however, as you have guessed," said Haviland, "and I shall certainly lodge a complaint."

The Tartar, who had been about to move off with his companion, paused.

"Is there any one whom thou dost suspect?" he asked again.

"Whom can I suspect except those who hate foreigners and their religion?"

"Thou wilt lodge thy complaint at once, of course?"

Haviland had played into the Lama's hand.

"I am going to the Chief Mandarin now." Haviland had discussed with himself the advisability

of appealing to the Living Buddha in case the outrage should be due to any of his monks. This, however, might annoy the secular power.

Haviland's eyes during this interview had constantly sought the Tibetan's hand, and as the other turned his crippled finger to full view Haviland's surgical knowledge told him that the deformity was due to an accident of birth, and was not, as he had somewhat hastily concluded, a wound long healed.

Mr. Blake, during the interview, had been tremulously desirous of thrusting tracts into the hands of their visitors. There was, however, something about them which kept him quiet till they had gone, when he severely reproached himself for a lack of moral courage.

"The ruffian looks as if he might have done it himself," said Fraser. "I'm sure he quite gloated over the ruins."

"The other young man," said Haviland, addressing the party generally, "was the monk I told you of—the one the Saint cured of his fever."

"I wish you had told us at the time," said Catherine. "Although, now I come to think of it, he interested me strongly. His face had more fire and vigour than one is accustomed to meet with in a Lama."

They all set out for Tsang-Lo, Haviland having decided that Catherine and Ruth should go with them, the night's adventure having made him nervous of their being out of his sight.

On their way they noticed that quite an exceptional number of monks were going from the Monastery towards the town, and that they were being eyed by them in no friendly manner.

Catherine and Ruth, as was their habit more often than not, drew the curtains of their chairs as they were carried through the town.

They entered the Mandarin's garden, Ruth and Catherine seeing for the first time its somewhat rococo delights, if such a term can be applied to a place which was a blaze of blossom.

The two young secretaries, who on the previous occasion had been strolling up and down the garden path, were seated in a pavilion, one on each side of a small, square, carved table, smoking. The Mandarin received them with less circumlocution than before, but betrayed a quaint shyness in the presence of Catherine and Ruth. He listened to their complaint, whilst a secretary took notes, promising to make inquiry, and also to give them the protection of soldiers if they wished it. In fact, he sent for the elegant young military Mandarin who had brought his message to them.

The latter entered the room looking even more dreamy than before, bringing with him the perfume of musk with which his garments were aromatic. A faint colour came into his cheeks as his eyes fell upon Ruth.

The Chief Official informed him that the foreigners were to have the protection of soldiers.

This announcement carried with it little comfort to Haviland and his party. They wondered very much if there were any real soldiers, or if—as was usual—they were myths existing only for the purpose of swelling the Mandarin's income.

The Mandarin, however, pressed upon them again and again the advisability of removing from Tsang-Lo. There was disturbance in the air. He had felt it himself. The Living Buddha had bewitched the people. They seemed to think of nothing but religion and the Lamas; and, as he knew Haviland would readily understand, when religion took such

a hold upon a community there was certain to be trouble of some kind. He appeared quite depressed at their refusal to take his advice. He sighed as if he resented being asked to do his duty and keep the town in order.

They drank tea, and then departed with many assurances that every care would be taken to prevent a recurrence of the outrage.

The ladies again entered their chairs, and they started on the return journey.

Outside they found that the numbers of the crowd which had accompanied them to the Mandarin's residence had been doubled.

They had hardly gone fifty yards when Haviland realised that if the crowd should lose its temper there was danger. He told Catherine and Ruth to keep the curtains of their chairs carefully drawn. A retreat to the residence of the Mandarin was out of the question, the mob behind them becoming more compact every moment.

Haviland was getting nervous. Mr. Blake was growing pale, but the lines round his somewhat expressionless little mouth were contracting with determination. Fraser kept close to the door of Ruth's chair, Haviland and Mr. Blake keeping guard over Catherine.

Almost as if at a preconcerted signal the air became thick with flying missiles. They were in the centre of the chief street of the town.

The side streets in front of them poured forth smaller crowds till they found themselves unable to go forward or back.

The chair-bearers were already covered in dirt, and Fraser's face was bleeding.

The anger of the rabble was growing momentarily.

Amongst them Haviland could see many Lamas, evidently bent on anything but an errand of pacification.

Their coolies were beginning to be hustled. Haviland looked about for a place of shelter, but during the last two or three minutes the proprietors of the shops around had hurriedly closed them up.

"We are in for it," said Fraser. "I wonder if the Mandarin will hear of it in time, and send us some of those soldiers?"

The babel of voices was so great that they could hardly make themselves heard.

Suddenly a Lama, raising himself above the heads of the people by means of a shop sign which he grasped with one hand, his foot on a window-sill, began to address the crowd, making violent gestures with the disengaged hand, whilst he harangued them in an impassioned voice.

The storm was rising every moment. The only thing was to go forward resolutely and fearlessly. In this way they managed to push on a few more yards, the crowd for the moment cowed.

Then the storm of missiles grew fiercer. The people in front could give way no more as the press of those behind became greater.

More than once Catherine and Ruth had attempted to leave their chairs and share in the danger, but Haviland—who never showed to such advantage as in a crisis—bade them sternly remain where they were.

The Englishmen's hearts grew sick within them as more than one person in the crowd brandished a knife. The curtains of the chairs in which Catherine and Ruth were seated had already been torn away.

Each of the men carried a revolver, which he drew.

Then suddenly, while the crowd behind them pressed on more eagerly, those in front fell aside. Through the serried ranks of the mob a compact body of some two hundred Lamas was forcing its way. In the midst was borne a palanquin.

A sudden hush fell upon every one as the procession of the Living Buddha approached.

The palanquin reached the Europeans, and the Saint inside it looked round, taking in the situation at a glance.

Alighting from his chair he stood and swept the crowd with his piercing gaze.

The Lamas, except those who had come with him, seemed entirely to have disappeared.

He spoke to his followers and then, turning to Haviland, said that some of them would accompany the party back to their dwelling.

Whilst he was speaking to Haviland both he and Ruth were supremely conscious of each other.

He looked at her chair covered with mud, its silken curtains torn and stained. A gleam of anger shot from his eyes.

As if the crowd had almost expected that he would himself lead the attack on the foreigners, they began to murmur when they saw the latter moving off under protection, but this man's power of domination silenced them.

From the moment Catherine had seen the Living Buddha her eyes had never left him. He startled her—she knew not why. She re-entered her chair dazed. Even from Haviland's description she had not expected anything so magnificent.

Her sympathy had gone out to him at once.

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Surrounded by their bodyguard of Lamas they returned, whilst the Living Buddha went on through the street, with its numberless shop-signs hanging out above like flags. The gaily-painted shop fronts, the bright-coloured dresses of the people, and the crimson robes of the Lamas were vivid in the sunlight as his unpretentious palanquin was borne onwards, the people prostrating themselves as he passed. He sat invisible behind the plain, white silk curtains which shimmered and swayed with the rhythmic tread of his bearers.

His brow was dark with righteous anger. He knew at once from which quarter the riot had originated, and a wave of grief shook him as he realised his incapacity to change the radically bigoted Lama nature.

Again, the sight of the peril in which the English girl had been, the picture as she stood by her wrecked sedan-chair, pale, but full of courage and determination, had brought with them a return of those emotions with which he had fought such a battle the first evening they had met.

By his side walked Ching-Lu.

On their way they met the young military Mandarin, with thirty or forty soldiers: a curious collection of ragamuffins, one-half of whom looked too invertebrate to be capable of any action requiring courage, the other half villainous enough in appearance to justify their being treated as criminals at sight. The young man had for the moment thrown aside his languid, exclusive bearing. He looked eager and anxious, and—to emphasise his unusual vigour—he was on foot, his chair following behind.

He respectfully saluted Attava, and questioned some of the Lamas. With Ching-Lu he exchanged

a strained greeting, Ching-Lu on his side being quite at ease.

These two had been boys together, and as young men had drunk deep of the red wine of life at Peking. To the Mandarin it was strange to see one who had been an authority on all matters of culture—from the making of an artist's reputation to the setting of his seal of approval on a courtesan—walking humbly in the train of this modern Saint. It offended his sense of fitness. Religion was hardly a pastime for the upper classes.

The Chief Mandarin received the Living Buddha with all possible deference.

He had only met Attava twice, and retained the liveliest recollection of each occasion. Impressed as he had been, it was little consolation for being made to feel particularly dishonest and undignified. In their discussions he had been outwitted, not so much by superior subtlety as by the calm, truthful point of view of his opponent.

The Mandarin also saluted Ching-Lu with extreme civility. Ching-Lu's family were powerful at the Imperial Court, and he was cynical as to how long his renunciation of the world would last.

He received Attava with considerably more ceremony than he had used towards Haviland. He was eager to conciliate this powerful individual.

The Mandarin was surrounded by quite a small court, a large number of pipe-bearers, young—overpaid and underworked—officials, gorgeously dressed in gold brocade and embroidered silks, holding their fans in their long, delicate, taper fingers, and gazing half-inquisitively, half-superciliously at the Lamas who had entered with the Saint. Not one of them, however, dared to glance at Attava and Ching-Lu other than with respect.

One young Lama, who had seldom been beyond the precincts of the Monastery, gazed at the luxury and sensuous surroundings and sighed. They roused in him a vague desire for the exotic in life.

Attava raised his hand, invoking a blessing.

He and the Chief Official seated themselves, while the others stood.

The Mandarin had already heard of the riot, and of the part that certain of the Lamas had played in it. He concluded that Attava had come to demand immunity for his own people, and he was already preparing to play a little comedy which should redound to his advantage and place the head of the monastery of Tsang-Lo under an obligation. He would allow himself to be persuaded after some argument.

He was the more surprised when the Saint said, "I was warned that there was to be a disturbance too late to interfere and prevent it altogether. I was permitted to be in time to avert violence."

The Mandarin assumed an expression of anger which, however, he took care not to make personal to the man before him. He was not courageous, and those piercing blue eyes seemed to see straight down into the recesses of his corrupt, job-mongering soul.

"The people have been incensed against these foreigners. I am told that thy Lamas, Reverence, have been going about amongst them stirring them up."

Attava's brow grew more thoughtful. He replied, "As Spiritual Head of the Monastery we declare our hatred and repugnance to persecution. As for us, these foreigners might live in peace."

"Strange, Reverence," said the Mandarin, "if this

be so, that it should have been thy Lamas who have sowed disaffection."

"The corruptions of centuries cannot be ended by a miracle. The wound is not cured in a day. We can but work on in faith and holiness. I repeat that I will do all in my power to save these Christians from persecution."

A Lama of middle age was listening to Attava's replies intently. They were recorded in his brain for recapitulation to Makah.

Ching-Lu noticed the intent and eager expression with which the man listened, and wondered.

The Mandarin was inwardly cursing his ill-fortune at being posted in the one town where there was such a strong religious revival. With the entire Monastery in opposition to the Christians he would have known how to act, but here was the Abbot himself defending them.

He tried a cunning move.

"I hear that already they have perverted some."

"Then we must redouble the saintliness of our lives."

"Thou dost not wish them sent away?"

Attava looked at him and said—

"If I did I should show that I have no faith in the Lord Buddha. Let them stay, and we will show that the hearts of those who desire nought but the truth can harbour nought but love."

The listening Lama inwardly marked the reply.

The Saint rose to depart. The atmosphere of the place he was in sickened him. The evil occult presences disturbed his soul. This old man with his dominant vice—avarice—stamped on every feature, these indolent, effeminate, and gorgeously dressed secretaries in their musk-scented, silken, brocaded garments, roused him to anger.

From the wall hung a priceless picture painted on an oblong strip of silk, representing a bejewelled and painted mistress of an Emperor of the Ming dynasty, drunken, and supported by ladies of her court, with cup and fan-bearers grouped round her.

Through the window came the heavy scent of the lotus flower, and he could hear from somewhere near the meaningless, unmusical laugh of women.

His eye rested on the scene in cold displeasure. The unpleasant spirit-entities drawn hither by the depraved beings around were to him visible. He was anxious to be gone, either to move amongst the poor and suffering—where he could relieve pain and sympathise helpfully with sorrow—or to be back again in that gallery, perched high up in the clear mountain air, meditating on the nature of man, so as to understand and assist him the more.

As he passed out into the streets of Tsang-Lo the poor crowded round his palanquin, the children with touching confidence holding out their hands to him. The Lama who had listened so intently had slipped away to Makah and the others.

CHAPTER XV

THE young military Mandarin arrived at the house some little while after Haviland and his party. The Lamas who had accompanied them, and who had been specially chosen by Attava, were examining the house—which had been Europeanised as much as possible—with affability and curiosity.

Their manner was in strong contrast to the scowls and looks of dislike to which they had been treated by groups of excited Lamas whom they had passed on their return.

Mr. Blake's fingers were again itching to make a general distribution of tracts, but the events of the day had—in spite of himself—cooled his ardour.

The young Mandarin addressed himself to Catherine and Ruth, evidently strongly desirous of hearing the latter reply to his questions.

Her Chinese was, however, a little limited.

Fraser did not fail to notice the other's attentions, and was furious. He would have liked to resent him as a savage, but he had to admit that had it not been for the vacant and weary look in his eyes he was handsome as a Chinaman could be. Besides, embossed silk robes, jewelled sword and hat had a picturesque advantage over white duck, even when cut by a Bond Street tailor. Not that the possibility of

an English girl so far forgetting herself as to gaze with even distant favour upon a Chinaman—however well born or well mannered—entered his head.

The young officer at last took his departure, leaving behind half a dozen soldiers, who were by no means an unmixed relief to Haviland. He determined to keep them a day or two and then to dispense with their services.

He more than suspected that they would bolt at the first sign of danger. The crowd which had accompanied them to the house had gradually melted away.

Haviland smoked and brooded, gazing perpetually towards the gallery in which the Living Buddha was wont to walk.

He had witnessed with something of a panic the arrival of the Living Buddha to their rescue, opportune as it had been in one respect.

He had noticed Catherine's gaze fall upon him, and for one moment had almost expected her to recognise what was perhaps her son, but she who had borne in her remembrance, for nearly thirty years, his image as a child, looking upon him had seen only a stranger.

For Mr. Blake the day had been a tragic one, some humorous Celestial having swiftly and unobserved cut off three-fourths of his pigtail.

For the first time in his life he agreed with those who protest against the unnatural maiming of young dogs by biting off their tails.

He sat, the picture of misery, murmuring plaintively—

"It will all have to be begun over again. You don't know, Miss Haviland, how fond one can get of a pigtail. And really it was promising so well."

He almost wept as he gloomily reflected that it might be lying neglected on some dust-heap.

Ruth bade him cheer up, saying—

“You know, Mr. Blake, you were so successful that you will easily grow another.”

“Ah, it will never be the same thing. You see, it was the first.” A sigh heaved him, as it were, from head to foot.

Later Ruth, tired out by the stress and excitement of the adventure, was lying in a long chair in a shady corner of the verandah.

Fraser looked at the picture of the young girl, white-robed, in the cool of a great, black shadow.

He went forward to try his fate.

As he took a seat by her side Ruth greeted him with a smile of more warmth than she had of late dealt out to him. The welcome was in all innocence. She was quite unprepared for the surprise he had in store. She realised that he was more or less in love, but never thought that it would come to a formal proposal.

It was an affair which would dwindle to mere friendship on his part, as it had always been on hers.

Fraser made up his mind to find out once and for all what were her feelings towards him.

“Don't you agree, Miss Haviland, that, if one comes to think it over seriously, we might almost be charged with insanity?”

“Whom do you mean by ‘we’?”

“Why—all of us.”

“What makes you say that?”

“Perhaps I need not accuse myself as much as the rest. I am obliged to exploit China for a living, and so is little Blake. But your father, and Mrs.

Haviland, and yourself—you might be comfortably in England."

"I'm very comfortable, thank you. And it's much more exciting where we are. Think of to-day's adventure!"

Fraser's colourless blue eyes opened in amazement, and he answered, quite warmly for him—

"Ah, that's just it—you're catching the infection. Soon you won't be able to do without perpetually moving on from one place to another. You'll get like those ladies who go tramping about wherever there's a savage unprovided with a copy of the New Testament in his vernacular. I don't believe Mr. and Mrs. Haviland have any idea of the harm they are doing."

"Harm?"

"Oh, I don't mean the Missions and schools, and all that sort of thing. Of course that's all right."

"It's just what I'm not quite sure is all right," said Ruth. "We bring all the hideous paraphernalia of the middle-class aspect of our religion, and weep over the degeneracy of a race which resents its lack of æsthetic beauty."

"Well, you know, something must be done to counteract the influence of that mountebank, the Living Buddha chap."

Ruth's eyes gleamed. He dared to talk like this of that almost sublime figure, possibly the one person in the whole of the province who could have rescued them.

"The mountebank saved our lives," she said quietly.

"I suppose he got frightened, saw the thing had been carried too far. Thought the consequences might be unpleasant if anything happened to us."

"What can you mean?"

"Oh, of course he had instigated it."

A bright colour came into the girl's cheek, and she raised herself excitedly in her chair.

"How can you talk in that way! A man with such a face and bearing—instigate—he must be good or the people would not love him as they do."

"Are you sure that they do love him? Or don't you think it's more likely a superstitious fear?"

"I am quite sure it is not that. Lo-Fen and Tu-Su have heard the people talk of him. They say that nearly every one has some story to tell of his goodness and kindness. They say that he has so much influence with the Mandarins that he has made them do all sorts of things to improve the condition of the poor." She stopped suddenly, as if conscious that she was betraying herself by her ardour.

"Still, the Chinese can't remain outside civilisation for ever."

"I sometimes think that it is the Chinese who are civilising us, not we the Chinese. They have stamped our national life and tastes far more than we have ever impressed theirs. We call that their want of adaptability and lack of progress. Let some great Chinaman come along and bring honesty into the Government departments and we shall have nothing to offer them but a few engines."

Fraser thought such originality was almost indelicate. The conversation was not tending in the direction he wished it to take, so he hazarded a lead.

"Don't you sometimes long to be back in England?"

"You see, England does not mean as much to me as it does to most people. It means my school life. All my happiest days have been spent in China."

"Ah, then you're lucky. You don't suffer from homesickness." He hardly knew how else to lead on. He had trusted to the prospect of a return to England to create a sentimental atmosphere favourable to his proposal.

There was evidently nothing for it but the question point blank.

"I am afraid I shall have to get back to Chang-King in a day or two. My leave is up."

She tried to say, "We shall be sorry to lose you," but being innately honest, she merely remarked—

"The journey back will be rather lonely."

Nothing could have suited him better.

For a moment he wondered if she were unconsciously thinking that the loneliness was an evil which could be remedied.

"If I go alone," he answered, with a tremble of nervousness in his voice.

She realised, like a skater who finds himself on unsound ice, that there was danger, and made one frantic effort to regain the safe shore of trivialities.

"I wonder how long it will be before we are attacked again."

He ignored the remark and followed up his advantage.

"It will be lonely if I go alone," he repeated. "But why should I? Miss Haviland, I——"

Assured of what was coming the girl half rose to prevent it, but he was determined, and blurted out—

"Miss Haviland, I want to know if you will be my wife."

There ensued that hopeless feeling of unreality and strain consequent on a proposal which ought never to have been made. She had not to speak. He knew at once that never at any time had she

thought of him as a possible husband. It was his fault. He could see—being an honest, conscientious sort of fellow—that he had read into the smallest acts of civility a meaning that they had never possessed.

The crude manner of his putting the question intensified the awkwardness.

His wits, sharpened by the tension, made a loop-hole for her escape.

"Please don't answer at once, if you would rather not," he said. It was at any rate a remark to which she could reply with some feeling of harmonious modulation. She liked Fraser little enough to be somewhat annoyed at his breaking in upon the exaltation in which she was living with what seemed so commonplace.

"There can only be one answer. I am very sorry if I have——"

But he was too generous for that.

"Oh no, it's my fault. I am afraid one is apt to believe what one wants to be true, and then in that way one delusion helps another."

She liked him for making this speech, and forbore to put the usual interrogative banality, "Can we not be friends?"

He hoped they would, but when it is said immediately following the ardour of a proposal it adds insult to injury. So he was thankful to be spared. Had it not been for the individuality of Attava, which filled up her thoughts by day and her dreams by night, she would have been more sympathetic; but, truth to say, though she admitted that credit was due to Fraser for the decided good breeding with which

There was a pause, and then, to her intense relief, Haviland came over and sat with them.

Fraser felt that the best thing he could do was to get back to his consulate as soon as possible.

So, a few days afterwards, he departed from Tsang-Lo, and was glad to be able to give a reason for doing so which would prevent awkward questions. His leave was up, and privately he thought that it had been very badly spent.

Catherine, who guessed the truth, forbore to mention the matter to him.

He regretted that his departure should rob the party of one of its defenders, and strongly urged them all to pack up and go with him.

Had it not been for the ever-haunting problem of Attava, Haviland would have been inclined to do so.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER the riot things seemed to settle down to the normal, although Haviland was never tired of impressing on them all that this apparent calm meant nothing, and that any moment might bring a recurrence of the peril through which they had passed.

Blake, plucky enough himself, regarded with awe the stately dignity and courage with which Catherine conducted herself.

