

A DREAM

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BY
LLOYD BRYCE,

AUTHOR OF

"PARADISE," "THE ROMANCE OF AN ALTER EGO," ETC.

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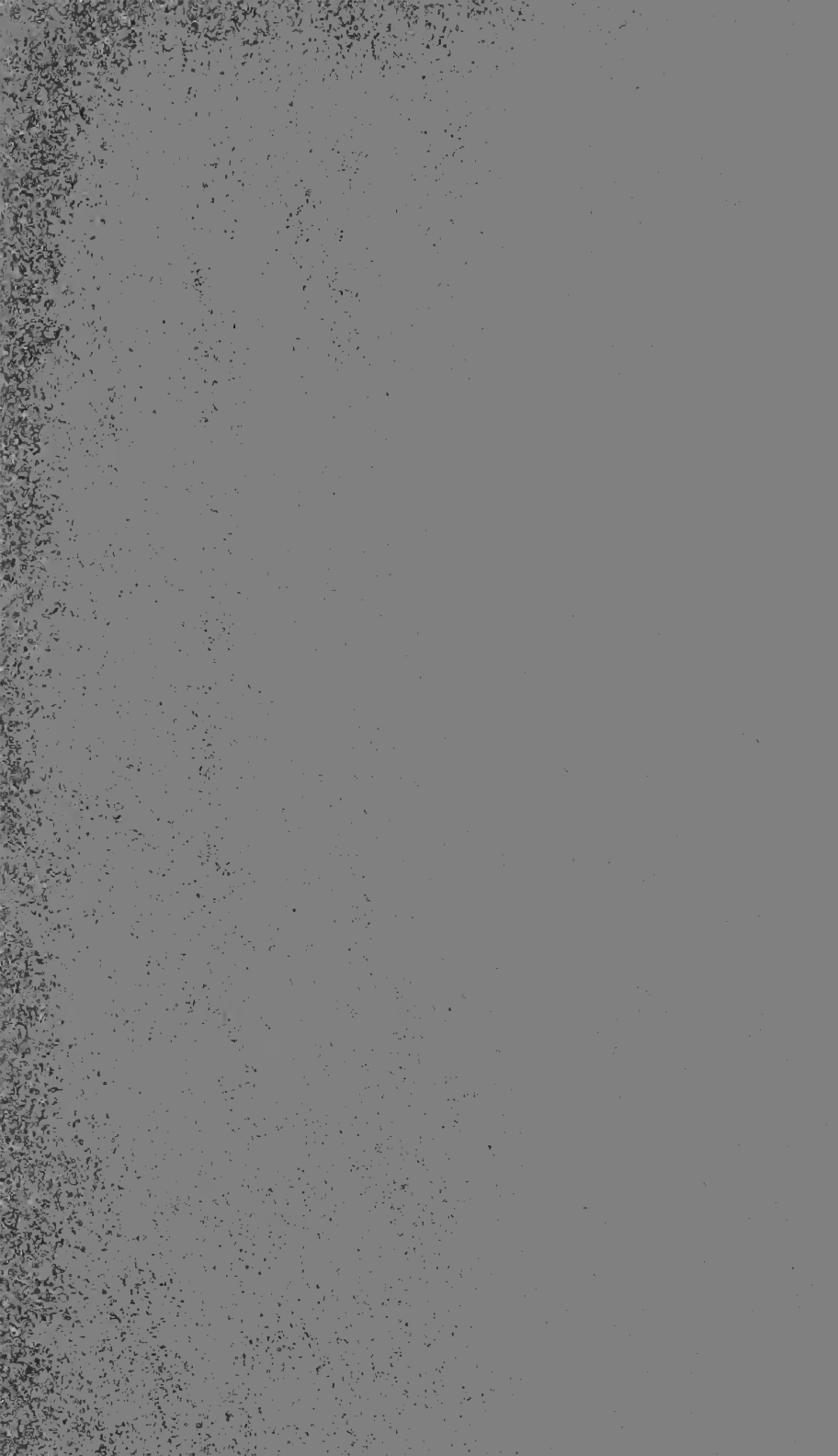
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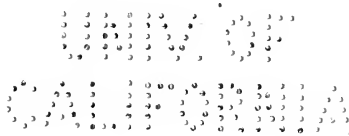


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DREAM OF CONQUEST

BY
Stephens
LLOYD BRYCE,

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TO VIRU
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A

DREAM OF CONQUEST.