Nervousness seemed to her an unknown quantity, and it was this assumption which impressed the Chinese with whom she came in contact and obtained a large amount of respect and deference for her.

As yet she had not thought it wise to take any steps towards advancing what was her great hobby—the Anti-Footbinding crusade.

She had little girls in her school the condition of whose poor maimed feet caused her to shed tears. One mite having stopped away for a couple of days, inquiry elicited the fact that the corruption of her feet had suddenly spread, and that the poor little thing had died, her lower limbs having mortified.

Catherine knew perfectly well that in a remote town like Tsang-Lo, which possessed nevertheless a fair proportion of aristocratic inhabitants, the mere—to them revolting—suggestion that a girl should grow

up and go through life on her own natural feet would be in the highest degree exasperating.

No one was more ardent in proselytising than Tu-Su. Lo-Fen, on the other hand, felt distinctly uncomfortable amongst such dangerous surroundings.

Tu-Su's admonition to remember the martyrs of Chang-Tsieng, who were drowned in sacks for their faith and had earned immortal glory, was no sort of comfort.

Lo-Fen, who had for a Chinese boy exceedingly winning ways, possessed a material little soul, and was much less fatalistic than most of his countrymen. To him the one thing certain was the discomfort of drowning, and—for all his affirmation of Christianity—he could not help feeling that the glory was problematical. He forbore in consequence to join his colleague in his gratuitous evangelicalism.

Tu-Su naturally became a marked man in the district, and perhaps the spectacle of a Chinaman outdoing the Christians themselves in missionary work created more prejudice and bitterness than any number of European missionaries could have done.

Haviland, whose knowledge of medicine was extensive and who had a peculiar facility for acquiring patients wherever he went, had already quite a large visiting connection; and, as this form of work appealed to him most, his conscience ceased to trouble him.

It was about this time that the household received an unexpected addition.

One night Catherine, lying half awake, heard borne on the breeze what sounded the mere echo of a childish wail, so small at first that it hardly seemed as if it were other than the unaided vibration in the drum of her ear. At last the fact of its continuity convinced her of its reality. She sat up and listened.

There was no house or hut near from which the sound could come, and yet there it was plain enough—a child's wail from the night outside.

She woke her husband, and to him also it took some time to convey the reality of the wail, which was now growing fainter.

At last he heard it and hurried on some clothes. They lit a lantern and, calling to the others, went out to search.

Soon there were half a dozen lanterns flitting here and there, unguided by the wailing, which had ceased.

It was Ruth who found it—a new-born child, whose vitality must have been extraordinary. She caught it up in her arms and wrapped it round in her thin cloak.

Soon they were all back in the house, the two women's eyes full of tears of pity for the inanimate little form which lay in Catherine's lap.

But it was Tu-Su, the hard-featured Chinaman, who restored it, breathing into its nostrils and mouth till slowly the ebbing life returned.

To discover the parents would have been impossible, and there was no law to punish them or make them take the child back could they have been found.

The two women grew devoted to the foundling, although to Ruth, who had most time on her hands, fell the burden of its care.

CHAPTER XVII

HAVILAND'S secret weighed on his mind more and more as the weeks went by.

He had questioned some of the townspeople as to the district from which the Living Buddha had been brought, and all agreed that it was somewhere in Northern India.

He lived in constant terror lest this fact should become known to Catherine.

Catherine had a miniature of Burney in her possession, and one day he examined it attentively.

He was a very fair draughtsman, and, taking pencil and paper, he copied the face in every detail, adding the long, uncut beard. He further added a figure dressed in such robes as the Living Buddha wore. The finished work was so faithful a portrait of Attava that he sat gazing at it in amazement. Then, with nervous fingers, he lit a match and watched the paper till it was consumed.

The evidence was complete. He had sought for, and eagerly welcomed, anything which might tend to show that his surmise was wrong. The case in favour of it had grown stronger day by day, and this was the crowning touch. He had turned over in his mind again and again the advisability of telling Catherine his suspicions. Of one thing he was certain : should he

do so, no danger, however great, would induce her to leave the place where her son was. Catherine noticed his unusual abstraction. She was accustomed to his seeming apathy in dealing with, so to speak, newly opened-up parishes. It usually concealed a wide, broad purpose.

But here his manner was different to anything she had seen in him before.

After a time she began to wonder whether the climate of Tsang-Lo might not have peculiar properties, for not only her husband but her stepdaughter had become singularly quiet and reflective; and, having put Fiasei aside as a possible cause, there seemed to be nothing else to account for it.

The girl was devoted to the little Chinese baby, and was never tired of amusing it, or making new and wonderful garments of delicate coloured silks.

The child had been baptized into the English Church, receiving the name of Azalea, suggested by the bands of blossom which striped parts of the country round. Azalea was a very good, quiet baby; in fact, that night, the greater part of which it had spent in the field outside, seemed to have saddened it permanently.

Ruth felt altogether freer and happier now that the figure of her rejected lover was gone.

She was all unconscious that often her movements were watched from the Monastery above. Sometimes she walked along the path by the stream, half hoping to meet the wonderful being who had come into her life, so unreal, yet found whom all the sense of beauty—which was so strong in her nature—had wound itself.

Catherine was, for the first time, a little hurt at the lack of interest taken in her new work by Ruth, who

seemed to be living in a world of dreams in which the others had no part.

Her spare time was spent in working at Chinese. She was exceptionally fortunate in having so competent a teacher as her father, her study of that seemingly complicated and confused, yet in reality most orderly of languages, having been prefaced by his admonition—

“Keep cool, and you’ll be all right. Get flurried and you’re lost. Never take so much as a peep at the difficulties which lie ahead of you. ‘Sufficient unto the day,’ &c., applies very especially to Chinese.”

Mr. Blake talked incessantly of the school. He had become a monomaniac on the subject. The way he harped perpetually on it got on Ruth’s nerves.

Catherine bore with him because of his sincerity. Qualities, in her eyes, excused a great deal.

But he spoilt for Ruth many of the beautiful, cool evenings when they were all together on the verandah, and she would rise and wander away to the fields around the house to escape from the irritating and monotonous cadences of his voice.

Very often she found herself near the spot which drew her to it as a magnet.

Thither she went one evening after a long day spent indoors. It had been raining, and the stream was swollen. The fireflies were darting hither and thither, leaving luminous trails against the already shadowing thicket.

Here in the dark recesses of the woods there were no flowers, though the poppy fields outside were drenched in scarlet, with patches of white, pink, and mauve. Near her in a backwater the lotus lily

dreamed, while the air was so still that not even the feathers on the bamboos stirred.

A little way up, on the other side of the stream, she saw, just outside the shadow of the wood, a mass of yellow flowers. She crossed over to gather some. Reaching the place she looked around and marvelled at its perfect attunement to the personality from which to her it was inseparable. She knelt down amongst the fragrant yellow blossoms, but forgetting her purpose her hands fell listlessly to her side, and she dreamed of that incense-laden Temple, perched high up on the rock above her, where silent monks processioned in a perfumed mist.

From far up came the sweet music of Buddhist bells, and with the scent of flowers in her nostrils and the music of the bells in her ears Attava stood before her.

He had found himself many times lately on the lower part of the slope, admitting frankly that it was in the hope of catching a glimpse of the English girl. He had even, from the thicket on the Monastery side of the stream, watched her slowly pacing the branch-roofed path, and each time he had seen her her personality had assumed for him a more magic spell.

Once she had been with Catherine, and as they talked the girl had broken out into a clear, fresh peal of laughter. It had played on the strings of his nervous system as the vibrations of one musical instrument on another.

There was grief in his heart as he looked down at the white-robed figure kneeling amongst the yellow blossom at his feet.

This was to be the crowning renunciation of his life, yet the faint human colour still left in the clear

atmosphere of his exalted ideal was the irrepressible yearning to let her know that at least her fellow soul had recognised her, even although the love that he bore her should find its expression in the renunciation of the physical.

He was too great, too broad, to admit any wrong in loving her so long as there was no possession. Something of the exaltation with which he regarded her conveyed itself to the girl.

She had heard his voice the day he had saved them from the rioters.

Then it had been commanding and stern. He spoke to her and a sympathetic tremor ran through her being. The voice was low and mellow, as her father had described it, but for her it held a charm and enthrallment which it could have for no one else.

As she looked upon him she remembered the stories she had been told concerning him which had fired her imagination and enthusiasm. They illuminated the physical index, enabling her to read the traits of character which had marked the face so wondrously with their beauty.

Dressed in the red robe of an ordinary Lama, he greeted her with the exquisite Buddhistic formula—

“The jewel is in the lotus.”

The girl rose to her feet, the blossoms she had gathered and bound with grass falling from her hands. He bent and restored them to her.

“I fear I have startled thee to-day as before.”

The girl, conscious of her faulty Chinese, hesitated to reply. His diction was curiously correct, and made it easy for her English ears to understand.

She felt like a little child, standing there with a great adoration in her soul. She stumbled through some Chinese words as well as she could, saying—

"You did not frighten me. I had no right to be there."

"There was no wrong," he replied.

Her own agitation prevented her from seeing how much he was moved.

"To be there when evening falls"—he pointed upwards to the spot where she had first seen him, with a gesture spontaneously grand and broad—"is almost to hear the voice of life. Man can only hear the voice of life when all other sounds are still."

He spoke without the least trace of affectation, in the manner of one to whom religion was the everyday thing of existence.

"It is not wise for thee to wander away from thy friends alone."

She wondered if he were trying to infer that he would sooner strangers did not walk on that side of the stream. She was pained, and explained as well as she could that she would not trespass again. Then seeing that he had conveyed the wrong impression, he hastened to say that he was only solicitous of her safety.

He asked after the man who had visited him. Ruth told him that her father was well.

"But he said he was a priest," said Attava.

"In our country priests are allowed to marry."

He looked amazed. The idea was novel to him. He half began to speak, then—evidently recollecting that it was her father they were discussing—stopped suddenly. There was a pause.

In China there are no Sundays, but with those haunting bells pealing far above her, and the expressive religious figure standing in the midst of an extraordinary stillness, there came to her the same

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sense of quiet that an English Sabbath seems to bring to the very landscape.

"I came here to gather some of these flowers."

A sudden shyness overcame her, and she made a movement as if to go. He was quick to perceive it, and interpreting it into a sign that she felt embarrassed, bade her a courteous farewell. The girl was sorry. She would have liked him to remain. He moved away up the hillside, leaving her amongst the flowers.

Then, forgetting the yellow blossoms amongst which she stood, she went slowly down the slope towards the stream.

As soon as she had disappeared a head was thrust cautiously from a thicket some few yards off. It was Makah. He gazed upwards at the retreating figure of the Living Buddha.

"He will come again," he said to himself. "She will come back too. This is indeed a weapon worth handling." He sat down to wait till it was dark and safe for him to steal back in the steps of Attava without being seen.

The Tartar had spied upon the Living Buddha till he had discovered the secret of the staircase down to the rocky platform. He had even seen him enter the cave, but had not had the opportunity of examining the means by which entrance was obtained. He had told Makah of the staircase, but the secret of the cave and the treasures which he believed it contained he kept locked in his own breast.

CHAPTER XVIII

MAKAI and the Tartar made the most of the action of the Living Buddha in the matter of protecting the Christians.

They took care that it should sow the first seeds of mistrust and bear a rich harvest in the minds of the people and the Lamas.

Certainly it was entirely contrary to what the people had expected, and shook the faith of many.

There always remained the hundred or two faithful disciples who had in the first days of reform, when the danger to his person might have been great, constituted themselves into a bodyguard. It was only these few—the elect—who perhaps really understood his higher aims.

The others, even those who sympathised with him, only felt instinctively that his influence was for good.

The Tartar had dogged the footsteps of Attava many times, down past the cave where the documents he so much desired possession of were stored, to the platform where Ruth had first met him.

He had done so with thoughts of murder in his heart, being only deterred by the uncertainty as to whether the passage were known to any others. Were it not known he could have leapt upon him from behind and stabbed him, leaving his body to

lie for all time in that dark way. But he could not be sure that Ching-Lu, or some other near disciple, was not a sharer in the secret.

Besides, in his heart of hearts, he had a superstitious respect for Attava's supernatural powers, and feared that against him his merely human hand might strike in vain.

Makah, too, had had some thoughts of murder as he lay concealed in the thicket watching Attava's movements. More than once he had felt the blade of the long knife which he carried beneath his Lama's dress. Perhaps some such fears as animated the Tartar also influenced him.

But then ensued the meeting with Ruth, and his schemes took an entirely new direction.

He was clever enough to have detected in the manner of these two towards each other an extraordinary sympathy. His instinct told him that chance might have been the author of the meeting that he had seen, but that there would be others, less unpremeditated.

Perhaps he would have been right had he been dealing with the character of an ordinary man. He hardly took into account the exalted ideals of the one he regarded as the wilful usurper of his own place.

Direct proof of clandestine meetings between Attava and a woman, especially a foreign woman, would do more to shatter his prestige with cleric and layman than anything else which could be adduced against him.

The very elevation on which he was enthroned in the minds of the people would prove Makah's most valuable ally. The greater the pretention, the greater the hypocrisy.

In triumph he poured forth the story of what he had seen to the Tartar.

"If this be true," answered the other, "we have him beneath our heels. Though," he added, "it may be possible that what thou hast seen is no more than a chance meeting. Where should he have met this woman? How have become acquainted with her?"

"I tell thee," said Makah, for the hundreth time, "there is no doubt. There is that about a man when thoughts of the one woman dwell in his soul, which speaks of the fever of his heart to all those around him. This so-called Saint cannot withstand this foreign woman."

Makah paced the narrow cell, his eyes blazing like coals of fire. Though he had recovered from his sickness, the unrest and burning fever, the result of his delayed ambition, were sapping his vitality, and his figure was shrunken and attenuated. He was mere nervous tension.

"If they met by appointment they will meet again," said the Tartar. "We must watch. Things are going very well. It will not do to be precipitate."

It was night, and at an hour when every monk should have been alone, praying in his cell.

As they sat whispering there came a knock at the door which startled them both to their feet. They waited. The knock was repeated.

Darkening the lantern so that any one looking in should not see that Makah was with him, the Tartar opened half an inch and looked out.

Outside there stood a Lama who had lately come over to the side of Makah. He was an old man with no position in the monastery, but about whom there clung an air of mystery. It was noted that his influence over certain of the Lamas was great.

He whispered in the Tartar's ear—

"There is some one to see thee—some one who can be of assistance to us."

The Tartar in alarm opened the door a little wider.

"Thou hast told some one?" he said in a hoarse undertone. "We are undone."

"Talk no more. I have made no mistake. Come, open the door. The Holy Buddha is with thee. Dost thou think I would bring danger where he is?"

* Slowly the Tartar opened the door.

The old monk entered, and with him the strangest figure—a short, enormously stout man. Jaw-line there was none, and his chin lay in great revolting folds. His small eyes pierced like gimlets, and as he entered, his gaze shot round the cell with the rapidity of a ferret. He was so like the grotesque drawing of some obese creature in a Chinese picture, that his surroundings seemed to go out of perspective at once.

His bulk was huge, but there was no indication of a lack of vitality. Every movement seemed to speak of enormous physical strength and rapidity. He was plainly dressed, although the material he wore was of the richest.

This was perhaps the most powerful man in China, head of a secret society, which—even in a country which is honeycombed by such organisations—was remarkable for its influence and power. Not a town or a country district but had agents of sufficient number to do its work. The supreme control of this immense human weapon was vested in the man who now stood with his hands clasped on his enormous paunch, smiling benevolently at the two Lamas.

His appearance was ludicrous, yet he emanated an

extraordinary impression of power and personal domination. When he spoke his voice was so thin and small as to be laughable.

He looked from one to the other for some moments, and then made a most respectful salutation to the Tibetan.

Makah smiled with pleasure, and, as if he had been receiving obeisance all his life, raised his hand in blessing.

The man of flesh before him examined him attentively, taking in every detail of his appearance.

He grasped at once that Makah might be a fanatic, but that he was not a foolish one, and that there was enough subtlety written in his face to show that he would be prepared to buy his triumph by means not too scrupulous.

"Thou art the victim of a great wrong, Reverence," he said.

"The usurper's days are numbered," answered Makah confidently. "The metal is in the fire. The sword shall soon be forged that shall avenge me."

The fat man nodded his head slowly as if agreeing.

"When we are ready to strike," interrupted the Tartar, "it will be either he or ourselves."

The other went on nodding his head, but held his peace.

Makah burst into an excited peroration on his cause. The fat man said not a word till the Tibetan had quite finished. Then he spoke.

"I can help to put all this right and place thee upon the Living Buddha's throne more easily than thou could'st by thyself, or with the aid of mere Lamas."

The two monks looked at him in amazement.

The ridiculous voice had in it a ring—not of the confidence born of enthusiasm, but of confidence arising from the knowledge that he was promising that which it would even be little trouble for him to perform.

The old monk, who had stood back in the shadow by the door, came forward.

“Perhaps when they know——” he began.

But Makah interrupted him, and speaking to the man the old monk had brought with him, said—

“Who art thou?”

The fat man thrust his hand into his bosom, saying—

“May I be permitted to offer the Living Buddha of Tsang-Lo and his lieutenant a fuchsia?”

Makah was still unenlightened, but the Tartar started back with a cry. He now knew who the visitor was.

“It is——” he began.

“Hush!” said the other, putting his finger to his lip.

But the Tartar went to the Tibetan and whispered earnestly in his ear. When he had finished Makah looked at the visitor with amazement, and the head of the Fuchsia League added—

“To the Talé-Lama I am a friend in need. To be crisp: Attava, the usurper and impostor, seeks to influence the people in matters other than religious. His power is becoming a menace to ours——” He paused for a moment, and then added in an almost terrible manner, “to mine; at least, in this district. And religious movements are apt to spread with startling rapidity. To-day it is a town, to-morrow it is a province, that is influenced. From inquiries I have made, I find that there is every reason for his being

so like the barbarians. He is the son of a foreign devil. He must be removed."

"Impossible. He is guarded night and day," said the Tartar.

"Excepting when he walks by the stream with the foreign woman." And the stranger gave a short, sharp laugh.

The monks listened in amazement. This man seemed to know everything.

"Worst of all," he resumed, "he has commenced to preach against secret societies. He has caused disloyalty and disaffection amongst our followers. He must be removed. And I will show thee how it can be done. But first accept a fuchsia." He held out the blossoms with an almost malignant expression.

He waited a second or two, and then frowned. Neither seemed anxious to accept his gift.

Makah was the first to stretch out his hand and take the blossom. The Tartar followed.

Both monks were bound by their holy vows not to join any secret organisation. Makah felt that as Living Buddha he was free of such a vow, and the Tartar was unscrupulous.

"We have but one rule," said their now despotic chief. "The least disobedience to any one who may be placed in authority will be punished by instant death. We have a graduated system of executioners," he continued, smiling sweetly, as though he were describing an entertainment, "and when all others fail I carry out sentences myself." He bared a terrible arm, on which the muscles lay like smooth stones.

Makah frowned. There was too little of the deference due to his inspired office.

"Death to the Living Buddha," said the fat man,

still smiling, "would mean so little, as he would transmigrate immediately to a body which was not under the jurisdiction of our Society."

Makah realised the cynical calculation of the stranger's first obeisance. But it was too late.

"The Living Buddha sees that power on this earth must be paid for, and the support of one who holds five millions in the hollow of his hand is worth having. Wear the image of a fuchsia in thy heart, and thou wilt be Living Buddha till once more thy transmigration is made."

Makah resigned himself to the inevitable.

"I should suggest that bold measures be taken. Naturally the foreign woman will serve as an instrument by which to discredit him. Lamas have risen in rebellion ere now. Remember this: do not fear the authorities at Tsang-Lo. They will not interfere. Manage this work in your own way."

He moved towards the door, and then, as if remembering a ceremony omitted, returned; and—for all his bulk—let himself gently down on his knees, prostrating himself before Makah.

Even then the Tibetan flushed again with pleasure at the empty triumph, and raised his hand in blessing as before.

"When a game is to be played it should be played properly, with all due ceremony and finish."

Then with a good-humoured smile he waddled out into the night, followed by the old monk.

They threaded the alleys of the Monastery till they reached a secluded spot, where men with shaded lanterns were gathered round a litter.

No one spoke, and the fleshly man was borne away without other sound than the creaking of the poles bending beneath his enormous weight.

The old monk stole silently back to the cell of the Tartar, and, establishing himself behind it, put his ear to a hole carefully made, through which the conversation of those within could be heard. The Fuchsia Organisation neglected no precautions.

Left alone in the cell the two monks had stood for a moment looking from each other to the purple and scarlet blossoms in their hands.

The Tartar, who had known of the existence of the Fuchsia Society, experienced a feeling of strong discomfort at finding himself a member of it. He knew how uncompromising and deadly were its methods.

There had been a young monk in the Monastery some time before who had been slain under mysterious circumstances. A fuchsia had been found lying on his breast. It was after this that Attava had commenced his crusade against secret societies, proclaiming them immoral in inception and disastrous in results.

The Tibetan, who had not fully appreciated what he was doing, listened to the Tartar's explanations with some feeling of consternation. But there was consolation in the fact that so powerful a body had promised that he should be the Head of the Tsang-Lo Monastery.

"What is the secret of their power?" he asked.

"I have heard those say who know, that it is because, whether for good or evil, no promise they ever make is broken. When a man who is of them says he will do a thing, he must do it or die. At least, so much is known of them by the outside world. We shall know more, no doubt," he added grimly.