CHAPTER I.

WANG-CHI-POO sat in his bamboo chair, discontentedly twisting the end of his queue. The fragrance of orange-blossoms breathed softly on him from the garden, but could not soothe his perturbation, nor could the noise of the fountain hard by that came in through the paper-glazed windows. Everything palled upon him; the silken hangings interwoven with gold that decorated his apartment, the brightly tessellated floor, in short, the wealth and Oriental luxury that were on every side were, this morning, less than naught to him.

The Chinese have a song that runs somewhat in this manner :

At first, man hungers for a meal;
And then, that clothes his form conceal;
Finely attired, a wife he craves;
Married, for palanquins he raves;
Supplied with horses, mules, and lands,
Official rank he next demands;
Ennobled, he would yet climb higher,
Till by degrees he claims empire;
At last enthroned as Heaven's son,
He thinks not yet his dues are won,
But, yearning still for something more,
'Gainst Death he fain would bolt the door.
Fool, Death alone thy wants can tame:
"I crave," thy epitaph and name.

But greed for more is, I fear, too common to the human race fairly to indicate the cause of Wang-Chi-Poo's disquietude. His discontent was of a less personal description, though it was connected with ambition: it was of a more truly Chinese character than the proverb just quoted. It had its root in his country's ancestor-worship; and to Western ears it will sound peculiar. Wang-Chi-Poo, though barely

forty-seven years of age, had reached the Second Mandarin's rank, and the cause of his discontent was the conviction of his incapacity to secure, by the usual means, the yellow button of the first rank. Nor was it for the gratification that this yellow button would confer on his personal pride that he craved this, but—here comes in the distinction, and, O land of the Antipodes, O land of the Topsy-turvy, it is a curious one—it was to gratify the pride of his grandmother, now some twenty-five years in her grave. Taking everything into consideration, for a man still in his prime, surrounded with every luxury and tempted by wealth and leisure to lead a life of pleasure,—for such a man thus to cast his longings and his aspirations backward to a previous generation illustrates, I think, one of the most beautiful traits of the Chinese character, and it is one that might well be copied by other peoples. Wang-Chi-Poo therefore pulled his queue discontentedly, and continued to brood on the hard fate of his progenitrix thus deprived, through him, of what he considered her just due.

We in the West announce our coming with a knock; those in the East enter first and knock afterward. Thus it happened that Wang-Chi-Poo was abruptly disturbed in his meditations by the presence of his secretary, before his entrance was so much as suspected. The newcomer was a small, narrow-chested young man with a large head and eyes like coals, set off by a pair of enormous spectacles tied by bows behind his ears. He was attired in the garb of the literary class, and, with much ceremony, took his seat opposite Wang-Chi-Poo, presenting him with a neatly-enveloped package of manuscript as he sat down. Wang-Chi-Poo wearily took up the parcel, only to allow it to drop as wearily into his lap.

“O Taonsu,” he observed at last, “I am not in harmony with state papers, and the doctrines of Confucius sadly pall on me to-day. Amuse me, rather; tell me the doings of the town; or stay! thou who hast sojourned in the land of Foreign Devils, tell me more of it. Tell me again of this land beyond the seas, where they dress in the color of coals and wear shining black boxes for coverings of the head; where, as thou hast said, they call change progress, and select an emperor every four years, though the moment he is on the throne they proceed to look out for a new one; whereof this same emperor, as thou hast told me, is yet a god during the first two years of his term, a demon during his last, and behold when he is stripped of his authority and a new ruler elected there are none so poor as to do him honor. Have they religions there, O Taonsu, and do the followers of Confucius number many?”