The Tibetan was pleased. They had promised to restore him to his position. What more could he want?

The Tartar and he thought over the best means of taking the next step in furthering their interests. They decided to impress the Lamas by going in a body to the Living Buddha and protesting against the protection he had extended to the foreigners. They knew beforehand that his answer would be one which would play still more into their hands, and no single effort which might tend to weaken his influence was to be neglected.

CHAPTER XIX

THE day the young military Mandarin had led his soldiers to the protection of the Europeans, he had on leaving them returned to the residence of the Chief Official to report. As he was borne along through the narrow streets of Tsang-Lo, which had already resumed their normal aspect, he leant back in his litter and dreamed with his opium-clouded brain of Ruth. From that moment he thought of nothing else.

He knew the opinion that most of his countrymen held about European women, and had till now shared it. But here was something different—exceptional.

As a Chinaman his thoughts were naturally not of the most exalted where a woman was concerned. His was a sensuous though cultivated character, his military position being merely a question of a job perpetrated to give the member of a great family office of some kind. He had good qualities, but his dominant vice had tended to weaken any strength of fibre that his character might have possessed.

For days he shut himself up, except at those hours when his duties forbade it, and between heavy slumbers—the children of his vice—drew mental pictures of the English girl.

One day, when curled up on the opium couch and

waited on deftly by a boy who arranged the pipes with long, delicate, nervous fingers, another youth entered and announced that there was some one outside who wished to see him.

A shadow crossed the young man's face. He wanted rest. He asked the visitor's name, and, on hearing it, betrayed the faintest sign of agitation, bidding the boy show him in.

There rolled into the room the same individual who, the night before, had been brought by the elderly Lama to visit Makah and the Tartar. Again there was nothing about him to convey the least impression of rank or power.

The young man greeted him with courtesy but hardly with enthusiasm. He bade the servants withdraw.

When they were left alone the first thing the stranger did was to produce from the folds of his dress a fuchsia blossom which he handed to his host. This he did automatically, as if it were an oft-repeated ceremony.

One of the most remarkable features of the organisation was that, although strong in cohesion and wielding a terrible power, its objects were not even generally known amongst its members. Its aims had an esoteric as well as an exoteric side, and its inner and ultimate objects were only known to the few. How much should be imparted to the particular member was entirely at the discretion of its ruler. The great majority of its members were simply the material with which he worked. The hatred of foreigners was, however, not peculiar to him, but was general to every member of the Society, their expulsion a first principle with all.

The young Mandarin pointed to the seat of honour,

but his guest smiled deprecatingly, and seated himself on a chair more accommodating to his bulk. The young man took a chair opposite, first offering an opium pipe. The stout man waved it aside contemptuously.

The Mandarin had never even set eyes on this despot before, although the details of his physique and individuality had been described to him hundreds of times.

"There is work to do here."

The young man looked at him inquiringly.

"There are things going on in Tsang-Lo which are bad for us and may ruin us."

Still the young Mandarin held his tongue.

"First, the foreigners."

Had he been other than a Chinaman the fat man would probably have spurned the stool at his feet to indicate his contempt and hatred, but like the men of his race he simply sat with his porcine eyes blinking slightly, and a deadly immobility about his massive bulk.

"There are very few—only four."

"I was told there were five." The Head of the Society of the Fuchsia Blossom almost moved in his chair with anger.

"There were five," said the Mandarin, "now there are but four."

"What has happened to the other?"

"He has returned to Chang-King."

"I was not told. Who is the head of our Intelligence Department in the district?"

The young man mentioned a name, which was that of one of the Governor's secretaries.

The slightest suggestion of a smile played round the corner of the fat man's lips.

"It is not for the sake of four—or even five—

foreigners that I have journeyed here. They must of course go too—into the river perhaps. You have the military under your control, have you not?" He waited for the reply of assent, although it was hardly necessary, for the information—as every other detail of the young officer's life—was known to him.

The younger man was thinking, with a strange, helpless feeling at his fatalistic Chinese heart, of the girl with the Western face and the glory of yellow hair. Was this hideous, omnipotent creature in front of him about to ask him to lay violent hands on her? For a moment he was almost tempted to tell him he was no longer of his Society, that he would have nothing to do with any horrible work he might suggest.

To what end?

He would be found one day stretched on his opium couch, dead. No one would know how—nothing but a stray fuchsia blossom to speak of the all-reaching power which had destroyed him. Or perhaps an order would come from the Court itself to say that he was ruined, giving him the chance of ending his own life.

An accident might happen which would appear utterly unpremeditated, but which would mean his death. There was no escape, and he knew it. Perhaps by appearing to fall in with the plans of the Society he might save the girl at least.

"There is," said the visitor, speaking as though for the first time he had really come to the point, "in the Monastery at Tsang-Lo one who must be removed."

"In the Monastery?"

"Its Living Buddha," he continued. "He has achieved a power in the district which threatens my own. He has set his face against secret societies, and many of our people have fallen away. True,

those who have done so are not important, but his influence may spread. He has made a follower of Ching-Lu: why should he not make a follower of any other young aristocrat who is fool enough to believe in him? He can only be removed in one way. There are members of our Society in the Monastery itself. You will help them as they may require."

The boy brought in tea, cakes, and sweets. The fat man drank some of the tea much as an Englishman would have enjoyed a glass of old port. "I can't get tea like this," he murmured. He then rose to go, declining all further hospitality. He said farewell to the young man almost paternally; in fact, except when he appeared to be thinking deeply; his manner was in every way benevolent and gentle.

He had been two days in Tsang-Lo and had laid all his plans. By nightfall he was nearly twenty miles on his return journey, sure that none of them would miscarry.

The young Mandarin returned to the couch and resumed his pipe. Barely an hour had passed when there was a great commotion in the Governor's residence. Some one had been found lying dead, murdered.

Immediately his boy told him what had happened, the young Mandarin hastened towards the spot.

The victim was the young secretary with whose diligence in the Society's service the fat man had been displeased.

He was lying with his face across the desk at which he had been writing some official letters, with a dagger, the owner of which could not be traced, through his heart. On the table itself lay a fuchsia blossom.

CHAPTER XX

CHING-LU, who naturally saw more of the bulk of the Lamas than his master, began to grow apprehensive.

That the drastic reforms initiated and carried out had not met with the approval of the older monks in the Monastery he had always known. That this feeling, however, was likely to find expression in an organised revolt he did not for one moment believe.

In the first place, the discontented ones numbered most largely the aged and feeble. Besides this, whereas the Monastery at Attava's coming of age had only mustered three to four thousand Lamas, its numbers had since been doubled by men attracted from all parts of China, Tibet, and Tartary, by his reputation for wisdom and saintliness.

The newcomers would naturally be staunch adherents of Attava, and they, taken together with those younger members who approved and were enthusiastic over his reforms, would always outnumber—and would do so more and more as years went on—the party of reaction.

But Ching-Lu's temperament, which was susceptible as only a subtle constitution can be, began to sense the existence of influences which he was unable to place definitely.

There were, unknown to him, two powerful forces at work against the supreme authority—namely, a pretender to the throne of the Living Buddha, and—what was far more dangerous—the whole weight of the Fuchsia Organisation. He was, of course, aware how strongly Attava had opposed secret societies, of which he knew there must be more than one having branches at Tsang-Lo. None knew better than he, living as he had done all his youth amongst the most reactionary and conservative elements of the aristocracy, the power these societies wielded.

While he was in this state of indecision as to what the next move of the other party would be, a startling event happened which showed that the roots of discontent in the Monastery had gone deeper than he had had any conception of.

A powerful and influential deputation waited upon Attava to say that they, the Lamas, wished him to use his influence to rid Tsang-Lo of the foreigners.

This was of course a device of the two chief conspirators. The Tartar had already put practically the same question, and wished to strengthen his hand by hearing the same answer given to a representative body of the Lamas.

The move was a bold one, inasmuch as it unmasked the strength of the discontent. But these two had been walking with more assurance since the promise of help which they had received from the Fuchsia League.

They had both been amazed at the power of this body. Lamas whom they had never expected to claim as adherents came over to their side. They were, however, unable to make any impression at all on those who stood nearest to the Living Buddha.

These were the most earnest and highly educated of the Lamas, and numbered some eight or nine hundred. It was easy to distinguish them by reason of their seeming, when massed together and compared to the rest of their brethren, almost of another race.

The boy-Lamas—of whom there were not a great number, for under Attava's reign it was considered questionable to allow a child to take on itself vows and obligations the full import of which it might not understand—seemed likely to increase, as they grew up, this band of chosen brethren. For, if it had been found impossible to entirely abolish the system of receiving children at the Monastery, Attava had determined that none but the very promising candidates should be accepted.

At first Attava was disinclined to receive the deputation. It could do no good, as his own mind was irrevocably made up not to interfere in any way with the Christians. He certainly could not scheme against them. It would have been utterly foreign to his nature. He realised the immense forces of traditional prejudice which prevailed with the majority of the petitioners, and knew that argument would be wasted. He might appeal to their hearts, and the consciousness of its being his duty to do so eventually made him consent to receive them.

There were certain days—two or three in every month — when Attava was accustomed to hold audience in a large building, which was to the chief temple as the chapter-house to an English cathedral. Here the pilgrims, who had journeyed many hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles—bearing with extraordinary fortitude incredible fatigue and suffering, sometimes accompanied by hunger and disease

—gazed at last, their journey over, upon him they conceived to be of the divine race.

From the surrounding country came thither also the sick and crippled, rendering the place often piteous to behold.

It was said and believed by many that he had healing power, and certain it was that more than one had gone from his presence made well and strong.

It was after such an audience that the Tartar and Makah came humbly forward with the request that he would use his undoubted influence* with the secular authorities to rid the neighbourhood of the Christian pest.

Attava listened, his face gathering a majestic sternness as the Tartar proceeded with the reading of a paper on which their request had been formulated.

There were set forth the usual wild stories as to the secret rites and horrible practices of the Christian sect. Their hand was against every other religion. They proclaimed the religion of the Lord Buddha idolatry—and so on, and so on.

Ere he could finish, his voice faltered and died away. He found it impossible to continue reading with those pale blue eyes fixed thus upon him. Makah, seeing his agitation, snatched the paper from his hand and finished reading it defiantly.

Ching-Lu started. There was no mistaking that this was the action of a leader, that if the others were not in earnest in their hostility to Attava, this man was. He noted that the hand which held the paper was maimed, lacking the thumb. He drew nearer to Attava, not knowing what might be in these men's hearts. The reading finished, the followers of Makah, numbering some thirty or forty—to repre-

sent the bulk—stood waiting, some sullenly, some defiantly, for the answer.

"How have these Christians harmed thee?" Attava said, addressing the Tartar, and ignoring his companion.

"They harm not me individually, but they harm all."

"How so?"

"Do they not hate us?"

"Shall hatred die by the hand of hatred? Then there is hatred still. Love alone can cause hatred to cease."

"It is known," said the Tartar, for with him the hatred of the Christian was a very real thing, and he had sucked in from his childhood, poisonous tales of their blasphemies and cruelties, "that they worship animals, and cause by magic horrible evils to fall upon the people. Dost thou not remember the Tae-ping who rebelled against the Son of Heaven himself?"

All present murmured, for, apart from the sin of rebellion—so deadly to the Chinese mind—there was the memory of the atrocities attributed to the Tae-ping rebels, most of them more than doubtful.

"Yet only by violence can they be sent hence. And shall we blame all the servants of a religion because some have fallen away from its teaching?"

The Lamas looked at him in amazement.

"There are those who have seen these very Christians here in Tsang-Lo laugh at the respect we pay to our holy ancestors."

This was the most telling remark yet made, and a sure way to appeal to the passions of any Chinaman. A low growl went round. Ignoring this interruption, which had come from a Lama at the back, Attava continued—

"Surely there is great work to do here, in the temple of our own hearts, a work of purification and cleansing, for which untold lives shall not suffice. Shall we waste our time in sowing seeds of envy and prejudice? No. When it is made clear that these Christians intend or have done harm we will move, and not till then."

"Thou art allowing the poison from their teaching to be drunk in by children."

Almost a smile played round the corners of Attava's mouth.

"Are there not poisons here in Tsang-Lo more deadly than any they could brew? What of the poison of the opium pipe? What of the poison that the children drink in as they look at the unclean sights of the city at our feet and become hardened to them? Here, in the Monastery itself, the battles I have fought with sin have not been few."

"Thou art no true servant of the Lord Buddha."

It was Makah who spoke, and he gathered himself together, ready to face the consequences of his words.

Even the Tartar paled at the daringness of the insult, as did those who stood behind him; for, though many of them believed implicitly in Makah's true claim, the instinct of obedience to the majestic figure before them was strong.

* There was a cry of anger from Attava's followers. Ching-Lu's delicate, high-bred features lost their usual gentle impassiveness, and the blood of those ancestors whose names for more than three thousand years had been a synonym throughout the Empire for courage and chivalry rose into his pale cheeks.

Attava raised his hand, and a great silence fell upon all.

"Art thou more his servant than I? Then will

"I learn from thee." The words were said perfectly as a matter of fact and not as a sarcasm.

There was again a long silence. All eyes were bent on the Living Saint. His looked on none, but were seeking beyond the veil for some symbol by which he might teach these erring souls the true healing power of love.

"Tell me," he said, bending towards the Tartar, "were these Christians sent forth from Tsang-Lo, how much better would'st thou be? The triumph would be thine, but to triumph in the wrong is to acquire the quality of vainglory. Then, they being gone and bearing with them, as thou sayest, their poisonous doctrines, we have but shifted to others the danger we would not face ourselves. Are not all human souls of equal account? If ours be the light—as assuredly it is—then let them stay here in the light, and, as we see the feverous mists flee from the face of the waters when the sun ariseth, so shall the false teachings of these Christians be swallowed up in the fire of the true faith of the Lord Buddha."

Not once during this speech had the voice risen in excitement, but there ran through it a strong, continuous undercurrent of exaltation.

Makah, whose mind could hold and reason but with the one idea as basis—that this man was usurping his place—was quick to perceive the danger of allowing the matter to be carried thus to the fountain-head of truth. The point was to convince the mob, and with the mob he included the larger number of the Lamas, that the Living Buddha countenanced the teaching of the Christians.

"Thou wilt not send them away, O holy one?"

There was just the faintest inflection of sarcasm in the last three words.

"In the name of truth I may not—in the name of truth I will not."

"Then there is no power that can." It was the Lama who had brought the man by night to Makah's cell. Hitherto he had been silent, not even taking part when the murmurs had become general.

As if in answer to his remark, and as a warning against its obvious hypocrisy, there fell through the hot air of the room what looked like a miniature crimson shuttlecock.

The next moment a fuchsia blossom was lying at the feet of the Living Buddha.

Whether it had been thrown, or whether it had fallen from the roof it was impossible to say ; but it palpably lay there as a warning, and every cheek in the room paled a little, save that of the Living Buddha himself. "

The audience was at an end, and all present prostrated themselves as he passed out, serene and undisturbed.

CHAPTER XXI

CATHERINE was, to a certain extent, living in a state of illusion. She had no conception of the distance her husband's freedom of thought had carried him. No suspicion of what was a fact—that he intended, should the present complication clear away, to throw up his missionary work and return to England—ever entered her head.

He believed that it would be time enough for the struggle with her principles when the day for their return arrived.

In the meantime, he could continue preaching with a good conscience. It was not that the eternal truths of Esoteric Christianity failed still to convince him.

They had not been deterred from pursuing their work by the riot. They were altogether too accustomed to the sudden rise of Chinese mob-storms.

They knew nothing of the exceptional circumstances which had produced this one, and certainly had no conception of the volcano on which they were living.

Those who had taken part in the riot under the impression that they could be driven away by fear were disappointed. This, however, only made them the more bitter.

The Europeans were constantly on their guard,

not deceived by the fact that the townspeople seemed to have grown accustomed to their presence.

The crowds which followed them about whenever they appeared in the streets of Tsang-Lo were not so large, but the very people whose feelings were being worked on by the Fuchsia Society had grown strangely quiet, content to bide their time.

Amongst all the people concerned in the events which were hastening to a culmination, Catherine and Mr. Blake were the least disturbed. True, there had been riots, but then these were part of the missionary's burden, and as far as they could see—having nothing to indicate the contrary—matters had settled down most comfortably.

The days went by one very much like another. Catherine worked incessantly at the school. She took the girls, Mr. Blake the boys, and Haviland superintended the entire concern.

Catherine's class consisted of half a dozen little girls who came regularly, limping in painfully, supported by a big stick, or borne thither on the backs of men and boys—the whole half-dozen with piteous little faces, and a curious pallor, which some say is never seen except in connection with foot-binding.

The sight was of course not new to her, but to see some pathetic mite holding its tortured feet in such a position as would ease the throbbing for a time, and vainly endeavouring to stop the tears which the ceaseless, gnawing pain would bring, made her heart ache.

Mr. Blake was about as competent to manage the boys he had under his care as he would have been to ride a buck-jumper. At times the noise they made was deafening.

In the missionary work Ruth took little part, and although Catherine's disappointment at her indifference to that which she herself considered so important hardly diminished, her trust in God was too complete and the sweetness of her nature too great for her to feel resentment.

To Catherine a nature like Ruth's, on which dogma could take no hold, was incomprehensible. Ruth was perfectly willing to help in awakening the intelligence of the children in Catherine's charge, but she failed to see the necessity for regarding intellectual food as subsidiary and only assistant to the proper understanding and reception of the Christian faith.

She could not quite explain it, even to herself. She had had a most excellent Christian training, and was not prepared to assert that the effects were other than beneficial ; but she felt that there must be a way to regeneration for the Chinese apart from what the missionaries held to be the only way.

A great deal of her time was devoted to little Azalea. Sometimes, after a day spent in the cool verandah with the baby lying on cushions by her side, she would go down with her father and bring Catherine back by the paths that led across the paddy fields, into the clouded shallows of which the setting sun threw gorgeous reflections.

At times she went accompanied only by her chair-bearers and Tu-Su or Lo-Fen. The Chief Mandarin regretted their disinclination to accept military protection. He was really anxious that nothing should happen to the party in his district. He had been a subordinate in another part of China when several Europeans had been murdered, and retained a lively recollection of the absurd fuss made by their

Governments. They had not been English, certainly, but even in that case there might be trouble.

* Catherine worked late, and it was often only the approach of sunset, and the prospect of being shut up in Tsang-Lo for the night, that got her into her chair and on her way home.

On some of the few occasions when her husband had not been with her this had very nearly happened.

Neither of them liked leaving Ruth during the long days at the house outside the town; but she insisted that she was not in the least nervous, and the place had been left so severely alone since the day of the great riot that their fears by degrees subsided.

It was after a long day spent with a Chinese book, till the characters became positively acrobatic to her tired eyes, that, accompanied by Lo-Fen and her chair-bearers, she set out to meet Catherine, walking till she reached the bridge outside the wall. Here she got into her chair, having no fancy for walking through the dirty alleys round the Mission House.

The day had been oppressively hot, and in these narrow and partly covered-in streets, some of them only six or seven feet wide, the atmosphere was poisonous. Ruth felt stifled.

Stripped to the waist, the small shopkeepers sat in the gloom and shadow behind their wares. The Chinese boys ran shrieking past. The girls, ever sorrowful and suffering, watched their pranks from the steps.

Here and there a Mongolian morsel of humanity with bright, beady eyes, cooed in a doorway. Women called across to each other from the windows above.

With the extraordinary, patient slavery by which

the exquisite embroideries of China are accomplished, men worked with ceaseless care at their frames.

Here and there was a bookstall with several parchment-skinned men of advanced years poring over its contents.

Once or twice her chair met that of some Chinese lady returning from a visit. Ruth caught a glimpse of a jewel-bedecked head and carmined cheeks, the exquisitely shaped hand, with its tapering fingers and filbert nails, holding back the curtain to catch a glimpse of the occupant of the other chair. A street preacher with a small crowd round him was reading from a book. A man carrying a huge crimson kite stood aside to let the chair pass. Pervading everything was the close, opium-tainted atmosphere of the city.

Arrived at the Mission House she knocked. The Chinaman who was left in charge appeared. He seemed surprised to see her.

The chair was set down in the courtyard, and as the coolies closed the gate the inevitable crowd which had been following her surged up against it. She went on into the house.

It had been put into a fair state of repair. The paper windows were new and the ceiling had been made dustproof. Kakemonos shared the wall with Christian texts, the latter requiring all their saintliness and wisdom to compensate for their comparative ugliness of design.

Ruth looked around. There was not a sound. There were several rooms, and she went from one to the other without its dawning on her till she had tried them all that Catherine had left.

Her consternation was great. It was one thing to come down alone into the city and to return with

Catherine, and quite another to do both journeys by herself. There was no time to be lost, and she at once returned to the courtyard. The caretaker, in answer to her questions, said that Catherine had left some five minutes before her own arrival. It was inconceivable how they could have missed each other. There was by this time a dense crowd outside the gates. Clearly the rabble had heard that the English girl was alone, and as many yellow faces as were able were peering with the eternal Chinese stare through the wooden bars. Some of the faces wore expressions which were by no means pleasant.

Ruth knew that the worst thing she could do was to display any sign of fear.

She re-entered her chair and bade the coolies open the gates. They made every objection. Directly that was done, they said, the crowd would surge in and probably destroy everything it could lay hands on.

At last Ruth commanded them to do as she told them. They refused point-blank.

There was greater danger than she knew of, they told her. A council of war was held, and it was decided to slip out of a little side door. This being opened, however, very nearly resulted in the mob gaining access to the building.

Ruth began to feel frightened. Time was getting on. It would soon be too late for her to leave the city at all that night.

An idea struck her. She would send Lo-Fen to her father. It was just possible that he might arrive in time. At any rate it was the only thing to be done.

The coolies held the side door, and Lo-Fen slipped out. A howl arose, but there was no attempt to hurt him in any way, a result no doubt of the fact that

Lo-Fen had invariably repudiated any Christian leanings in his own conversations with the townspeople. Ruth returned to the deserted schoolroom.

The coolies brought in her chair, and, seeing no particular danger threatening to themselves, gambled in the corridor outside.

A painful sense of helplessness and isolation overtook her. She wondered—and at the thought the hot blood surged up to her cheeks—whether her father would invoke the aid of the Living Buddha, should he be too late to gain admittance to the city.

Later, the noise outside diminished somewhat, and, hoping that the crowd was dispersing, she ventured out into the now darkening courtyard.

A terrifying howl arose as soon as she appeared. The picture left in her brain as she retreated was that of a dense mass of faces, rendered ghastly in the growing gloom by swaying lanterns. The street, which stretched away in front of the Mission House, was full from end to end with a shrieking, foaming mob whose blood was up.

It was not a pleasant picture. It might live in the memory as picturesque, but held at the moment too many hideous possibilities. All the tales she had heard of murdered missionaries rose up in her brain.

It was in just such a way that an Englishwoman had been caught and massacred near them, some six months before. She remembered the details of how the poor mangled body was found. Though not a coward she rose with a shudder. Fears crowded upon her fast and thick.

Each additional sound seemed to assure her that the mob had at last broken in.

As it grew darker her excited imagination peopled the room with yellow-faced Chinese spectres.

Perhaps the crowd were even now climbing the wall which surrounded the house and was her only safeguard. She grew fearful of having any distance between her back and the wall, against which she put a chair, opposite the door, so that nothing could enter without her seeing it.

She remembered, with a certain sense of relief, that the danger of the place being set on fire was not great. They had thought of this when taking it, and had deduced its immunity from the fact that such an event would result in the destruction of the whole quarter.

In the coolies she placed no reliance. In fact, they constituted an additional danger.

They might at any time, to save themselves, let the howling mob into the house.

All through her terror she thought of Attava, and found herself praying to him as if to a god.

How long she sat she knew not, but at last it was quite dark.

Opposite to her had gradually faded with the light a text printed in English, "The Lord is my refuge and my strength."

To her amazement she found herself wondering at the hopeless colouring of some gaudily painted flowers with which it was garlanded.

Then the words began to repeat themselves in her brain, as if endeavouring of their own will to bring some comfort.

There came a battering at the side door.

Could it possibly be help?

One of the coolies rushed in to say that the crowd had commenced an assault upon the building, and that the other coolie had climbed the wall and was mingling with them.

Then a great sense of courage came over her, a form of patriotism. The greatness of the danger, the certainty of the end, numbed all fears.

The battering continued, and she heard the door give way.

A repugnance to dying in that unnatural Chinese dwelling drove her into the courtyard, where already there were men and boys sitting astride the wall shouting encouragement to those beneath on the other side.

The crowd surged through the house. The courtyard was thronged in a minute. The lanterns shed a lurid glare over all, rendering particularly terrible and loathsome the figure of a man, stripped to the waist, and brandishing an ugly knife.

Bizarre, fantastic, the creature advanced towards her in the uncertain light.

The end had come.

She faced him resolutely. He paused, and there was a diversion, made by the big gates giving way.

Then for a moment a dead silence came over everything. The light flickered, and the whole crowd looked at the man with the knife, poised before the girl, who stood pale as death, but tense with pride and determination to die worthy of her race.

A distant growl from those who were not near enough to see actually what was going on rose and fell almost like a dirge.

Then she saw the hand with the knife raised above her head, even as it was seized and the knife wrenched from it, a space swept clear around her, and the young Mandarin, quivering with rage in every limb, standing between her and her enemies.

CHAPTER XXII

OF late the young Mandarin had grown paler and more languid. His vice was making terrible inroads upon his constitution.

The Chief Official, who, apart from his ruling passion, avarice, was a good fellow enough, and took a kindly and paternal interest in the young men attached to his office, shook his head sadly, and murmured—

“A dead man moving among the living.”

He and all those about him were addicted to the same habit; the comparison, however, between them and the doomed young officer amounting to the same as that between a drunkard and a moderate drinker.

The fidelity and devotion of a foster-brother arrested the too rapid progress of the disease, and prevented the effects, which would have been noticeable enough in a victim of less exalted rank, from becoming too obvious.

There were periods in which, aided by the vigilance of this servant, his will-power reasserted itself for a time; but his surroundings, the luxury and inactivity of this petty provincial Court, and the deference due to his birth, were none of them circumstances conducive to his being compelled to abandon the habit for mere existence sake.

That Ruth ruled his dreams was an amazing fact which he thought best to keep to himself. His own doll-like wife was as nothing to him. She was, of course, of exceedingly good birth, and toddled through life on her twisted, gilt-shod little hoofs with a chronic laugh full of emptiness.

There were other women in his household, pretty, taken from good families, and occupying a position of most respectable secondary wifehood. They smiled on his life from behind masks of paint and blackened eyebrows. He was rich, and these silk-clad little ivory dolls had everything that Chinese women might wish for. There were children too, little things that crawled about their nurseries like coloured beetles.

None of these women had ever touched his soul, probably because they were without soul themselves.

Mad thoughts of falling in with the schemes of the Society, conniving at the murder of Haviland's party, and preserving the life of the English girl flitted through his clouded brain.

Cut off from all Europeans, who would there be to say that she had not perished with her friends?

The idea almost roused him to the necessary energy for carrying it out.

The fate of the English party seemed so certain that he asked himself why he should not derive some benefit. After all, he would be her saviour, and would surely have some right to reward.

It would most likely be impossible for him to preserve her from the Fuchsia League, but, at the same time, he would try.

The young exquisites of Tsang-Lo fluttered their fans and drank perfumed tea as they talked mysteriously of some great event which was

impending, and which would strike terror to the hearts of the Europeans at the settlements.

The emissaries of the Fuchsia League were everywhere, listening to everything. Corrupt and sordid, the Chief Official, regarding his district as a mere milch-cow from which to extract wealth, took no serious steps to avert a movement of which he received warning in a hundred little ways. He was fearful, but apathetic.

He had given these foreigners the protection of soldiers. He had expressed his own wish that they should be well treated, and was, in his heart, a little annoyed that they should insist on coming to disturb the smooth course of official life. He had done his best. No man could do more.

Ching-Lu's conversion was a favourite topic at the Mandarin's Court, and a fact which had never ceased to rouse wonder and amazement.

It was realised by the Fuchsia Brotherhood that it was highly undesirable that anything should happen to him, and there was a sort of tacit agreement among them to this effect. Information came to them that not only in Tsang-Lo had the little stout man made arrangements for driving out the foreigner, but that all over the empire there was a great movement impending.

This person's power of travel and endurance was enormous.

Once again he appeared in Tsang-Lo, and the young officer, hearing of his arrival, almost feared that he knew of his secret passion for the English girl.

He knew that this man had only to give the signal and the trap would close.

If death were certain he had a great desire to be

for a space of time alone with Ruth, and to make her understand some of the passion and adoration he felt for her.

The idea of sacrifice never entered his head. There had been nothing in his training and bringing-up to suggest such a method of thought. He knew that his own doom was sealed in any case, and that the juice of the poppy was gradually lulling him to sleep. He would, at any rate, know this one great happiness before the end came, while he still had energy to enjoy it.

And so, as the days went by and the heat of the summer grew more and more oppressive, he walked by the lotus pond thinking of her, or dreamed in the pavilions in his garden, while the heart of his foster-brother grew heavier and heavier as he saw his manner becoming more languid, and noted the pathos of the strangely humid eyes.

By this time most of the flowers were gone, excepting the lotus—that still drew life from the cool waters—and the flaming sunflowers that faced the cloudless sky insolently, daring an all-powerful sun to burn away their glory.

His foster-brother he trusted as himself; yet, so complicated was the registration of members of the Fuchsia Society, that very often two brothers were members of different lodges in the same town without being aware of it.

Still, if he were to carry out his scheme he must trust some one, and so he told him his vague plans and asked him to cast about in his mind for a way in which they might successfully be carried out.

The impassive features of this man betrayed not the least astonishment at what must have been an amazing fact, and, to him, a very shocking one.

The difficulty was to know how and when the Fuchsias were going to act. So far the only instructions the young man had received were to keep his soldiers quiet, and not to allow them to interfere officially to repress any disturbance.

He must by some means or other find out when a movement was to be made. He had been trying to do so for some time without success.

His foster-brother was eager to help in the scheme. It came to him as an inspiration that perhaps the foreign woman might be the salvation of his master.

Every plan that either of them could think of was eagerly discussed, only to be thrown aside. The one that seemed possible of execution was that at the first sign that a disturbance had begun and that the Fuchsias were at work, his soldiers should be instructed to surround the girl and convey her to a chair which would be in waiting.

Yet even this would require the greatest care and caution in carrying out. There were, he had not the least doubt, members of the League amongst the soldiery. When he reflected on this fact he became—even though he had been brought up in the midst of official corruption—sad at heart at the impossibility of restoring anything like healthy government to his country. He realised how honeycombed the whole fabric was with dissident elements.

Then one evening there was a great noise without. The people were running past all bent towards the same quarter of the city.

He was at the moment going over a collection of rare pictures which had been made by his ancestors. An addition which he had that day purchased had led to his examining the whole collection cursorily.

They were contained in a magnificent inlaid press of pinewood, and were hung in rows one on the top of another.

The subjects stretched away back into the centuries. One represented the three sages studying the symbol of the Hing and the Hang, which lay on an extended cloth held by two slaves.

Another was that of a woman, her hair bound with red silk and ornamented with silver filigree work. She was standing on an enclosed terrace or piazza, several men in monochrome dresses in the background. Beneath her, in a garden divided into parterres by tiny watercourses, over which ran enchanting and fancifully built bridges, walked a crane painted in subdued grey and bluish black, the woman herself in a daisy-bordered robe, with beautifully moulded hands, leaning on the rail in front of her. It was the masterpiece of a well-known artist of the sixteenth century, and the young man sat and drank in the mellow, modulated colouring with full appreciation of a thing beautiful.

His foster-brother entered, and spoke to him hurriedly beneath his breath.

In a second the young man was on his feet and calling for his sword. This, a large, two-edged weapon, was brought, and, summoning several of his retainers and bidding them arm themselves, he hurried out and bent his way to the more crowded parts of Tsang-Lo where the Mission House stood.

He arrived just in time to save Ruth from the uplifted knife. Another moment and she would have been down, and the crowd, with that brutality which is the anomalous characteristic in any highly cultivated people, would have swept over her.

The young man seemed like one possessed. For

the first time he was worthy of those ancestors whom he worshipped with all the fervour of his race.

The crowd of demoniacal, frenzied men and boys shrank back. Those on the wall dropped into the street below.

It seemed as if some other influence had come to his aid, for here and there men were seen persuading the crowd to disperse.

Of Lamas there were none. It was too late an hour for them to be in the city.

Strangely, almost like a dream, the crowd melted away.

With exquisite courtesy the young officer led Ruth back into the schoolroom. She was faint, and placed her hand upon his arm. At the touch his whole being vibrated with passion. The sword which he held fell with a clang to the ground and was picked up by one of his followers.

She sank into a chair in the schoolroom, wondering at herself for having remained so calm and controlled.

He went out and saw that all the doors were made as safe as possible, and placed a guard at each.

Remnants of the crowd looked on in amazement. As he gave the necessary orders he realised the dangerous course he was pursuing. This open championship of the Christian girl would give deadly offence; but, with the fatalism of his race, he was unable to examine the consequences too keenly.

He commenced to pace the courtyard with that rocking motion caused by the Chinese shoe.

It was an hour when he was accustomed to be under the influence of the drug, and a wild beast began to tear at his vitals; yet he gave no sign of pain, and though the anguish grew momentarily he

still pursued his monotonous walk in front of the room in which she was.

Ruth sat and waited, although she felt her strength and power of endurance ebbing from her. The danger was over now, and at intervals a slight, piteous sob broke from her.

She yearned with every moment to hear the voice of her father without ; or if only he—to whom her heart had instinctively turned in the hour of danger—would come.

Perhaps they were even now standing outside the city gates waiting for morning.

Not that the presence of her defender did not give her a sense of security. She felt no further fear as to her safety ; and after a time, worn out, her head leaned back against the wall behind her and she dozed.

She was awoke by the sound of her father's voice, and opened her eyes to find the room full of Lamas.

Her father and mother were standing by her, whilst in the background were the young Mandarin and Ching-Lu.

CHAPTER XXIII

HAVILAND had been a little annoyed on discovering that Ruth had gone without him to call for Catherine.

He, however, apprehended no danger, and it was not till Catherine returned to the house alone that he became at all uneasy.

As sunset approached they grew more and more anxious, and had decided to go in search of her when Lo-Fen arrived, with the terrifying news that she was shut up in the Mission House, and that the building was surrounded by a howling, murderous mob.

Leaving Lo-Fen to take care of the little foundling, they hurried down to the city, to find the gates closed.

They battered and shouted, but the walls above them showed no signs of life, nor did the four-storied tower, hanging top-heavily over the gates.

From where they were they could hear the distant roar of the mob.

Their hearts stood still within them.

At last a couple of guards appeared on the walls above their heads, but flatly refused to admit them.

Catherine and Haviland were distracted, and Mr. Blake wept with grief.

They tried entreaty, command, and bribery ; but all to no purpose.

Tears of helpless rage ran down Haviland's cheeks ; and, maddened with the obduracy and insolence of the guards, he hurled his weight against the wicket, which refused to give way even before his prodigious strength. Tu-Su, in Haviland's name, offered sums too colossal in the eyes of the sentries to be credited. They demanded that the money should be produced first, and jeered at mere promises.

And 'ever the distant roar of the crowd rose and fell.

From Mr. Blake came the most valuable suggestion.

"Perhaps the Living Buddha would help us. He did so before."

Ere the words were well out of Blake's mouth, Haviland had turned and fled up the hill towards the Monastery, leaving Catherine and Blake standing in helpless misery.

The distance to the Monastery seemed interminable. As he neared the entrance he remembered the Tibetan dogs, and revolved hastily in his mind how he should elude them. He passed through the arch and, neither seeing nor hearing any evidence of their presence, made a dash past the place where they had been on the former occasion, escaping by the fraction of an inch the closing of the powerful jaws, as the huge brutes leapt at the spot which he had that instant passed.

He went on hastily. He could hear the Lamas who acted as gate-keepers talking to the animals and pacifying them. It was now dark and they luckily had missed seeing him.

As he ascended the hill he hardly dared to look

back down upon the city for fear that flames rising from the Mission House should assure him of too hideous a truth.

His child, his little girl, was alone, defenceless, in the midst of those howling thousands, and nothing but a miracle could save her.

Of the humiliation of having to appeal to the Living Saint he recked nothing. He would have humbled himself to the dust for a little help.

The horror of a refusal never entered his brain. Somehow, from the first moment Blake had made the suggestion, he had felt that in the Living Buddha lay the certainty of help.

The climbing of the hill he remembered afterwards as if it had been a nightmare, a dream in which he was making for a place which seemed to grow further and further off as he moved towards it. A cold sweat broke out on his brow as he conjured up the scenes which might at the moment be taking place in the city.

Ever and anon the moon shone out between the driving clouds, illuminating with pale blue light the deserted spaces and pathways, a beam here and there falling upon the fantastic shape of a praying-wheel.

Quiet lay all around, save that from far below came the baying of the Monastery hounds. He went swiftly on, breathing heavily.

The monks had retired to rest, and the long rows of cells stretched away, ghostlike, on either side. Here, high up on the hillside, he could hear nothing of the yells of the mob, and thought it strange that so short a distance should baffle hearing. For one moment he was filled with hope that they had abandoned their attack. Then the other terrible possibility gripped his heart.

Once as he ascended he paused. In front of him he thought he saw several Lamas creeping along by the cells in the shadow, as if anxious to avoid observation.

They were members of the Nuchsia League, going to a meeting in the Tartar's cell, at which his own destruction was to be part of the plans for consideration.

When he reached the place where he had seen them, he concluded that they must either have been phantoms of his imagination, or that they had disappeared with incredible silence and speed down one of the many paths that led to the river.

Farther up he passed a watchman, who failed to see him.

At last he reached the open space at the top.

Through the doors of the Temple he could see a dim light burning. There were no doubt watchers there before that light which was never extinguished. He went on to the dwelling of the Saint.

The Lama who answered his knock was unable to take in his meaning, and he went to fetch some one else. The newcomer grasped that Haviland wished to see the Living Buddha, and shook his head vigorously. It was impossible. But Haviland had made up his mind that whatever happened he must see the only man who could save his daughter. He would not be denied, and bade the Lama in a tone of absolute command take his message.

Evidently impressed by Haviland's manner, he returned into the building, reappearing shortly afterwards with Ching-Lu, who was amazed to see the Englishman.

Haviland explained matters as briefly as he could. Ching-Lu took his message to the Saint, although he

felt even at the moment a perhaps natural irritation that this alien sect should appeal to them for help.

Haviland guessed something of his thoughts, for he himself felt humiliated at the fact.

Ching-Lu hastened to the Living Buddha's cell and knocked. There was no reply. He entered. It was empty.

He passed out into the gallery. The Master was standing at the further end, his face upturned to the sky, where the moon was breaking through a fabric of clouds.

"Master—master!" He had to speak twice ere the Living Buddha realised that he was not alone.

Ching-Lu explained Haviland's errand, and noted with wonder the sudden change that came over him.

Haviland's distress was not more marked than his own.

For one moment he thought deeply, and then bade Ching-Lu give the order to have the Monastery bell rung, which was only sounded in moments of emergency, or at a sudden and special call to prayer.

He went out and saw Haviland, promising him help. Haviland, even in the midst of his own grief and suspense, marvelled at the agitation of this usually reserved and dignified figure.

"The maiden is alone?" he asked. "Alone in Tsang-Lo?"

Haviland murmured an affirmative.

From the cells that ran round the side of the hill, from those stretching away east and west by the water's edge, the Lamas swarmed up. The sound of the bell reached the conspirators in the Tartar's far-off cell, and startled them into a fear that perhaps

all had been discovered. Swiftly they obeyed the summons, going singly, and losing themselves amongst the hastening throng.

Attava having chosen such of the Lamas as he could depend on, bade the others return to their cells, and set out with Haviland to the town.

Ching-Lu and Haviland walked by his swiftly moving chair. It was now quite dark, the moon being hidden. A drizzling rain had begun to fall.

They found Catherine and Mr. Blake looking the picture of misery and woe.

Attava knocked at the gate of the city and demanded entrance. It was an ancient privilege of the Head of the Monastery to go in and out as he pleased.

The man, who at the summons appeared on the wall above their heads, went down on his hands and knees at the sight of the Saint; but, to the astonishment of all, at first refused to open the gates.

The lanterns lit up the Living Buddha's majestic countenance as he again demanded entrance, this time in a voice which terrified the man, threatening to bring the six thousand Lamas down from the hill and storm the city if necessary.

The man was cowed, and threw the gates open.

Attava, followed by his Lamas, was about to enter, when suddenly he realised what he had done. He had threatened to use force, and if need be to shed blood. He had been false to himself, to the glorious principles which he taught and by which he had ever endeavoured to live.

He instructed Ching-Lu to take the larger number of his followers and proceed to the girl's rescue. With a deep sense of humiliation he re-entered his

chair and bade them take him back to the Monastery.

While he had stood commanding them to open the gates by right of his ancient privilege, Catherine had been studying his face for the first time.

The lanterns carried by his attendants rendered it only fitfully apparent in detail. Catherine, scarcely conscious in that moment of excitement of the extraordinary effect that was being produced upon her, was roused in every nerve by the sympathetic vibrations of this man's being.

Fascinated, she watched his every movement, and hung on his words.

As he entered his chair their eyes met for one brief moment.

Catherine felt the blood leave her heart.

Then the sedan-chair, with its bearers and swaying lanterns, moved away up the hillside; and she, her husband, and the Lamas, went on into the city.

But a voice within her was crying—

“Where—and when?”

CHAPTER XXIV

ATTAVA'S intention—the first impulse of the man within him—had been, as soon as the gates were opened, to go in and with his own hands deliver Ruth, or—and a shudder shook his frame at the idea—if the worst had happened, to take a terrible vengeance on the perpetrators of the outrage.

Moved as never before, all the instincts that he had fought against and suppressed played upon by the unexpected problem of sex, his habits of self-control yet reasserted themselves, and he went sadly back, anguished with suspense, as a punishment for the unrighteousness of his impulse.

He stretched out his arms in an agony, calling on the Fathers to save this being, the one thing which had made him weak. Each tiny incident of the short interviews he had had with the girl came back to him. His love for her had come upon him so suddenly, as a gift, something to compensate for the cold spirituality in which his human soul, in spite of itself, cried out at times for sympathy of its own kind.