“There are many from the Flowery Kingdom in America, Great Excellency, whom the press of hunger has driven thither, and a few in the schools who, like myself, were sent out by His Celestial Majesty to be instructed in their sciences.”

“And what are their sciences, O Taonsu? Is it true that the fiery horse walks on big stilts through their cities, crushing and trampling down all before it? Is it true, too, that each man takes only one she-devil for his wife, and even so is obliged to cut off her nails that she can't scratch?”

Taonsu raised his eyebrows with a queer little smile.

"They certainly cut off their nails, Great Excellency; but as for one man taking only one she-devil for his wife, they often take as many as we do, only the process is different. Permit me, Your Excellency; the newspaper around this manuscript is of Western origin and chanced to come over in the last steam-junk." And Taonsu, removing the parcel from his patron's lap, untied it and spread the enveloping wrapper flat out on the floor. "There, Your Excellency," he continued, pointing to the advertisement of a lawyer who guaranteed absolute divorce, with perfect secrecy thrown in, for ten dollars, "when a man wants a new wife he goes to this lawyer, states his complaints, and gets freed from the old one by paying down his money. This is the first step." Then Taonsu ran his eye down the sheet till he came to the advertisement of a matrimonial agency. "And here is the second step," he continued. "He visits this agency, pays down ten chop-dollars more, and selects from a series of photographs he is shown the woman whose picture he likes best. Thus for twenty chop-dollars in all he is both rid of his old wife and provided with a new one."

"What strange devils these Foreign Devils are!" said Wang Chi-Poo, reflectively; "to understand them thou must look at them upside down. But our people, how do they prosper?" he went on, inquiringly.

"They did well until too many came; then the natives massacred them."

"They massacred them?"

"Even so."

"But why, when our people were many? If they were few it were more natural."

"Excellency, the natives feared we would overrun their country and take the bread out of the mouths of their own children; but here is mention of our people in this very paper, and what they suffer." And Taonsu read a serio-comic description of a late ball given at Washington by the Chinese Legation, with an exaggerated account of the scramble for supper. This he translated remarkably well, only taking in too literal a sense the Western humor.

On Wang-Chi-Poo, of course, the humor would have been entirely lost; to him only the indignity was manifest. The Chinese Embassy had been insulted; and he swore lustily in the dialect of Confucius, and would not be comforted.

"This last occurred some time ago," resumed Taonsu. "More recently, however, they have passed a law that is an express violation of all their agreements, for it will exclude our people entirely from their shores."

In Wang-Chi-Poo's eyes, the desire to exclude his people furnished rather a curious instance of that topsy-turviness he had remarked upon, but the insult inflicted on the Legation was a breach of that ceremonial which to a Chinaman is as the breath of life itself. For a long time he swore; then, his passion subsiding, he chewed the recollection like a melancholy cud.

"Go on," he said at last, "read me something more of these Foreign Devils. What do those great letters say on the top of the sheet?"

Taonsu, thus directed, resumed his office of interpreter.

"They speak, you see, Great Excellency, of the unprotected condition of their harbors, showing the billions and billions of wealth that lie exposed to any invader with no provision for their defence. Each city on the coast, it is stated, could easily be laid in ashes by a fleet of even a fifth-rate power."

"And is this true, O Taonsu?"

"Too true, Your Excellency. To defend the great city of New York, which is almost as large as this city which we inhabit, there are barely half a dozen forts well-nigh crumbling into the dust."

"How many cities are there on the coast?"

Taonsu reflected. "There are at least six of the first class, and innumerable small towns."

"How many days' sail is it to this land?"

"Steam, Great Excellency, has bridged the ocean."

"Taonsu, leave me: I would think."