There had been something in the girl's upturned face when he surprised her kneeling upon the carpet of yellow flowers: a frank trust—almost adoration—adding fuel to the fire which the first sight of her had lit in his soul. Her face had obtruded itself through

his prayers. He had seen her form, wraith-like, defined amidst the incense clouds as he worshipped in the Temple. She had stolen into his dreams, and at night, when the Monastery slept, he had found himself—he knew not how—bending from the gallery towards the place where she lay.

He had yielded more than once to the temptation of seeking the spot where they had met, unaware that on each of these occasions he had been spied on. He knew that sooner or later he would have to tear her image out of his heart, and as yet this very image had only grown stronger and more vivid day by day.

That she was bound to him by ties invisible to human eyes, formed in lives remote from his present one, he had no doubt.

He realised—and his inspired vision into the eternal justice of things accepted—the impossibility of their ever coming together in this world.

He had lived so remote and apart from human passion that he had imagined himself free from the danger of it. The one human prejudice—for such it was when viewed from his exalted standpoint—was that in favour of Ching-Lu, the spiritual enthusiasm and friendship for a character that had shown itself so lofty and capable of sacrifice. He admitted sadly that the strength of the passion was necessarily in proportion to the strength of the pride which had made him conceive himself free from the possibility of it.

In the midst of these reflections his mind flew back to the city. Perhaps at this moment they were bearing that exquisite fleshly tenebment from the accursed slums, all its beauty distorted and marred. If that were so, he had his soul's assurance that she would be near him. His religion forbade him to use

his occult power—in which the secret documents of the Monastery had instructed him—for the purpose of ascertaining this, or for any other selfish motive.

In one moment he could have so separated his earthly from his inner vision as to accomplish this.

As his hand sought his throat to loosen his robe, a small round metal substance came away in it. The fine gold chain which had secured it had snapped. It was the first time it had been off his neck since he was a boy—in fact, he never remembered being without it—and as it lay in the palm of his hand he examined it attentively.

It bore the impress of a crown and three figures.

When he alighted at the door of his palace—it was etiquette to call it so, although no Lama was more humbly lodged—those around him drew back in amazement.

His face bore terrible traces of the struggle he had just passed through.

The Tartar, who was standing by, called the attention of those nearest to him, murmuring—

“It is an agony for the safety of the foreign woman.”

“Yet he did not enter the city to save her,” answered another.

Makah's subtle brain at once twisted the circumstance to his own interest.

“That was his cunning,” he retorted, “It was safer for the girl that he should not go.”

“And yet,” said the other doubtfully, “we have watched many evenings, and they have not met as thou saidst they would.”

“Patience, patience,” whispered another voice behind them. It was that of the older monk—the one who had brought the head of the Fuchsia League to the Tartar's cell.

Some time after Ching-Lu returned.

Attava felt the words die away in his throat as he tried to question him about the girl's safety.

Ching-Lu forestalled him.

"She is safe. Pao-Tung came to her rescue."

Attava gave a great sigh, and he repeated—

"Pao-Tung?"

"He commands the military in the district."

The Living Buddha remembered. He had seen him once in the Temple, a blaze of gorgeous silk and fur, with jewelled sword and cap.

"He was keeping guard over her when we arrived. Strange—one of his birth should be so anxious about a barbarian's safety." Ching-Lu was so accustomed to speak of all foreigners as barbarians that he did so as a matter of habit, and not of contempt, which he was far from feeling.

Attava had never given Ching-Lu, the friend of his soul, the least clue to the truth.

He had been so accustomed to fight his soul's battles without any other earthly aid than his own strength, that it never struck him to seek sympathy and consolation from his friend. More than once young Lamas had sought his help and advice in keeping their vows of celibacy. Love never having come to him he had wondered at the overwhelming passion which seemed to have taken possession of them and to be sweeping them away. Yet he had thought that he understood, and perhaps he had done so more than any other man would have been able who, like himself, had not met with some definite temptation.

As Ching-Lu stood relating to him the details of what had nearly been a hideous tragedy, Attava was arguing with his conscience whether it was not perhaps

pride—a mere desire not to part with the least shadow of his spiritual prestige—which kept him from confiding in his friend. He was too accustomed to judge swiftly and rightly in matters of conscience not to decide at once when it became necessary to do so.

But what could he tell Ching-Lu?

A woman he had met twice in all his life, who hardly understood when he spoke to her, who probably looked upon him as he ought to look upon her—as something apart. Their paths could never by any chance lie together. He would make an end of it, face it as he had faced many other struggles, and put the memory of her away from him.

There were lights moving far away below in the dwelling of the Europeans.

In silence he and Ching-Lu stood watching them as they flitted about in the darkness.

“It would be as well,” said Ching-Lu at last, as one by one the twinkling points in the abyss were extinguished, and they looked down upon impenetrable darkness, “if these people went away while there is yet time. If they do not there will be serious mischief.”

“They will never go while they conceive it their duty to remain—whilst they think they are doing the work of their God. It is strange, though, that it is we—whom they talk of as idolaters—who should have saved them twice from death.”

There played round his mouth for a moment a smile which betrayed a sense of humour in the highest things only possible to a fine intellect.

There was a pause, and when he spoke again he put into words exactly the thoughts which were in Ching-Lu's mind.

“Our people will not be pleased with to-night's

work. If I could only teach them that on each occasion when we have stood between the Christians and their persecutors it has been a triumph of our own holy religion!"

"I heard those who had not returned to their cells murmuring. There seems," said Ching-Lu, thoughtfully, "to be a spirit of unrest and discontent amongst the Lamas, the reason for which I am unable to fathom."

"We must have patience," returned the other. "Think what this Monastery was, and what it is. We have restored some of the outward semblance of purity and holiness. To cleanse its heart will take longer. We have endeavoured to change the old ways of sloth and corruption. We have planted the good seed. We must not look to see the tree grow, put forth branches and leaves, and bear rich fruit as we gaze upon it."

"It is often difficult to bear with ingratitude and ignorance."

"Were it not for these very things there would be little need for our work."

"Yet my spirit fails me when I think of the millions spread over this pleasant land, all of them with their eyes looking downwards to earth, none of them towards heaven."

The Buddha laid his hand affectionately on the young man's shoulder.

"Patience always—nothing but patience," he said. "Each wandering soul shall be gathered in in good time. It is part of our trial to live, in what is the mere flash from eternity, the sorrows and griefs that make our lifetime." He looked down on the young man gravely and sweetly. The other returned his glance with an affectionate smile. Never since the

day he had first cast from him his rich apparel and high estate, and acknowledged this man Master, had a word spoken in that mellow, musical voice failed to sustain and console him.

They were interrupted by an important message from the Chief Mandarin. It was written in the stilted Chinese official manner, and ran:—

“TO HIS HOLINESS THE LIVING BUDDHA OF
TSANG-LO MONASTERY.

“I trust thy health is good, and I congratulate thee on thy many virtuous deeds.

“Thou well knowest—for we have talked together on the matter—that there have lately arrived in Tsang-Lo several barbarians, professing to teach a religion which cannot but be regarded as a heresy most dangerous to all. They have already been the cause of much disturbance and annoyance in the city, and I am credibly informed that on each occasion they owed their safety to thy sheltering protection. They may therefore be inclined to listen to thy reverent and exalted advice, and depart from the city ere further mischief has occurred.”

The Buddha having read the letter through handed it to Ching-Lu, who said—

“Poor man! He is aware that the necessary soldiers for keeping order exist only on paper, and that if a more than ordinary disturbance were to occur he might have to disburse large sums for compensation. However, if these foreigners are wise they will leave Tsang-Lo without further warning than that which was furnished them to-night.”

Attava raised his hand in blessing, and Ching-Lu retired.

CHAPTER XXV

AS Ching-Lu left him the Master resumed his ceaseless pacing.

The eyes of the image at the end of the gallery had always troubled him. As he walked away from it he felt them following his retreating form, and when he turned he was startled, so alert was the gaze with which it confronted him. The almost fantastic, weird impression that it produced on him was a legacy of his childhood, for in the Monastery there was a room round the sides of which were ranged long rows of these images interspersed with those of other gods.

They had seemed to him, owing to the way in which childhood magnifies familiar objects, to be gigantic and menacing.

In those days he used to receive pilgrims in that room, and he recalled himself as he was, a laughing, golden-haired child, still unsaddened by the consciousness of the corruption amongst which he was living.

There was one of these figures, that of Kwanyian, Goddess of Mercy. It was very gracious, and the one he loved most to contemplate.

She bore in her arms a child.

Once, in his early boyhood, he found his eyes blinded by tears as he looked upon her.

Was it the suggestion of motherhood in the sculptured woman and child that roused in him the yearning desire for an influence and affection which he had never known?

It was in after years that this suggested itself as an explanation of the sudden wave of sorrow, intangible and mysterious, which had swept over him.

Above the rows of figures hung Temple banners and flags. On some were pictured, surrounding the single and larger figure of the Buddha, innumerable kneeling Lamas. On others were the figures of the different deities, or rather saints, of the Buddhist faith.

The ceiling had been a wonder and a delight to his childish eyes. There were extraordinary, twisted, gilt dragons leaping from the heart of the wood. There were wonderful birds, beasts, and flowers painted in resplendent blues and greens, with here and there a violet splash. The doorway was a fascinating tower of porcelain, and used to rise before him, pagoda-like, as he sat at the other end of the room through the weary hours of ceremonial.

Inconsequently these memories crowded in upon him as he continued his weary walk to and fro.

The night had by this time become gloriously light. The desire to be out in the air, to hear again the voice of life, seized him. Conscious of the loss of balance that his mind was at the moment suffering from, he thought communion with the immensely silent might give him back his calm and courage.

He went down to the Temple, and as he passed through the base of the image a figure stole out of the shadows and followed him.

He was soon on the rocky plateau where Ruth had first seen him, and sat down to reflect.

One thing was certain. He must persuade these Christians to leave the place. Once away from Tsang-Lo she would by degrees become an abstraction which might even be a spur and an incentive. He felt almost mortified at the suffering which he was enduring for the sake of mere earthly passion.

Bathed in moonlight the landscape lay spread out before him, and its great serenity brought comfort to his soul.

From the wide stretches of the rice fields beyond his gaze travelled back to the slope beneath, on which the dark patches showed where the fire of the flowers would flame up again when the sun arose.

Then his heart grew still and every limb became rigid as if he had been turned to stone.

A white figure was climbing the hillside.

At the distance he was unable to recognise her, yet he never doubted for one moment whose form it was that was coming towards him over the silver ridges of the mountain-slope. Neither did any other thought occur to him than that she was asleep, betraying in that sleep the secret of her waking hours.

Nearer she came, and, fascinated, he rose to his feet.

For a moment she disappeared from view, and he stood waiting breathlessly for her form to rise above the sharp edge-side of the plateau.

The time in which she was invisible seemed an eternity. Then, just as he was going forward, wondering whether it had not been all a dream, she stepped on to the flat surface where he stood.

She came towards him and almost brushed his robe as she passed.

She was now standing by the stone where he had

been sitting the first time she had seen him. She stretched out her hands and murmured—

“Attava, Lord—Master!”

An exquisite and intangible perfume floated to him from her hair. The night seemed full of the exhalations of flowers and the perfume that intoxicated him. It was some delicate Chinese scent, become love-laden incense through her use of it.

She stood for a moment by the vacant seat, a moment in which he suffered an eternity of temptation. Then she turned her unseeing eyes towards him, and he could see that there were tears glittering on the lids.

Again and again the faint, indefinable scent stole towards him, bringing with it all that had ever appealed to him of female charm.

Her throat was very white in the moonlight, and she moved away, going over the side of the slope like a silver star.

He could hear her sighing as she went, and, seized with a sudden fear for her safety, he followed her. Once or twice on the way down she stumbled and his hands had almost touched her. She paused by the patch of yellow flowers and then went down on her knees, groping about as if searching.

She crossed the stream and walked back, he ever following.

They reached the field and finally the group of mulberry-trees around the dwelling.

Catherine, restless, uneasy, had risen from her bed and had gone to see if Ruth were sleeping peacefully after the night's terrors.

The room was tenantless, and in her highly-strung state anticipating some fresh horror, she had hurried out to call her husband.

To her surprise the gate of the courtyard was wide open, and, going to it, she had seen the two figures advancing across the field.

As they drew near the Living Buddha put up his hand to enjoin silence, and Catherine saw that Ruth was asleep.

She looked at the girl and then again at the upraised hand of the Saint.

She staggered back as if she had been shot. The eyes that were looking out at her from the growing daylight were the eyes of the lover and husband of her girlhood.

The hand that was raised was maimed, as that of her child had been.

As she gazed, fascinated, he turned and went swiftly away.

A wail, an echo of that of nearly thirty years before, met the first breath of dawn and was borne by it, throbbing, over the silent fields.

CHAPTER XXVI

CATHERINE'S first impulse on seeing the figure of the Living Buddha standing before her was to cry out for Haviland, but she remembered Ruth just in time.

The girl had walked past her, up the steps of the verandah, and was now entering her room.

Catherine followed her swiftly, and, having seen her safely asleep in her bed, went out and sped down the field. She looked around.

There was no one.

The morning had almost come, but the curved and gilded roof of the Temple far above looked heavy and dull, lacking the illumination of the sun.

She went back and paced the verandah, now and then holding her hands to her head, which felt as if it must burst.

She was sure that she had not been mistaken, and as the sun flashed like a sheaf of fiery blades above the horizon her being was also warmed with the gladness of the tidings which it seemed to celebrate.

She felt the tears wet upon her cheek.

Later she and Haviland would go up to the Monastery, and when her child heard from her lips the truth, Nature herself would teach him to receive it.

Then, one by one, all those difficulties which

Haviland had gone over so wearily again and again during the last few weeks came to trouble her gladness.

The single idea of explaining the truth had seemed at first the simplest thing in the world.

Now all manner of complexities began to present themselves. She remembered that this child of hers had not been brought up in another faith as a layman—in which case she would have looked forward to his conversion with at least hope—but that he had become the very soul of an alien religion; and she had heard enough to convince her that there were a large and increasing number of disciples who believed that there had arisen in their midst another Tsong-Kaba, who would do for Buddhism in China what that Saint had done for it in Tibet.

Carefully, with tense brain, she went over all the possibilities of the situation.

She tried to conceive things as they would be when the truth had been told. With the training he had had he would probably say that if it were so, it was part of the scheme of those who rule the destinies of this planet.

His mission, her instinct told her, would be an infinitely more important thing to him than the recovery of a parent. Even in thinking it over she shuddered at the idea of her son being the High Priest of such idolatry.

If only a miracle would happen! If only the light of Christian faith could descend upon him instantly, as it had done to Paul of Tarsus, illuminating the dark corners of his soul, showing him that the phantoms of heathenism were not, except in the terrified imaginings of superstition!

The chaos of doubt and difficulty into which her

mind was thrown produced as a result an act natural to her. She sank on her knees, and bent her head in humble submission to the Saviour who had ever been to her the nearest and most sympathetic of friends.

She prayed long and earnestly for her son—prayed that the prayers of nearly thirty years might be answered; and then—overcome with sorrow, mingled with a certain relief that her doubts had been set at rest—she wept.

Rising to her feet she gazed long and earnestly at the Monastery above. She was striving to reconstruct the life her son had lived in these Temples with their tinsel and gaudy decorations, which had always been such abominations in her eyes.

Then she remembered, and it brought some degree of consolation, that even there he had done a great work. She herself had never been inside the Monastery, but her husband—with whom she had visited many others—had spoken of the extraordinary comparative cleanliness and order.

Was it possible that she might be mistaken? The very simplicity of the proof roused a passing misgiving. Almost as the doubt entered her mind she put it aside. Those eyes had been too startlingly like her husband's. The maimed hand!

The coincidence would have been too extraordinary.

In the first moments of wonder at the marvel of her son's appearance the mystery of his advancing across the field with Ruth had hardly occurred to her.

Whence had they come?

She looked up at the frowning, overhanging rock, and, ignorant of the fissure by which the Living Buddha reached the Monastery, the matter became more and more incomprehensible. Ruth had

wandered out in her sleep. It did not strike Catherine that she had gone further than the field or the path by the stream.

How had the other come across her?

At any rate, it would be difficult to tell her husband. He would think that, overcome by the excitement of the evening, she was the victim of a hallucination.

When he awoke the words with which she tried to explain matters died upon her lips.

Her obvious nervousness Haviland put down to the terrors of the previous night. He refused to allow her or Mr. Blake to go to the school, declaring that lack of judgment and tact was the bane of all missionary work, and that they must wait till things had settled down somewhat. They could not be sure that any moment would not bring an attack on the house. He posted look-outs on the road to the town, and at the first sign of a rising he determined to retire, if there were time, further into the country.

His mind on the main point, however, was made up.

The incidents of the night before had convinced him that it was necessary to inform Catherine of his final decision. He might have let the matter drag on for some time longer had it not been for the great danger involved in so doing.

After many years of doubt and of inward struggle he had put himself a straightforward question—Was he justified in going forth and offering the dogma of Christianity as the only means of salvation?

He had been obliged to answer—No.

His study of the entire system of the world's religions had taught him that it was a portion of the truth, but he felt that even though he could preach it as such he had no longer any right to remain in a

communion with which he had ceased to be in sympathy.

His early doubts had brought great suffering, the final step only a sense of enormous spiritual refreshment.

In cutting himself adrift from the Church, he felt that he was entering religion for the first time. He would no longer be a Christian as a sectarian, but a Christian equally as he was a Buddhist, Taoist, or a believer in any other faith warmed by the rays of the truth.

He could not go about preaching that he believed in the Trinity but denied the Church's interpretation.

To attempt to preach the subtleties of verities would be to pour out his strength upon the unfructifying rock.

There might still be great, useful work for him to do, and though the missionaries might do well in proclaiming that beyond which their intellectual limits had not gone, he felt that he himself would be more useful perhaps in even building a railway where it was wanted.

The worst part was that he had ever concealed his doubts and misgivings from Catherine.

He had not been able to reconcile it with his conscience to drag another soul out upon the tempestuous sea of question and speculation which he himself was navigating. To his wife he had simply seemed to be growing more and more Broad Church every day. The attitude which could at once reject and accept Christianity would be incomprehensible to her.

They were together, seated in the covered verandah when he told her.

Ruth, whose health and spirits made them feel

more uneasy day-by day, and who was hardly likely to benefit by the shock of the night before, was sitting some distance off with a book in her lap, her eyes looking dreamily out before her.

Catherine had been commenting on her lack of spirits, and Haviland eagerly seized at the idea of her returning to England.

"I am afraid," said Catherine, "that it was very selfish of us to bring her here at all. We should have sent her down to Shanghai as we were advised."

"You remember I suggested it and she refused. And when Ruth makes up her mind it is difficult to move her." Haviland would have liked to come straight to the point, and to tell Catherine that he had decided to give up his missionary work and if possible to return to England.

As far as the Living Buddha was concerned, he had fought the matter out, and had come to the conclusion that he would make all preparations for their leaving, and then tell Catherine of the suspicions he entertained as to his being her son. He could never reconcile it to his conscience to leave Tsang-Lo without having done so.

If on hearing the truth she absolutely refused to go, then Ruth must be sent by some means or other alone, and he would stay with her till perhaps as time went on she would be content to leave the position as it was. Catherine would probably deem it her bounden duty to make a great effort to bring her son to Christianity, although she would have to admit the absolute undesirability of trying to persuade him of his real identity. Haviland had been too strongly impressed by the Living Buddha's conviction of his own sacred personality for him to believe that he would ever consent to aban-

don his position as Head of the Monastery. He was one with his work, and that alone would render such a thing impossible.

"Why not take her ourselves?" said Haviland.

Catherine looked at him in surprise.

"How could we possibly do that? Do you mean that we might take her as far as Chang-King, and let her go down with somebody who is about to start?"

"No; I propose that we should return ourselves."

"I don't understand."

"My work as a missionary is ended."

Notwithstanding the agitation from which Catherine was suffering she was dumfounded. She turned and looked at her husband as if expecting to see the outward and visible sign of some ailment necessitating his return home at once.

He continued.

"You remember I have often told you that when I first came to India as a missionary I was very young. Looking back I doubt whether they had any right to send a man so young, one whose primitive Gospel faith had never been tried in the fire of life, experience, and knowledge. I have drifted further and further away from any Christian Church, although I cannot say that from my point of view I have drifted away from what I believe to be Christian teaching." He paused, as if half expecting a reply. Catherine making none, he went on. "One of my reasons for applying for permission to come as far as this was that I might think out the matter for myself, away from influence on one side or the other."

Still Catherine was silent.

"As a matter of fact," Haviland continued, "I am just as much prepared to preach pure Buddhism to-

morrow. To attempt to replace Buddhism or Taoism by Christianity is a work I will no longer have any part in. That saintly young man up yonder is, I am inclined to think, on the right path. He is reforming the religion which is most suited to the needs of these people."

"But," faltered Catherine, "do you no longer believe?"

"Not according to your definition of belief."

"But it is terrible!"

"No, for it has not shaken my belief in an all-just God for one moment."

"But how can you reconcile that statement?"

This was the point where Haviland felt it would be so futile to attempt to explain matters to his wife. What had taken him years to arrive at could not be put before her in a few minutes, or even a few hours. The whole process of thought which he had been following for so long would have to be traced back to the beginning. He wondered sadly whether this avowal would make a great difference between them. It seemed impossible that it should do so after so many years of true companionship.

"Of course," he said, "you must not think that I have been playing the hypocrite for years. As is the case with most great convictions, they seem to come suddenly, although the soil from which they spring has been unconsciously turned and turned, and made ready for the harvest."

She was looking at him sadly, and she put out both her hands and held one of his between them. Her own faith was so pure and strong that she was sorry, very sorry for him. She was thinking that at any rate he must regret the inability to hold any longer so beautiful and exalted a belief. To her, who had

worked so long in the Lord's vineyard, the cutting away of all the life and interest in which he was centred would be a terrible blow.

But worse than all was that this confession of her husband's should come at a moment when Tsang-Lo seemed to hold so much that was precious to her.

She must tell him of her suspicions, but somehow the first words that came were not concerning her son.

"Why did you not tell me?"

Affectionately he answered the pressure of her hands.

"At first there was nothing to tell. Everything seemed to reconcile itself to the Christian Church teaching. Then when I had gone a little further I could not see why I should call you out into the struggle and turmoil of doubt."

He appreciated her tenderness the more that he knew what a blow it must be to her.

It was worse than if he had been dead, dying a Christian according to her lights.

She was, however, not of the stuff of which persecutors are made. She was anxious to be of comfort to him. Everything was in God's hands, and He knew best.

"I sometimes think," said Haviland, looking towards his daughter "that Ruth is perhaps more like, in her attitude towards religion, what I should have been had my boyhood's bringing up been less narrow. It seems that creed and dogma are outside her life, and yet she is eminently religious."

"Do you wish to return to England at once, then?"

Haviland rose to his feet and took a hurried turn up and down the verandah.

His wife watched him in surprise. He appeared to be undergoing a great mental struggle.

At last he came and stood before her.

"Catherine, have you noticed a change in me lately?"

"I thought you were very preoccupied, but now I understand."

"There's something that I feel I ought to tell you—something that I've known for weeks."

Her eyes blazed with expectation. She rose to her feet with a cry.

"David!"

Ruth, sitting some way off, looked round.

"Hush!" said Haviland. He drew her into the dark shadows of the house, out of sight.

"You remember the day I first visited the Living Buddha?"

"Yes," answered Catherine, her voice hardly under her control.

"Well, directly I saw him I made sure he was a European, and I seemed to have seen his face somewhere before. It puzzled me so much that I could hardly fix my thoughts on what I was saying. While we were talking of this house, I put up my field-glasses, and then handed them to him. As he took them I noticed that his right hand was maimed. The thumb was missing."

His wife was standing before him, drinking in every word, her eyes dilated.

"The possibility flashed across me at once—and then one day an old Lama told me that this Living Buddha had been brought from India."

Catherine's bosom was heaving convulsively. Her breath caught and almost choked her.

"Then you knew——?"

"I knew?" he repeated questioningly. "What do you mean?"

She told him of what had happened the night before, and he gazed at her stupefied.

"What can it mean?" he murmured. "You are sure they crossed the field together?"

"Quite sure. David, what is to be done?"

"It is your boy, Kate, it is your boy."

Then Catherine sank into a chair, sobbing and trembling.

He took her in his arms soothingly.

As her sobs subsided they heard, borne to them from above, the sweet, musical sounds of the Monastery bells.

Any doubts Catherine might have had were now cleared away. It was an immense relief to her to find that there was no possibility of her having been mistaken.

They sat for some minutes in silence.

At last Catherine said, laying her hand pleadingly on her husband's arm—

"I could not leave Tsang-Lo now, David."

"Yet Ruth must be got away." He thought for a moment, and then added—

"Why not let us all four go down together? We can send Ruth to England, and you and I can return here. In fact, I can come up with my successor. I shall be another European in the place in case of trouble. You can continue your school work, and there will no doubt be heaps for me to do." And perhaps by degrees things may come right to a certain extent." He wished at once to assume the absolute futility of going to her son with the truth.

"Nothing," he continued, "would make him leave his work. He is wedded to it, and your being near

him after he is in full knowledge of the relationship between you could only embarrass him."

"You are very good," said Catherine gratefully.

"I am afraid," he continued, "that we shall have endless trouble here. The whole district seethes with Buddhist revivalism, and will more and more engender fanaticism and intolerance. You see," he said, making an attempt to trace for her his own line of thought, "religion in the hands of the generally uneducated is always fanatical—witness Christianity in medieval hands."

"David, I want my son. You remember how sure I have always been that he was alive. I knew it as if a voice from heaven had told me so."

"We must study him as well as ourselves. Think—after all, you have found a son to be proud of. It seems as if it were all the work of some unseen master-mind, as if he had been called out of the West to reform the beautiful creed which these people have distorted. Think of what—judging by that which he has already done—may be his destiny. The Chinese nation is in need of a great teacher. Perhaps you are the mother of such a one."

Talking to her in this manner he sought to lead her away from the contemplation of any sudden action.

The mystery of Ruth crossing the field in the early dawn with him still remained, obviously incapable of being solved with the evidence at their disposal.

Unless he had the power of ascending the sheer rock he must have come round by the path from the town, or across the fields.

How came he to be wandering there at night?

As they were speaking of the matter Ruth came up to them.

Both noticed how pale she was and how languid

her step, but put it down to the reaction from the evening before.

Haviland told her of his determination to send her back to England.

At the idea of leaving Tsang-Lo the girl turned white, and a look almost of terror came into her eyes. She managed to ask them calmly if they were going too.

Haviland did not think it necessary to tell her that his missionary work was over, but explained that he and Catherine intended to return to Tsang-Lo.

Hearing this Ruth absolutely declined to leave them.

Catherine pointed out that it was her health they were thinking of, adding that it was not right that she should spend the best years of her life cut off from companionship with those of her own age and race.

The girl declared almost excitedly that she was quite well.

"Let me stay with you," she pleaded, kneeling by Catherine, and leaning her head upon her shoulder. "I shall never be as happy anywhere else as I am with my father and you. You want to send me away because you think I don't take an interest in the schools and the mission work, but I will—at any rate in the school."

"My darling child!" protested Catherine.

"We can't be selfish about you always," added Haviland.

"There must be something," said Ruth. "It's because I was so careless last night, and nearly got you all into trouble." She was nervous and overstrung, and the tears rained down her cheeks.

Catherine, with a woman's instinct, saw that there was something troubling the girl beyond the events of the night before.

She began to think she had been mistaken, and to wonder whether Ruth had really cared for Fraser; but this supposition seemed improbable, inasmuch as she shrank from the idea of going down to Shanghai, in which case she would most likely meet him.

So keen was the girl's distress that Haviland said no more about it then, neither was it possible, as at that moment the young Mandarin arrived to convey the Chief Official's regrets at the violence of the mob.

The organisation of the missionary body to which Haviland belonged expressly forbade any deliberate complaint in the capacity of British citizens. The attention, therefore, gratified him. He and Catherine both thanked the young Mandarin warmly for his bravery.

Although Ruth hardly recognised the galvanised man of the previous night in the languid personality before her, Haviland thought he detected a change towards greater vitality in his appearance.

He expressed a desire to see Haviland alone, and Ruth and Catherine withdrew.

The eyes of the young man followed the girl's retreating form, fascinated.

Haviland asked him into the house, but he courteously declined, explaining that what he had to say had better be said where there was absolutely no chance of listeners.

He therefore took a seat on the verandah, as far away from the house as possible.

Very cautiously he told Haviland that, though he did so at great personal danger to himself, he must warn him that, however much the city might appear to settle down, there was no intention of allowing them to live at Tsang-Lo in peace.

He tried to convey to Haviland the extent of the

movement which was taking place against the foreigners, hinting that it was not alone at Tsang-Lo that the attack on them would be made.

Haviland unfortunately had heard this sort of report before, and was unable to comprehend the reality and extent of the danger which the Mandarin was endeavouring to impress on him without absolutely disclosing the secret of the Fuchsia Organisation.

Haviland explained that they intended shortly to leave, at any rate for a time.

On hearing this the Mandarin hardly knew whether to be pleased or not. The fact of their returning later on did not trouble him, as he expected any disturbance would be over by then.

Haviland further explained that it was for their daughter's health they were taking this step, and that they intended to leave her behind when they themselves came back to Tsang-Lo.

The young Mandarin, being himself absolutely ignorant as to what day would be chosen for the outbreak, could not guarantee their getting away in time, and therefore allowed the preparations for saving Ruth for himself to hold good should they not leave before they were attacked.

Haviland could not be at all sure that this warning was not a device of the Chief Official's, an attempt to frighten them away. At the same time, the Mandarin left behind him a sense of insecurity, and Haviland could not but feel thankful that they had decided to go away at least for a time.

Before he left, Ruth, afraid that she had not expressed sufficient gratitude the night before, thanked him earnestly for his help.

Her voice fell like music on his ears, and her difficult Chinese sounded wondrously quaint and

attractive. She roused an extraordinary tempest of passions within him. All the other women whom he had met and by whom he was surrounded became as nothing.

After she had thanked him he said that the best recompense he could have would be her wearing a charm which he would give her.

He took from his jacket a brooch of jade inlaid with rubies and diamonds.

Ruth would have liked to decline it.

It was an exquisite piece, of pure green; and must, she knew, be of great value. It struck her as she hesitated that he looked hurt, so, remembering the service he had rendered her, she took it from him and fastened it into her dress.

He went out from her presence more hopelessly absorbed by her being than ever, and as he was borne towards the city a slight tremor shook him, realising that she could never belong to him.

Hardly had the young officer gone when Ching-Lu arrived.

He had come to request Haviland to visit the Living Buddha, saying courteously that the Master would have called upon him, but that such a concession would only annoy the Lamas and the people, and would be likely to prejudice them still more against the Europeans.

Lo-Fen had not been seen since the previous evening, and it seemed more than probable that he had bolted, to make sure of saving his own skin, at any rate.

Haviland was most disinclined to leave the house under the sole protection of Mr. Blake and Tu-Su. He decided, however, to take the risk.

Catherine looked after him sadly as he went on the visit to her son. She was hungrily envious.

CHAPTER XXVII

As Ching-Lu and Haviland passed up the hillside towards Attava's dwelling, they saw standing about many groups of excited Lamas. Evidently something unusual was afoot, and Ching-Lu looked around in amazement.

The calm of the Monastery had been disturbed during the last half-hour, and he was unable to discover the reason.

Once or twice as they neared several of the chattering monks their conversation ceased suddenly, as if it were something they did not wish Ching-Lu to hear.

Haviland, as he walked along, was revolving in his brain what Catherine had told him about Attava and Ruth.

Should he throw out a hint which would give the Saint an opportunity of elucidating the mystery?

He must tread cautiously, or there was no knowing what mischief might not be made.

Near the Temple at the top they passed Makah and the Tatar monk. Ching-Lu thought that the young Tibetan threw a glance of ill-concealed triumph towards him and the Englishman.

Two or three minutes more and Haviland was once again ushered into the presence of Catherine's son.

Ching-Lu left them together. Haviland hastened to thank him for his services of the night before. He was struck by a subtle change in the Saint's appearance. The great calm and control which had impressed him so much the first time had given way to a suggestion of unrest.

It seemed to Haviland that he was less apart, that his being was more disturbed by earthly vibrations.

As Ching-Lu had said, he was anxious for their safety. He had done all in his power to persuade his people to be tolerant and broad-minded, but it was impossible to create saints out of the lower human clay. The stories that had come up from other districts where there were Christians had seized hold of the minds of the people. The mob believed the tales of horrible atrocities which were ascribed to them. There were people in Tsang-Lo who declared themselves witness of the digging up of the body of a child who had been in the care of the missionaries at T-Chang, and asserted that it showed signs of having been subjected to the most horrible mutilation.

The converts who had already been made were the objects of daily threats.

At the mention of the converts Haviland winced. It seemed cowardly to be running away even for so short a time from those who trusted them.

He was amazed at the earnestness with which the Living Buddha pleaded for their departure. That it was fear that they were compromising himself he did not believe. There was something about Attava which rendered it impossible to suspect his motives.

He then mentioned the child that Catherine had rescued.

"They say it is sick."

"That is so. But surely the child they themselves left to die of exposure——"

The Living Buddha interrupted him quickly.

"Shall we look for argument in sheep? They say that it was only saved to torture it."

Then Haviland told him that he had that morning quite made up his mind to leave Tsang-Lo, at least for a time. He and his wife were anxious that his daughter should return to her own country.

Haviland had expected some sign of relief, but on being told this the Living Buddha sat as if carved out of stone.

After some seconds of absolute silence, Haviland continued, saying that if anything would prevent his going it would be threatened violence towards himself, and more especially towards the converts.

He did not think it necessary to say that his own share in missionary work was coming to an end.

During the interview he had been studying the Living Buddha carefully, and one by one all the salient points of his personality showed sympathetic to those in Catherine. This was indeed the son of the strongly religious character—with its tremendous sense of duty and loyalty to those around—and clearly the son of the man whose character Haviland knew by heart—the character too broadly religious to be bound by dogma, but impressed by the amount of truth and beauty to be found in any faith.

The man before him was the essence of both. Little wonder that he had become an inspired teacher. The idea of interfering with his work by the imposing of an earthly tie would be sacrilege.

He inquired of Haviland whether they would all accompany him, mentioning his colleague.

The idea of poor Blake left to himself in Tsang-Lo brought a smile to Haviland's face, although this was exactly what the plucky little man had wanted when Haviland had hinted that he and Catherine might have to take Ruth down to Chang-King.

He rose to take his leave, when the Buddha drew him gently to the end of the gallery and bade him look down. Haviland did so, and the other pointed out the rocky platform below, from which the slope of the mountain commenced.

"I trust thee with a secret," he said. "It is possible to reach that spot without going round by the Monastery and ascending the slope to it from the other side. It is my habit to commune there with the Supreme Thought. I was in that place last night when a maiden came thither in her sleep. I followed her back to her dwelling to see that no harm befell her. Dost thou understand me?"

"I understand you," answered Haviland, "and I thank you." He withdrew.

In the corridor he met Ching-Lu, who appeared disturbed. He paused for a moment irresolutely on seeing Haviland, but finally turned and accompanied him to the confines of the Monastery. The groups of Lamas had somewhat dispersed. After having said farewell to Haviland, Ching-Lu hurried back to the Buddha.

The most extraordinary rumours had, during the short time Haviland had been with the Master, reached his ears. A distorted version of the incident of the night before, which, unknown to Attava, had been observed by several of the monks, had been repeated to him.

What these corruptly minded men had made of the simple incident was to Ching-Lu a blasphemy.

He hardly knew how to approach the Master with the story, and yet he felt that it must be told.

On returning to him he found him surrounded by some officials of the Monastery to whom he was giving orders.

Ching-Lu was at once conscious of an atmosphere of resentment in them. It was so marked that he wondered that the Buddha did not detect it. Attava had a habit, however, of ignoring petty displays of irritation, and went calmly on with his work till he had transacted his business with each one and dismissed him. He knew that Ching-Lu had entered in a state of unusual excitement to tell him something, but it was not in his nature to interrupt the work in hand unless expressly asked to do so.

When they were alone he turned to him inquiringly.

"Holiness, there must be some influence working against thy authority. There has been brought to me a scandalous story."

"If it be but scandal, let us hear no more of it."

"It concerns thee, Master, and is vouched for by many of the brethren."

The Buddha looked at him searchingly.

"What do they say?"

"They say that last night——" Ching-Lu paused. It required courage to continue——"Thou wast seen on that slope, alone with the foreign girl."

He went to the end of the gallery and pointed downwards. He had expected anger at the least. He had not believed that the Buddha could be proof against so deadly an insult, but the Master only looked more thoughtful, and answered——

"And what if it were so?"

Ching-Lu looked at him in amazement. There was a curious meaning in the Buddha's voice.

"What if it were so?" he murmured dazed.

"Ching-Lu," said the Buddha softly, "ever since we first met, and thou mad'st election to help me in my task and to be my brother of brothers, every secret of my soul hath been shared with thee." He then told Ching-Lu of his first meeting with Ruth, and poured out the whole story of his love for her.

Ching-Lu listened, thunderstruck, but he at once saw how little those who had slandered him understood this man. He might be vilely tempted—he could not himself be vile.

"There must be some tie between us, the remnant of an earthly passion indulged too much in another life. I should have told thee of this before," he continued, noticing the crestfallen look of his disciple, "but where would have been the profit?"

Ching-Lu was silent. He was thinking what a weapon this would be in the hands of the reactionary party, to what dimensions the story would swell by the time it had gone the round of the country side. The fact that Attava could be victim to an earthly passion lowered him in his eyes not at all, for he could see that the acuteness of the suffering was only equalled by the certainty of victory.

Suddenly an idea struck him, and he exclaimed—

"But these men must have been spying!"

Of this Attava had no manner of doubt. It was not the point which interested him.

The way down through the Temple was certainly supposed to be a secret known but to a select few. The discovery of it by others did not appear to him to be of the greatest moment.

In former days it had been the secret of the Living Buddhas and the immediate heads of the Monastery, and had no doubt been used for some such purpose

as that which the cavesdroppers had attributed to Attava.

"Why should they have been spying?" questioned Ching-Lu.

"It is some attempt to discredit me."

There was a sound of voices without, and the Tartar, followed by several of the monks, burst in. Simultaneously, however, some of the Buddha's personal following entered from another door, and stood round him ready for eventualities.

Even these looked perturbed. The Master had been accused of treason to the very vow on loyalty to which he placed the greatest importance.

Makah was not with those malcontents who entered the room.

The Saint met the intruders with a stern glance, which was sufficient, first to bring them up abruptly, secondly to wring from them the homage due to him.

"What is the meaning of this discourtesy?"

The Tartar spoke.

"We have been told that which has so amazed us that we would have some answer for thy traducers."

"What have ye been told?"

"There are six brothers here who say that they saw thee, Holiness, walking by night with the foreign girl who dwells below."

Attava looked at them in silence for a moment, his face neither betraying anger nor irritation. After a moment he put the simple question—

"Where?"

The Tartar went to the side of the gallery and pointed down to the platform.

"On the slope at the base of this rock."

"At what hour?"

"An hour before dawn."

For one moment those in front of him thought the Buddha was about to argue the question, and this emboldened them. Their manner gathered assumption.

"Let those who say they saw this thing come forward."

Three or four of the monks standing behind the Tartar did so.

"What were ye doing from your cells at that hour?" interrogated the Buddha sternly.

At the unexpected question they slunk back amongst their brethren abashed.

Those behind the Living Buddha waited, breathless and expectant.

At all times the Master had preached continence to them, pleaded with them for purity, had implored them to work, each in subduing himself, so that the reputation of the Monastery might be lifted from that of the most corrupt to that of the most incorrupt.

The only time he had been known to become passionate was in thundering at those whom he believed to be backsliders in this respect; therefore those behind him—who worshipped and followed him implicitly—waited to hear the accusation flung back in the teeth of those who made it.

They were almost stupefied when the Living Buddha added—

"Those who were away from their cells contrary to the laws of the Monastery will be punished. They were right—they saw me walking by night with the foreign woman. What then? Is there any one here who dares bring a worse accusation?" He paused for a reply. There being none, he said, "If ye have anything to say, say it."

There was still silence, and finally the Buddha pointed gently towards the door.

They stole out one by one. When the last had gone there was again silence. Then Ching-Lu made a gesture to the disciples who were standing round, and they also withdrew.

The Saint sat still with his gaze bent upon the ground. Ching-Lu went to the side of the gallery and looked over, hardly conscious of what he was doing.

When he turned the Buddha's eyes were fixed upon him, and they were wet with tears.

"Our strength will now be put to the test," he said. And as he spoke the sense of impending disaster was upon him.

Ching-Lu and he sat and talked earnestly over what was to be done.

That the reactionary party would make the most of the weapon which had been put into their hand they entertained no doubt.

"To our most beloved brethren thou may'st tell the truth, but if my life is not a sufficient recommendation for the belief in me of the rest, then time must teach them to disbelieve."

Ching-Lu heaved a sigh of relief when the Buddha told him that Haviland was leaving Tsang-Lo, at least for a time. He was a keen observer of character, and had lived so much in the stormy atmosphere of Peking—where the conflicting elements of the Court were only equalled by the antagonisms of the Europeans—that his opportunities for judging the character of the Western nations had been exceptional. From the first Haviland had puzzled him, so unlike was he to any of the numerous missionaries he had come across. He had met much earnestness and devotion amongst

them, but hardly great mentality, and certainly nothing like the intellectual breadth of Haviland. Although the opportunities he had had of studying him had been few, they had been sufficient to convince him of his general superiority. He had detected a strong resemblance in character between the Master and this Englishman; and, seeing them together, had been convinced that there was between them a sympathetic sentiment.

The belligerent attitude of the monks over the incident of the night before astonished him. It conveyed a disagreeable impression of organised revolt.

Till now their discontent had seemed only a difficulty attendant on the reforming of a corrupt orthodoxy.

His former connection with the aristocratic party of conservative reaction had shown him that there was a growing organisation throughout the Empire for the purpose of driving out the foreigner. He had, however, seen so much of the futility of Chinese organisations in general that he did not believe in its ever reaching a sufficiently efficient condition to act otherwise than in isolated outbreaks. He had seen enough to convince him that the foreigner would have made sure his footing long before the secret and so-called patriotic societies were ready. He had therefore no fear of a great national rising.