When a Westerner "thinks," he generally requires the repose of absolute quiet; when a Chinaman "thinks," his cogitations are assisted by a noise. The same results are attained by exactly the reverse process. Stillness is proverbial of the fisherman's craft; in China the fisherman surrounds himself with gongs. The Chinese watchman beats his rattle, not to let the householder know that all is well, but to make thieves and evil-doers aware that he is about. And where, under Western civilization, a man having a grudge murders his foe, a Chinaman, instead, kills himself upon his enemy's threshold.

Wang-Chi-Poo entered the garden with the purpose of seeking his wives' quarters beyond, for Wang-Chi-Poo had one first wife, and—not to offend the delicate sensibilities of my lady-readers—he had several wives besides. This garden was a marvel of quaintness in its way. It was crossed and recrossed in every direction by little porcelain-paved paths; brightly-painted bridges spanned diminutive canals, and in the middle of the garden was a fountain from which the canals all radiated outward. In the basin of the fountain stood an enormous artificial flamingo, of so natural an appearance that it served as a perpetual puzzle to a live flamingo which could do nothing but walk around him and stare at him the entire day. Passing through the garden, Wang-Chi-Poo entered his wives' quarters by a curious gateway in the wall, cut in the exact shape of a large teapot.

Naomoona, the first wife, was reclining luxuriously in a hammock; Taomoona, the second, was similarly engaged; Saomoona occupied a third hammock; and, in fact, the whole number, down to the very newest, were quietly swinging themselves, keeping time to the oscillations of their bodies by the motion of their fans.

On the floor was a highly-decorative bamboo mat, and on this some half-dozen little Wang-Chi-Poos were disporting themselves. A shout of delight from the latter announced the coming of the author of their beings; the ladies severally rose from their hammocks, and each, taking hold of the chair that was nearest her, proceeded to wipe from its seat with her dress imaginary particles of dust.

"The Light of the Household shall sit on my chair," exclaimed Naomoon. "No, he shall sit on mine," interrupted Taomoon. "Nay, but on mine," added Saomoon. But the Light of the Household solved the dilemma by taking his seat with the juvenile Wang-Chi-Poos on the floor, drawing some curious little tissue butterflies from his voluminous pocket, and with his fan making them mount into the air for the edification of his children.

"What would you think, O wives of my heart, if I should never sit on any of your chairs again? if, on the contrary, I should take my seat on the lofty stern of one of His Majesty's smoke-junks and sail away to the land where the White-skin Devils abide?"

A hush of intense surprise greeted this speech; then each of the ladies raised her curious little enamelled face over the edge of her curious little hammock and stared at her husband, who was still engaged with the butterflies.

"They say that they make silks of strange designs, these Foreign Devils," said number one.

"And set diamonds in a way we know naught of here," observed the second.

"Ay, and cut their stones to make them shine with unwonted lustre," observed a third. "A jeweller from India once showed me some that had been cut, he said, in barbaric lands."

"The house would be dark," exclaimed Saomoon, "without the presence of its Light, but we will curb our impatience till his return bringing with him these weird proofs of the Foreign Devils' skill."

Wang-Chi-Poo rose from the floor, tightened his broad red sash, rearranged the folds of his voluminous tunic, and called for his palanquin. He felt annoyed, just as a Westerner might, at the flippant reception his serious proposal had met with. "Wang-Chi-Poo has not gone yet," he muttered, "but should he depart he will console himself with the reflection that his wives will bear up against his return."

CHAPTER II.

THE strictness of ceremonial used in approaching His Celestial Majesty was in no wise relaxed for Wang-Chi-Poo, though he was a mandarin of next to the highest rank; and for the purpose of approaching His Majesty Wang-Chi-Poo had called his palanquin. To go in proper state required, for Wang-Chi-Poo, six runners in front and six behind, without counting the fourteen bearers of the sedan-chair. Ahead of all rode a horseman with a huge sheet of paper in his hand and horns like rams' horns fastened to his cap on each side of his head. The duty of the horseman was to strike awe into the public by loudly reading off the paper the titles and dignities of Wang-Chi-Poo coming on behind; that of the runners, to prevent these same honors from being forgotten, by belaboring the public over the heads with their staves.

Not to particularize the precise road the procession took, suffice it

to say that in due time it arrived before the walls of the Imperial palace, where the great man descended.

The plan of this palace much resembles one of those curious Chinese boxes which you open only to find another box inside. One wall serves but as an outwork to another wall, and one series of buildings but as shells to other buildings within; all interspersed with court-yards and gardens in a way to baffle and bewilder whoever would describe it.

Wang-Chi-Poo, being received by at least twenty-five court officials, and having them as guides, threaded without much difficulty the labyrinth, and was ushered at last into an apartment at the lower end of which, in a sort of niche partly screened by a mat, the Son of Heaven sat on his throne. Though but a boy in years, the sovereign was a veteran in intelligence. Wang-Chi-Poo, on arriving at the threshold of the sacred precincts, dropped on his stomach and advanced into the apartment on his hands and knees, making a series of little hops like a frog, with his head in the air and his mouth open; for, being a stout man, it was a decidedly uncomfortable manner of progress. Opposite the niche he stopped.

"O great Son of Heaven, august Lord of the Universe, and Master of Ten Thousand Kingdoms," he exclaimed, "an idea, a great idea, has taken possession of thy slave."

His youthful Majesty glanced down condescendingly from over the mat.

"Take care, O Wang-Chi-Poo: ideas are dangerous," he observed, with precocious instinct; "ideas are as the witch-fires in the lowlands that lead a man on rejoicingly only to engulf him in mud. Is this idea of thine inspired by Confucius?"

"No, sire, it is a new idea, one born of extraordinary circumstances."

"Hush; I have heard it said that there is nothing new but the forgotten."

"True, sire, but this idea is not altogether my own; rather let me say it is sprung from thy great sire's generosity."

"Rise then, O Wang-Chi-Poo; but if it be not as thou hast stated the bamboo basket shall lift thy head higher than thou aspirest to raise it, and Foong-Shoong [the evil spirit] shall take thy body."

"Great Majesty, I crave thy indulgence; what I would say requires secrecy for its success."

Now, with most Oriental sovereigns to clap the hands is the signal to approach; with the Son of Heaven it is the reverse. The Son of Heaven clapped his hands behind the mat, and instantly the numerous attendants lining the apartment disappeared, as if by magic, through trap-doors in the floor.

Left alone with his august sovereign, Wang-Chi-Poo proceeded to relate the substance of Taonsu's communications, describing the unprotected condition of the seaboard towns across the ocean and their enormous wealth, and showing with how little risk, owing to the semi-civilized condition of the inhabitants, they might be laid under tribute. Then he went on to portray the powerful navy China now had, the vast sums that had been expended on it, and the growing conviction of the

people that, because it had accomplished so little, the old style of war-junks was superior. Lastly, Wang-Chi-Poo described the indignities China had suffered from Foreign Devils generally, jumbling up the expedition of the French, the half-forgotten burning of the summer palace by the English, the Chinese riots in America, and the passage of the Chinese-exclusion bill, and winding up as a grand climax with the supposed indignities inflicted on His Majesty's Embassy in Washington.

As he finished, the eyes of his precocious Majesty snapped fire.

"And why has no one told me of this last, O Wang-Chi-Poo?" for, in the opinion of the sovereign also, the supper episode was a more grievous insult than the anti-Chinese bill.

"Because, Great Majesty, the Son of Heaven is supposed to know all."

The Son of Heaven pondered deeply over this home-thrust.