It was since his adherence to the Monastery of Tsang-Lo that the personality which now controlled the Fuchsia League had arisen, grasping with a master-mind the details of organisation, and swiftly giving cohesion to the vast machine which was to do the work.

Of all this Ching-Lu was ignorant. He simply

believed that Haviland and his party were in imminent danger of being massacred by the populace. The riot of the night before confirmed this view.

Makah—who was silently pursuing his object—had taken care so far to keep out of the way.

The head of the Fuchsia League had not told him what he himself believed to be probable: that if anything happened to Attava he would most likely be torn to pieces by the mob. He had not thought it necessary—reflecting cynically that Living Buddhas were as plentiful as babies.

But Makah had himself given the matter some thought, and it was not his intention to join too largely in the attack on the Head of the Monastery. When the work was done he would come forward and, producing the proofs of his identity, save the situation from chaos.

Besides, they had a trump-card to play. It had been Makah's brilliant idea. He undoubtedly had genius and determination of no common order.

The night the fat man had come to his cell he had stated with authority that Attava was a foreigner by birth. Makah had not been slow to see the opportunity. He and his fellow-conspirators intended to state that the Living Buddha was none other than a foreigner doing the work of the barbarians.

They little knew how near the truth they were.

An ominous calm brooded over the Monastery for the rest of that day. The Buddha attended the service in the Temple, and sat—like a child's dream of the Deity—throned on clouds of incense.

He spoke to the pilgrims as before words of counsel and wisdom. But now some of the monks found themselves whispering "Hypocrite."

When night came he was on his knees in the plain, bare cell where he slept, wrestling in a great agony. At the moment of his direst need the superb figure who had stood before him on the threshold of his career was with him once again, framed in its radiation of translucent blue which seemed to burn with an even steadier glow.

He waited, knowing that it had come to give him words of comfort.

"Be of good cheer. The end is almost come. Be thou strong for yet a little while."

And a great peace fell upon the Buddha's soul.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ON returning, Haviland found his wife in a state of great distress. The baby, which had been ill for some days, was worse.

A tremulous wail came from the house, and Haviland hastened in.

Catherine found time to make a hurried and whispered inquiry as to how the Buddha looked, and if he were well. Had the need of attending to the child not been pressing she would have wished him to sit down and tell her every detail of the interview.

The afternoon had become almost chilly, and the wailing of the child assisted a grey and dreary sky in producing an atmosphere of gloom.

The little thing lay in Ruth's arms, and she was walking up and down with it, pale and anxious.

Now and then the child ceased its wail and dozed off for a moment or two, only to wake up with a sudden, pathetic cry as if asking for help against that which oppressed it.

The exposure that the poor mite had undergone had proved too much for its constitution.

As Haviland entered the room it was seized with a paroxysm of whooping-cough so long that he was convinced it was the end. In a minute or two,

however, the poor little thing, thoroughly exhausted, lay just breathing.

Everything had been done for it.

It was improbable that the child would be able to withstand any more such attacks. Seeing that he could not help further, Haviland went out and spoke to Tu-Su, telling him to get things together, as directly the child was well enough to be moved they intended to make a start.

Tu-Su was enchanted. He hated Tsang-Lo, and preferred not to be a martyr unless it was absolutely necessary. In reply to his master he said there were no tidings of Lo-Fen, and proceeded to explain that his disappearance was in his opinion a sinister omen. Lo-Fen, he said, had mixed much more with the townspeople than any other member of the party. He had probably heard that there were to be attacks on the Christians, and had preferred to seek the safety of his native town. Tu-Su had never been in a district where religious feeling ran so high, and he was somewhat puzzled at the presence of so saintly a personality amongst the Buddhists as Attava.

Ruth came up as Haviland was giving Tu-Su the necessary directions. She looked astonished.

"Are we going, then?"

"My dear, there are occasions when I, as head of an expedition like this, must use my own judgment. I do not consider it safe for us to remain longer in the district—at any rate for the present."

The girl paled visibly, and Haviland noticed it.

"But what does it matter? We are all going together." It struck him for one moment how pleasant it would have been if they had been about to return to England, and a shadow came over him that the obstacle which prevented this should have

came so inopportune. — He, however, thrust the thought aside as unworthy. He had a horror of doing anything which might suggest to him that his character had not been improved by his development of thought.

"Of course, of course," said Ruth. But although she spoke with an attempt at cheerfulness the pallor grew, and she cast her eyes involuntarily towards the Temple above.

Haviland caught the almost instantaneous direction of her gaze, and it was like an index to what had puzzled him in her of late. He told himself that his brain was becoming unhinged by the complications in which he was living. Surely it was impossible.

And yet, had her sure instinct detected her racial equal in this man, penetrating unerringly through the paraphernalia of vestment and ritual circumstance?

It was just such a character as would rouse the adoration of a girl like Ruth.

Again and again he tried to laugh the idea from him; and ever it returned, proving itself by a hundred and one little evidences which had meant nothing to him at the time, but which now crowded in upon him.

The night before she had asked for him when they rescued her. He remembered the glad, exalted look that had come into her face when she heard that he had sent his Lamas to her help.

It was the young Mandarin who had saved her, and she had been grateful, and had expressed her gratitude. But the intention of the one, he could now see, thrilled her, while the deed of the other had only brought sincere thanks.

But surely she was not in love with a man whom,

as far as he knew, she had seen but twice—for the night before she had been asleep.

A cold tremor seized him. He wondered whether he had been mistaken in this man.

Was he after all a gigantic hypocrite, and was what his wife had seen the night before some wretched hypnotic trick?

This was the first woman of his own race, with the exception of Catherine, whom he had seen.

Perhaps the concentrated passion of years, dry tinder from long disuse, had blazed into flame.

The cold sweat broke out on Haviland's brow as he thought of the possibility.

He finished giving Tu-Su instructions as well as he could, and then returned to the house.

He stole a furtive glance at Ruth, and saw that she was weeping silently.

"My darling child—what is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing. Last night upset me—that is all." She escaped from him to her room.

Very thoughtfully and gravely Haviland walked along the verandah towards the room where Catherine was nursing the child.

On his way he met Blake, who was wandering about like a lost soul.

"Rather ignominious, this return, isn't it, Haviland?"

Haviland's nerves were in a high state of tension, and the suggestion that he would do anything ignominious would have been at any time irritating to him.

"I don't know why," he said sharply. "When it's a certainty of being murdered there's not much advantage to be gained by stopping where we are. They wouldn't appreciate your sacrifice, Blake—even if you

do want to set an example by being tied up in a sack and thrown into the river."

Mr. Blake quite jumped. Martyrdom was to him a great abstraction. To reduce it to detail struck him as being vulgar anticipation.

A cry from the inner room reached Haviland.

He hurried in. With horror in her eyes Catherine held out the child to him. Its body was just settling down with a last quiver into the stillness of death.

He took it in his arms during the final struggle, and then handed it—looking like a wax doll—back to his wife.

He called Ruth, and the two women laid out the tiny Chinese foundling that had crept so pathetically into their hearts.

Haviland came in later and found his wife praying by the improvised bier, on which the morsel of dead humanity lay in its little white nightdress, with a spray of azaleas, pink against the waxen pallor and black hair.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE young Mandarin sat in his house, filled with gloomy thoughts.

He had heard of the rumour which was going the rounds about Ruth and the Living Buddha. It had been carefully disseminated by the rebellious monks, and when it reached him it was as a story vouched for as authentic.

It changed the whole current of his feelings towards her. He hardly paused to argue with himself. The authority of the story was undeniable.

This man who had been setting himself up as a saint was a wretched hypocrite and, what was more, had won the thing he loved. He would carry out his original idea, no matter what it cost; and, inasmuch as the ideal atmosphere in which he had enshrined her had been dissipated by the breath of scandal, he would bend her to his will.

Wherever he went he heard ribald jests at the expense of the Buddha and the barbarian girl. It infuriated him.

The aristocratic society in which he moved, cynically indifferent to religion, and disliking the barbarians, thought it an excellent joke. The story gained ground daily, and those who believed it, and those who did not believe it, formed themselves into

two camps full of bitter animosity towards each other.

It was at this point that orders went forth from the headquarters of the Fuchsia League bidding all members be ready to strike, that the hour was at hand.

What should he do?

His mood had changed. He hardly felt inclined to give the Europeans further warning. Even should he do so their attempted departure would be like a spark to gunpowder. He knew that every movement of theirs was spied upon, and that there was no intention of allowing them to leave the place in safety.

There seemed to him no other fate for the English girl than hideous massacre, unless he were to carry out his scheme. Even then, it was a thousand to one that he would be successful and get her away in safety, and in the event of failure her fate would be his.

Again and again he travelled over the whole ground of the difficulty trying to find some way of escape, only to come to the conclusion that there was none.

They were all hopelessly in the toils, and he himself must either swim with the tide and put his passion for the English girl aside, or go down in the ruin that was overtaking the reforming monks and the Europeans.

The fate of the Living Buddha mattered little to him. It was only the girl and her safety over which he thought and thought, till his brain, exhausted, could think no longer.

He had only one hope, and that was that the whole affair might miss fire, and he was encouraged;

to this view by the remembrance that it would be the bulk of the Brotherhood who would have to carry out the details, not the instigator.

The chattering, irresponsible little wife, noticing his preoccupation, brought his eldest child—a grave-faced boy—to distract him. She was fond of her husband in her way, and had rejoiced of late to see the opium pipe more and more often laid aside.

The young Mandarin hardly noticed the child, who looked at him a little wistfully; and seeing something in her husband's eyes which startled her, she gathered her baby in her arms and hobbled away, her feelings almost hurt.

It was just after this that his foster-brother, the being he trusted more than any one on earth, announced a visitor, and the head of the Fuchsia Organisation rolled into the room.

His visitor seated himself at once in the chair which he had occupied on the previous occasion. He accepted tea, and refused the pipe as before. He seemed in high good-humour, and laughed and joked incessantly.

He complimented the young man on his improved appearance.

"Not so much of this, I see?" he said, pointing to the pipe. "That is good. And even more care taken with our personal appearance."

The young Mandarin was indeed exquisitely dressed. He hardly smiled at the other's joviality. It failed to carry conviction. He preferred the somewhat sinister manner of the former interview.

"I carry a torch," said the fat man, "to set a light to all the bonfires I have built throughout the kingdom. I am told the good citizens of Tsang-Lo

had one on their own account a few days ago, and that you put it out."

The young man nodded. He thought he could see the drift of the other's affected good-humour.

"You were right—you were right. I am told that your indignation at the plans of the Brotherhood being interfered with was wonderful. The murder of this foreign girl would have spoilt everything. They say you quelled the mob yourself—and all for love of our Brotherhood. How devoted!"

He continued to dwell on the supposed devotion of the Mandarin.

"There was really nothing for me to visit you about, except to compliment you ten thousand times on your bravery, and to bid you remember that you will not move your soldiers when the time comes."

The Mandarin felt as if the other were reading his heart. He had the strongest conviction that this man had made up his mind exactly how many hours he had to live, had reckoned up that he was capable of the greatest energy when the crisis demanded it, and was therefore dangerous. He already felt like a dead man sitting on sufferance in the house of life. It only strengthened his determination to make one final effort as regards Ruth.

The little man then rolled out; and was gone from Tsang-Lo, like a nightmare, leaving behind him an unwritten warrant for the young man's execution.

Stoical as the Mandarin was, he from that moment grew nervous. Imaginary assassins stole towards him in the twilight by the lotus pond. The figures on the screens in the room startled him, and swayed towards him in the gloom.

Silently his servant entered the room to perform

some duty. With a cry he sprang to his feet, and stiffened himself for defence.

The servant looked at him in astonishment, but at a gesture withdrew.

Trembling in every limb the young man sank back on to the opium couch.

CHAPTER XXX

It was the following evening.

The young Mandarin was alone. He lay on the opium couch and, looking out, watched the shadows deepen on the lotus pond, till the blossoms gazed up at the sky from the dark waters like pale-faced spirits.

He lay waiting, certain that death would soon be his visitor.

The artificial rockeries in the garden outside took twisted and terrifying shapes in the uncertain light. The breeze sighed through the funereal cypress, stirring the leaves till they struck the paper windows with the light touch of spectre hands.

The hum of the city was borne to him over the walls.

His soul grew timid. He was sitting over the ashes of a futile life, and was full of a weird consciousness of moving amongst ghosts.

The only real thing that remained to him was the sentiment towards the barbarian girl.

He leant forward in his chair and listened.

Was it his fancy, or had the hum of the city grown strangely loud?

It was buzzing stronger and stronger.

With a strange sensation of relief he felt that the hour of horror had come.

A messenger rushed in to tell him that the Chief Mandarin wanted him at once. The whole city was in an uproar.

He sent the man back to say he would follow instantly.

He had made up his mind.

It had come upon him in an instant that he would defy the Fuchsia League, summon such of his soldiers as would follow, and do his duty.

He called for servants.

No voice answered him.

He called again for his foster-brother.

The latter was behind in the gloom, sprung as it were from the earth, and ere the young man could cry out a third time he had buried a dagger in his
1 stretched him gently on to the floor.

1 a fuchsia plant close by. He broke a
1 it and dropped it by the side of the
staggering figure. With it fell a tear upon the pallid,
emaciated face.

Then he stole out into the growing turmoil of the city.

CHAPTER XXXI

A LITTLE way from the house Haviland, Catherine, and the rest were standing by a dismal hole dug in the earth.

They had laid in it the little morsel of humanity whom conquering death had won from them.

The red glow of the lantern held by Tu-Su threw a ruddy tinge on the prayer-book in Blake's hands, on the dark sides of the grave, and just revealed a tiny white shape lying in the earth.

Unsuspected eyes were watching them. Solemnly the last words of the exquisite funeral service were spoken.

Catherine and Ruth, oppressed by the mingled atmosphere of death and loneliness, wept silently in one another's arms.

They were returning to the house slowly and mournfully, when Haviland stopped.

There was the sound of a roar, mingled with the beating of gongs and drums, advancing towards them from the town.

The whole party heard it simultaneously.

As they listened, their hearts standing still, two figures appeared out of the gloom in front of them.

It was the Living Buddha and a monk.

His expression had in it something tremendous, as if he were inspired to meet a mighty crisis.

"Quick!" he said. "They are on their way to attack this place. Put out that lantern."

He proceeded to lead the way across the field.

"Have you your revolver, Blake?"

"No."

"Get it."

It was the work of an instant for both men to secure their revolvers and ammunition, but even that moment nearly lost them their lives.

The Living Buddha made a gesture of hopelessness as if he were afraid he had not made them understand the danger.

The next moment they were all hurrying across the field towards the bushes by the stream.

As they reached the shelter of the bushes they looked back and saw the lanterns of the first dozen or so of the mob moving around the house. Luckily the night was pitch dark, so dark that the spies had not been able to see their escape.

They hurried on across the stream, over which the Living Buddha almost carried Catherine. Even at that moment of supreme anxiety she shivered with emotion as she felt her son's arms round her, and remembered the child she had laid beneath the bushes on that far-off Indian day. Indescribably strange and weird was this reunion.

She clung to him with a sob, and he, sympathising with what he conceived to be her fears, enveloped her with his arms comfortingly.

He looked back anxiously at Ruth, but, seeing her between Blake and her father, went on reassured.

A vague joy filled Ruth's soul at being near him, even though it was caused by so great a danger.

Panting they struggled up the hill.

Half way up Haviland called Tu-Su's name.

There was no answer, and the whole party paused in distress.

Haviland knew that he had started across the field with them, and was at a loss to explain his disappearance.

They called again and again.

Suddenly a flame shot up into the dead darkness, cutting it like a crimson knife. Then another and another, till the whole scene was illuminated for them. The house had been fired. In the glare they could see the rabble crowding round it like hyenas. Still there was no sign of Tu-Su. They could hear the shouts of the infuriated mob, searching for them in the bed of the stream.

There was no time to be lost, and Haviland, with grief in his heart, followed the others up the hill.

As they reached the rocky platform lights were already moving swiftly up the slope. It seemed as though the direction of their flight had been discovered.

In a minute the hillside was alive with searchers.

They arrived at the fissure, through which the women went first, the others following, the monk who was with the Buddha coming last.

The stone was then moved forward, and they were safe for the time being.

As they passed the spot where the entrance to the cave lay the Saint thought for one moment of hiding the Europeans within it, but remembered that the secrets it contained were not his own. In a few minutes they reached the gallery, where, the Saint told them, no one would ever think of searching for them.

He was relying on the fidelity of the monks. He went out and left them.

Catherine had not been able to keep her eyes from him, and yet his glance as he left the room was for Ruth.

When he had gone Catherine wandered round in wonder and curiosity at the place where her son had lived.

As the Buddha passed through the hall of his dwelling, accompanied by the monk, on his way to make arrangements for conveying the Christians in his own chairs out of the district, he met Ching-Lu pale and breathless.

"Hast thou heard?" he asked.

"Heard?" the Saint questioned.

"The young Tibetan monk whom thou didst save——"

"What of him?"

"He declares himself the real Living Buddha, and denounces you as an usurper. Hundreds of the Lamas accept him."

There swept over the magnificent presence of Attava a wave of wrath, such as the monk and Ching-Lu had never witnessed.

He seemed in that moment to gather himself together for battle.

CHAPTER XXXII

THAT had happened which Makah had wished to avoid.

He had been compelled to proclaim himself before he conceived the time to be ripe.

Rapidly as the strength of the reactionary party had grown, fully as more than half the Lamas believed in him, he could see that the night the revolt was to take place nothing but the public announcement of his claim would satisfy.

The affair had been well managed by the Tartar and those who had kept the organisation in hand. Armed, they collected at an appointed spot directly those of the Fuchsia League, who had been detailed to help the attack on Attava, appeared on the scene.

Fortunately for the partisans of the Buddha, these were fewer than they should have been, and some of the conspirators held back. These two things gave the loyal party breathing time.

Makah harangued them.

"Am I not he? Look!" He held aloft his maimed hand. "The Living Buddha should have been a child born with four fingers on this hand. So, look at the hand of the man who has usurped my place. It is a wound, and was not so at his birth."

There was a stir at this amongst the listeners.

"I tell you," continued Makah, "that he is a foreigner, a barbarian. Has the Eternal Buddha ever poured himself into the fleshly vessel of a barbarian? Has this man not forbidden many of your most sacred rites?"

There was a murmur. He had touched his audience on a sore point.

"Can he slay himself and yet live? Has he not forbidden this sacred and ancient ceremony within the walls of the Monastery? It is because his power is not from Buddha. See!" He held above his head a large knife. He tore aside the covering of his robe, which was gathered across one half of his body, laying bare his stomach.

As he stood there, his semi-naked body illuminated by a hundred swaying lights, his eyes blazing fanaticism, his limbs stiff and frenzied, he presented a diabolical spectacle.

A deep hush fell on the thousands of monks who by this time crowded the roofs of the cells around the green knoll where he was standing, which was surmounted by a prayer-wheel. They felt they were about to witness a magical feat, which had not been seen within the walls of the Monastery since Attava had taken the power into his own hands. It was a ceremony which he had denounced as hideous and impious.

From afar came the shouts and yells of the frenzied mob on their way to join in the massacre of the foreigners, whose escape had not yet been discovered.

Makah suddenly ripped his belly up in one long slit to the diaphragm, and as the blood gushed forth into his palm he flung it abroad.

The bystanders caught the flying drops, and marked their shaven crowns in token of allegiance.

There was a cry of amazement, which subsided almost as soon as raised.

The face of the Tibetan had grown ghastly pale, even in the glow of the lanterns. For a moment the multitude thought that he was about to fall.

He bent forward and passed his hand over the wound, and when he removed it there was not the suggestion of a scar to show where it had been. It was enough.

This cataleptic feat appealed to the majority of them far more than the lofty wisdom and counsel of the man who hitherto had dominated them.

Within a few minutes of its taking place Ching-Lu had been told of what had happened.

That a serious attempt would be made to depose Attava had never struck him in his wildest dreams.

He had the blood of rulers in his veins. The attack was evidently imminent, and he immediately grasped the possibilities of a general massacre of the progressive party in the Monastery.

He saw in a moment the forces that Attava had raised against himself in his effort to create a purer ideal.

The persistent denunciation of secret societies had alienated many of his former followers. The Mohammedan element of the town would be delighted to join in the attack. All these would reinforce the reactionary Lamas, and the sudden proclamation of Makah was sufficient to demonstrate the fact that the plot had been carefully prepared. Swiftly he considered the possibilities of defence.

The sympathisers and followers of the Living Buddha would gravitate towards the upper part of

the Monastery, where stood the Chief Temple and the official dwelling.

The rebels would probably be armed, and as this flashed across him despair almost seized his soul. Then he remembered the weapons which the pilgrims were accustomed to lay at the shrine of Kwanyian, Goddess of Mercy.

He instructed the head Lamas, who had already gathered round him, to arm their men from this stock, and to establish a barrier across the slope, cutting off the upper part of the Monastery, converting it into a fortress.

The weapons were of every conceivable pattern: matchlocks, useless from lack of ammunition, bows and arrows, which the Lamas would hardly be able to wield, lances, sabres, daggers, and Chinese pikes—long, slender poles with scythe-like, terrible blades attached to the end. The Lamas armed themselves hurriedly from this miscellany.

It was at this moment that Ching-Lu found the Buddha, and briefly explained what had happened.

The Buddha was faced by a problem which was absolutely impossible of the right solution from his point of view. His conscience had always told him that the spiritual kingdom has never gained an inch by violence. His martyrdom and death would be a ten thousand times greater lesson than a violent victory over his enemies, which would convert him from a teacher to a man of blood.

Yet it was impossible to persuade those around him to lay down their arms, counting their earthly lives as trifles not worth consideration. He knew that—fine and exalted men as a great many of them were—their natures made it impossible for them to do this.

Had it only been a question of himself his death would mean but little.

His mind was speedily made up.

Ching-Lu told him that he feared the foreigners had been massacred, and was amazed to hear that they were at that moment safe in the Monastery.

"I commend them into thy charge," said Attava. "For myself I will go and speak to my children."

Ching-Lu at once detected his idea, which was to walk boldly in amongst the rebels, trusting that when they had wreaked their will on him they would be satisfied. Ching-Lu, who by no means thought the day was lost, his fighting instincts aroused, determined that this should not be.

As Attava emerged into the open place before his dwelling and the chief Temple, there was a deep baying from the huge Monastery dogs, who had been secured by Ching-Lu's orders and brought up to the summit. His swiftness and forethought seemed as if they might save the situation.

Most of the dogs had been shut up in the cells around; but a few, held by monks, strained at their leashes when the Buddha appeared, as if anxious to leap to his protection.

On the Temple steps was gathered a crowd of boy-Lamas, mere children, pale and in tears.

The Buddha, who had stooped and caressed a ferocious-looking dog as he passed, spoke words of cheer to the children, bidding them enter the Temple and pray. He hoped that when his own life had been taken the rebels would abandon the search for the Europeans.

But Haviland, with Blake, Catherine, and Ruth, who had heard the din and had had the reason explained to them, appeared from the Buddha's

dwelling. The two Englishmen immediately announced their intention of fighting side by side with the Lamas.

The women instinctively drew near to Attava. His eyes met Ruth's. Hers were full of an unspeakable confidence and pathos. They both derived comfort and reassurance from each other's presence.

He somehow felt that whatever line of action he took she would understand, and that brought him a full measure of recompense.

The Monastery bells rang incessantly to call those loyal Lamas, who might be uncertain how to act, to the place where the defence was to be made.

Attava, accompanied by a few disciples, went as far as where his followers had established their line of defence.

The other party had already reached within fifty yards, a huge, undisciplined mob, filling the night with yells of execration as soon as the Buddha appeared.

He was received with cries of enthusiasm and fidelity from his own followers.

The clouds which had obscured the moon parted somewhat, and this, with the additional aid of the hundreds of lanterns, rendered the opposing parties clearly visible to each other. But on the Buddha himself the light seemed to have focussed, making him stand out from every one else around, as a taper might shine through the dark.

He put up his hand; and instantly over the vast assembly there fell a great silence.

From above came the baying of the hounds, and from far below the noise of the mob.

But the voice of the Saint, like a supernatural

thing, would have made itself heard through the wildest tempest.

His expression was majestic and serene. It was the face of one who knew that his hour had come and who had no fears.

"What would ye?" he cried.

A figure leapt forward. It was Makah. He wielded a large, two-handed sword.

"Usurper and hypocrite!"

The Saint smiled sadly.

"Wilt thou face the Lord Buddha with a sword? Dost thou think the way to him is across a sea of blood?"

Haviland and Blake placed themselves beside him.

Ching-Lu was everywhere, filling the loyal with confidence, and organising up to the last moment.

The first inclination of the women was to keep close to the two men they both loved; but at Haviland's direction they retired to the Temple, where they would be able to attend to the wounded.

He suggested this to Ching-Lu, who told off some of the older Lamas to help them, and carry up the wounded.

Ching-Lu was surprised not to see the Tartar amongst the leaders on the other side.

The attacking party made a rush.

Attava attempted to go forth and meet them, but was restrained by Ching-Lu.

Matchlocks were discharged, and several of the defending Lamas fell.

Seeing this, and encouraged by it, the attacking party came on with greater confidence.

There was a sharp crack from Haviland's revolver, and the foremost Lama came to the earth headlong.

Blake, whose eyesight was not particularly good, failed to bring down his man.

The grey light of dawn came almost simultaneously with the first attack. The battle had become general, and as the day grew the fury of the combatants increased with it.

It seemed as if the long-repressed animalism of the monks had gathered together all its latent force, and was debauching itself in this carnival of blood.

Those without weapons tore and bit at each other like wild beasts.

Here were two Lamas struggling on the ground, one in his death-throes, with the fingers of the other buried in his throat, heedless of the blows of a third, who was endeavouring to drive him off, as a rabid dog might be beaten from its prey.

In another place were two monks, who had slain each other simultaneously, fallen in one ghastly mound of quivering and bleeding flesh. The fight was the relief of the pent-up passions of years.

The long, scythe-like lances did terrible execution. The matchlocks exploded for the most part harmlessly.

Ching-Lu was in the forefront of the battle, doing the work of ten men. He fought with a dagger and a sword.

He had deputed a score or so of Lamas to fence in the Buddha, and on no account to allow him to sacrifice himself.

Haviland and Blake fired as quickly as they could load.

Splendid as was the defence made, and advantageous as was the ground the defenders held, they were but fifteen hundred strong against many thousands. It was true that only a certain number could

operate against them at a time, but these were obliged to fight desperately, as the crowd behind pressed on thicker and thicker, rendering retreat impossible. The battle raged up the principal path and round the rows of cells, converted for the moment into temporary fortresses. To add to the luridness of the scene, that quarter of Tsang-Lo in which the Mission House stood burst into a blaze, showing that some fanatic had fired it, heedless or forgetful of the danger to Chinese life and property.

It looked like a blazing city at the mouth of hell, and from where he stood Haviland fancied he saw boats putting out from the shore with shapeless bundles, which were dropped into the river.

The city walls were crowded with people.

Further and further up the hill the defending party were forced inch by inch, and still the dawn grew, till the day was fully come, and revealed the hillside flowing with rivulets of blood and covered with mangled bodies.

Makah had made more than one attempt to reach the Buddha, but the defenders were gathered round the Chief Temple, on the steps of which he stood, ere the Tibetan was able to achieve his object.

Ching-Lu had fought like some Chinese hero of mythical days.

Stripped to the waist—his white, finely-bred body, refined by asceticism, but with muscles like steel—he moved amid the combat with incredible rapidity, not only performing prodigies of individual valour, but at the same time keeping watch upon all other parts of the fight, fearful lest some irreparable error in strategy should be made.

More than once he had hurled back the press of battle, when it seemed to gather too closely round

the group that acted as the bodyguard of the Buddha.

Again and again he had sought to engage with Makah, hoping that, should their leader be slain, the heart would go out of the rebellious Lamas.

And now he was lying dead at the foot of the Temple steps. He had been facing half a score of foes, when a weak, degraded monk struck him down from behind.

He lay with a smile on his lips, as if conscious that the profligate of Peking had redeemed himself by this crowning act of years of practical repentance.

Haviland and Blake were standing beside the Buddha at the top of the steps, firing their last remaining cartridges, Catherine and Ruth, inside the entrance to the Temple, doing what they could—even in that hour of tremendous peril—for the wounded.

Haviland knew that their last hour had come, and seeing that only two cartridges were left, remembered Catherine and Ruth, and put the revolver in his belt, seizing a sword from the stiffening hand of a Lama who lay close by.

Then the cordon around them was broken for a moment, and Makah leapt forward and stood face to face with the Buddha.

Makah struck at him, and on an instant a hand of steel grasped his wrist, and broke it like a twig.

Then the Buddha dropped his arms, and looking into his opponent's eyes, cried to him through the din—

"Thou art yet a greater sinner than I, and require more time for repentance."

The Tibetan's dagger found his heart, even as Catherine, with the cry of a tigress, sprang at him, and Haviland and Blake reached his side.

At the same moment the dogs—which had been kept by Ching-Lu as a last resource—were let loose.

In an instant they dragged the Tibetan to the ground, and settled on him like wolves upon their prey. The others, urged on by those who had had charge of them, flew at the attacking party. The inexplicable panic which will seize men, even when fighting most determinedly, took possession of those at whom the ferocious hounds bit and tore. They turned and tried to escape. Those behind did the same, till a large number were trampled under foot, and a wild retreat was made in two directions, those unable to reach the path flying down the left side of the slope to the river.

The few hundred Lamas remaining of the defenders pursued them as far as it was safe to do so.

Haviland looked around at the scene of bloodshed.

The hounds were still ferociously pursuing the retreating crowd, whose terror was complete. Catherine, white and speechless, was seated on the bloodstained steps of the Temple, with the head of her dead son on her knee; whilst Ruth, unbelieving, was endeavouring to staunch the wound which his mother saw was fatal.

Some of the monks were trying to drive off the dogs from the body of Makah, which they were literally eating.

Haviland, sickening at the sight, turned away to assist the wounded.

The sun was beginning to blaze down on the scene of carnage.

The city walls were still crowded with spectators, and the last battle with the dogs was being fought, most of them having been either transfixed, or ripped or had their brains knocked out.

Here and there, on the line of retreat, were dying men feebly endeavouring to crawl into cells out of the way of the remaining hounds. Boats were crossing and recrossing the river, whilst the bridge was crowded.

Excepting for the mob on the river-bank the attacking party had deserted the Monastery altogether.

Smoke was still rising from the burning quarter of the town.

The loyal Lamas were bewailing their dead Buddha, and growls of rage at the Europeans—whom they believed to have brought this about—were beginning to grow.

In another few minutes their position would be critical in the extreme.

The body of the Buddha had already been carried into the Temple.

Suddenly the sound of firing, from weapons such as no Chinese in the district possessed, fell upon Haviland's ear.

It seemed to come from just beyond the bridge. He looked in that direction.

Along the river-banks the people were fleeing up towards the town.

Across the bridge the mob was struggling back to the city gates.

Then his eye fell upon an object which brought a rush of hope to his heart, and almost a shout to his lips, for there, a couple of miles off, where the bosom of the river grew broad, lay a gunboat, the Union Jack plainly visible.

"Good God, Blake! Look! We're saved."

"We shall never get past these monks," replied Blake.

Haviland saw that in his excitement over the appearance of the gunboat he had failed to notice that the monks were collecting as if to rush upon Blake and himself.

This time there was no Living Buddha or Ching-Lu to protect them.

Haviland, always cool in moments of supreme danger, forced himself to apply every atom of thinking-power to solving the problem. With a shudder he saw the few remaining dogs being brought in.

The monks had by this time seen the gunboat, and were evidently determined to have done with the Europeans before there was any chance of their rescue.

They hesitated, however, remembering the work of the revolvers.

Again there was a rattle, like the sound of a quick-firing gun, from the direction of the ground that lay between the Monastery and the bridge.

"They've landed a party, Blake. There's only one hope. They're safe to make for the house: if we could escape by the way we came last night. Come, quick!"

They entered the Temple, expecting that it would be the signal for the Lamas to dash at them.

The children cowered in a corner.

The two women were kneeling by the side of the dead body of the Buddha.

Catherine was gazing, fascinated, at the regimental button that hung round his neck.

Ruth, realising that nothing could bring him back, stopped endeavouring to staunch the wound, and looked, bewildered, at the gilt trifle which Catherine held in her hand.

"He was my son, Ruth—the little boy I lost so many, many years ago."

Her tears fell thick and fast upon the face of the dead Saint.

Haviland stooped and touched her on the shoulder.
"Catherine!"

She looked up at him.

"He is in God's hands now."

Even in that moment of danger there was a pause. Then he briefly explained the new peril.

Blake was examining the base of the image, seeking the panel. With a cry of relief he found it.

The women rose and followed Haviland.

At that moment the Lamas could be heard spurring one another on to enter the Temple.

Haviland was standing aside to let the women and Blake pass into the chamber first.

Ruth's eyes were dry. She moved amid the unreal horror of the events which were taking place around her, like a figure in a great classic tragedy, too terrible for tears.

Flight seemed vain, and Haviland wondered whether it would not be better to stay and face their assailants, than perhaps struggle in gruesome battle with the hideous hounds in that dismal, underground passage.

An idea seized him. He looked around at the Temple with its gaudy hangings, its banners and bedecked images.

The women had disappeared down the staircase. Blake was standing two or three steps down, holding the trap-door for Haviland.

It was the work of an instant for Haviland to go, towards the children and drive them, terrified as they were, to the entrance of the Temple.

They fled out, and almost simultaneously the Lamas entered the building, a huge dog in advance.

The idea which had seized Haviland had been caused by his eyes falling on a large oil lantern.

As the children made for the door he dashed the oil over some hangings and ornaments. Then, seizing another lantern, set fire to them. In an instant there was a blaze, the flames running over the light woodwork like a live thing.

Blake was calling to him impatiently to make haste, unaware of what he was doing.

As the dog crouched for a spring he closed the panel behind him and joined the others beneath the ground of the Temple.

He hurriedly explained what he had done.

If the building caught fire, well and good; they might probably escape. If not, they must sell their lives dearly. Perhaps in any case it might bring sufficient delay to save them.

They went on, Haviland striking matches to light their path.

Suddenly, ahead, a beam of sunlight fell across the stone corridor.

Reaching it, they found an open space on their right, and thinking it might lead to some way of escape, they passed through it, Blake—who was the first—almost stumbling over the dead body of a Lama.

His face was faintly illuminated, and they could see it was that of the Tartar monk.

His body was pierced with arrows, while others lay around.

Before them stood a mighty figure with a slack bow in its hand.

Even as they looked, a thin thread of smoke passed by them into the cave on its way to the light. Then another.

The fear that suddenly filled their hearts they hardly dared to mention to each other.

They hastily examined the cave, and, finding no exit, returned to the passage.

The smoke was stealing down, turning from pale blue to grey as it thickened. They went along till they were brought up by the sheer rock.

Could it be possible that they had missed their way?

With quick, nervous fingers Haviland ran over the rock in front. A sigh broke from him as he was unable to detect anything which would suggest a method of effecting an exit.

The smoke thickened.

The women stood by, silent and heroic.

At this point there was only room for one to carry on the investigation. For some minutes Haviland went on searching, the only sound being the nervous breathing of himself and his companions.

Suddenly, as he pressed against a certain spot, the wall rolled away as if on oiled wheels.

The liberated smoke rushed past them into mid-air.

In a few seconds they were all safe on the rocky platform.

Between them and the sky was a canopy of smoke from the burning Temple. Fragments of flaming wood fell around. They looked down, but their dwelling—a heap of ashes—was deserted.

There seemed at least a chance.

At the bottom of the slope they found Tu-Su. Haviland immediately and sternly ordered the others

on. The sight was a terrible one. Their faithful servant had been literally hacked to pieces. By his side lay a blue linen bag in which he had kept his worldly possessions.

Poor Tu-Su ! He had returned for this world's goods, and it had been his undoing. \

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE night on which the Mission House had been attacked Lo-Fen, foreseeing—as he thought to a certainty—the massacre of the foreign party, including himself, had made a clean bolt for it.

He had been left to look after the Chinese baby, a being whose existence was so worthless in his eyes that he felt no compunction at leaving it alone.

Before morning broke he was many miles away from Tsang-Lo, and two days afterwards turned up at Fraser's consulate, nearly a hundred miles off, both he and his pony utterly exhausted. He had had to be exceedingly careful not to arouse the suspicion of the officials of the districts through which he had passed.

He gave Fraser a lurid and exaggerated description of what had happened to Ruth at the Mission House, conveying the impression that the English party were most probably massacred, or in a fair way to being so.

Fraser was frantic. He knew that Haviland would not, in his capacity as missionary, send for help.

Disturbances had been apprehended in his own district, and a gunboat had come up to overawe the populace, and take Europeans on board in the event of a crisis. He went and saw the Commander.

Tsang-Lo was further up the river than any gun-boat had ever been. There were difficulties in the way, and it was not at all certain that it would be possible to get up, even should they decide on going.

Fraser suggested a landing-party. The Captain did not quite see throwing a handful of men on shore, amongst what might at any moment become a horde of ferocious Chinamen.

However, they would try. So they steamed on carefully, and, the different depths of the river being an unknown quantity, it took them much longer than if they had been able to go straight ahead.

The morning of the battle at the Monastery they arrived within sight of Tsang-Lo.

"It looks as though the whole town were on fire," said Fraser, as the smoke from the burning quarter swept across the river far ahead of them. Drawing nearer they could distinguish the people on the walls.

"The whole place seems devilish excited," said the Commander coolly, surveying the town through his glasses. "They would hardly make such a fuss about cutting up a couple of missionaries."

Fraser was deadly pale, and the hand that held his glass shook. The brusqueness of the sailor he hardly noticed. He knew that he was one of the very best-hearted men in the world and would do everything that could be done.

"Whereabouts were these people?"

"Round there to the left. You see the Monastery climbs up that hill—that's the chief Temple at the top."

"Ever been in it?" The sailor was trying to make out something that puzzled him.

There was a scraping sound, and the boat, which was going at snail's speed, stopped.

After a time, when they had found the channel, the Commander returned to Fraser's side.

"Where did you say these people were living?"

"You can't very well see from here. It's right at the back of the hill. The other side is mostly a sheer precipice, and the house they look lies in the country below. My God! what's that?"

They were going against stream, and a body was borne past them, the throat cut from ear to ear.

Fraser's agitation increased. They were now near the walls of the town and it would have been unwise to go further. There were crowds between them and the Monastery, on the bank opposite the town.

The point was, how were they going to find out whether the English party still remained alive? They determined to make one effort.

They landed a party with a couple of Maxims on the bank opposite the town, and then went forward.

The arrival of the gunboat created tremendous excitement.

Those beyond the bridge at the foot of the hill, unaware that the Buddha had been slain, were preparing to renew the attack, when they saw the small body of bluejackets advancing.

Contemtuons of their number the mob came towards them, sending a shower of arrows and stones. It was no time for indecision, and the Maxims were at once brought into play.

The mob dropped like flies.

It was this firing that Haviland heard.

Twice again did the mob attempt to face the deadly tubes, and twice the Maxims screamed defiance, filling the Chinamen with horror.

There was a terrified retreat to the town. Before long the country in front of the Monastery was clear, and the last remnants of the retreating force were fighting madly to get through the gates, out of the way of what seemed a supernatural visitation.

Fraser could now see with his glasses the corpses dotting the paths and open spaces between the cells.

They had passed a gruesome sight by the river-side—a sack, with the outline of a human being inside it, half buried in the mud. His heart grew sick within him. It seemed as if the very worst had happened.

They reached the path leading from the bridge to the Monastery. The Commander was sweeping the hillside with his glass.

“It looks as though they had been having a picnic. Every sign of a scrimmage.”

With a quick eye for strategy one Maxim was placed so as to dominate the bridge. By this time the gates were closed, but it was as well to be ready for a sortie from the city.

Almost as soon as this Maxim was placed in position there was an explosion on the wall just above the gateway, and the soldiery, who had been firing ineffectually from antiquated guns, and more antiquated bows, were seen scattering in all directions.

“It looks to me,” said the Commander, “as though they have been aiming one of their muzzle-loaders at us, and the bally thing has burst. We had better try and make our way to Haviland’s house.”

“I am afraid,” said Fraser sternly, “that there’s very little hope.” Then suddenly he burst out with energy. “Damn this country!”

Leaving the Maxim in position by the bridge with

half the force, they set off almost at a run under the guidance of Fraser.

As they rounded the corner of the hill they came face to face with the four people of whom they were in search.

A little way behind them, some straggling Chinese were keeping at a respectful distance, every now and then hurling at them mud, stones, or anything they could lay their hands on.

Fraser could see at once that all four were almost done.

"Haviland! Thank God!"

The hands of the two men met in a warm grip.

"What has happened?"

"Let us get away from this hell." Haviland's voice sounded hollow and lifeless.

Within half an hour they were all on board.

The gunboat was about to move down the river on her return journey, when a boat came swiftly towards them, flying the official flag.

It was the Chief Mandarin.

Haviland, Fraser, and the Commander met him, and waited contemptuously to hear what he had to say.

He was full of apologies, appealed to Haviland as witness that he had done everything for their protection, and explained that he was informed that the terrible scenes which had taken place the night before were the work of a secret society. His own secretaries had been murdered. What more proof could be wanted of his own innocence?

The words of the poor man, who really was largely the victim of circumstances, carried little conviction.

As he passed over the side Haviland said to him—

"There was slain in the Monastery of Tsang-Lo

this morning a man who might have regenerated your country."

The Mandarin was thinking of a silken cord, disbursements, and all manner of terrible and horrible retribution. If it had merely been the native and foreign Christians! But Tsang-Lo half destroyed by fire, hundreds of Lamas slain, and more wounded, temples burnt! Here was matter indeed for gloomy reflection.

The gunboat moved slowly away.

The two women refused to leave the deck while they could see the last of the Monastery.

More than once the Commander cheerfully invited them to breakfast, but Haviland—who understood—whispered gently that they were better left alone till Tsang-Lo had disappeared from sight.

Catherine and Ruth stood straining their eyes, as one by one the buildings on the hillside became blurred and indistinct, finally disappearing altogether.

Then the hill itself was shut out by a bend in the river, but the column of smoke from the burning Temple rose high enough in the heavens to be plainly seen.

It rose thick and compact to a great height.

Then a small cloud detached itself, and floated away higher, higher, into the clear blue sky, like a soul on its way to God.