"And thou counsellest me to use my powerful armaments for vengeance?" he observed at last. "Thy idea is not without value. Long now have we had these foreign steamers, and long have we been doubtful what use to make of them. Ah, Wang-Chi-Poo, thou givest me an idea that is not in Confucius,—namely, to signalize my accession by some notable event. Thou givest me an idea; I will, I will, I will; yes, I will take the reins of power, as the law now allows me, into my own hands, and declare war against these Foreign Devils; thus I will stretch out my arms to devastate their cities as they have devastated mine,—why not? These expensive armaments brought from across the sea shall go back across the sea and declare in tones of thunder that the majesty of China is more than a name, and His Majesty more than a child. But stay, thou who hast really had something to do with giving me this idea, what wouldst thou advise? Though thou art but of the second rank, thy head is not completely addled, and I have often thought thee not quite the fool thou seemest."

Wang-Chi-Poo modestly acknowledged this compliment by a bow. Before replying to the question, however, he ran the long nail of his little finger down the breast-seam of his tunic.

"Tell me, who should command this expedition?" continued the sovereign.

Wang-Chi-Poo still hesitated. "August Son of Heaven," he at last replied, "thou hast many admirals educated in foreign lands to command thy fleet; but I was thinking that if some commissioner could be found to accompany it, some one not quite of the highest rank, for so he might be arrogant and spoil all by his wilfulness,—one who was well read in Confucius, but yet not so blind a follower of Confucius as to refuse to look beyond,—one whose greatest ambition was to raise an ancestor who had no rank, and who would give as security for his success perchance a million chop-dollars,—I was thinking that if such a man could be found, the nominal direction of this expedition could be safely reposed in his hands."

"But where is such a man, O Wang-Chi-Poo? Gladly would I lay my hands on him."

Wang-Chi-Poo bowed self-complacently.

"By the bones of my ancestors, I almost believe thou meanest thy-

self! Ha! if it is thou, I shall have to ask TWO million chop-dollars. Thou art too 'cute, O Wang-Chi-Poo."

"Thy servant is too poor."

"Say rather my servant is too rich. But stay; there is something in thy plan, and, as thou thyself hast said, it demands secrecy and discretion. Regents are obstructive, courtiers are bowing puppets, while ministers of the crown are as pots that leak at the bottom and have sieves for sides. Thou didst mention a certain Taonsu whom our generosity permitted to study in the Foreign Devils' lands; with him I might more freely consult as to the likelihood of what thou hast told me. Wang-Chi-Poo, I salute thee; get thee hence."

Then Wang-Chi-Poo retired,—retired as is the custom in China, backing out not only through the first door, but through the second, backing out through one room after another, backing out through court-yard after court-yard, and through the labyrinth of gardens by which he had come; keeping his face turned always in the opposite direction to that in which he was going, and salaaming to this official and salaaming to that as one after the other passed him on. Nor was the manner of his progress changed on arriving outside the palace; for on entering his palanquin it was borne to his home backward through the streets, so that his face might never be turned away from that of his juvenile but Celestial Majesty.

CHAPTER III.

IT has been said of Russia that the system of its government is military despotism tempered by assassination. Of China it may be said that the system of its government is competitive examination tempered by purchase.

China has reached the highest development of what is called here Civil Service Reform, only in China the subject-matter of the examination is always Confucius.

No matter what the post sought for may be, Confucius is always the test of fitness. For a collectorship of customs—Confucius; for a generalship in the army—Confucius; Confucius for every post, Confucius for secretaries, ministers, and judges, with a sublime impartiality and a sublime indifference to the particular requirements of each case.

For positions in the navy, however, in addition to the doctrines of Confucius, a thorough knowledge of seamanship is required, and the Naval Academy at Foo-Chow, under the management of European instructors, turns out quite efficient officers. These, in addition to the many young men educated in the European seats of naval instruction, form a sufficiently large class to draw upon for the command of their new Armstrong and German-built steamers.

I can think of no more glaring contradiction than this rapid engraftment of new methods and of new sciences on the old trunk of Chinese civilization; this scientifically built and scientifically managed fleet, armed with steel guns, and under the command of a monarch who

attains his majority at the age of fourteen ; this scientifically managed army too, equipped with arms of precision at the whim of a sovereign, however precocious, who sits on an ivory throne behind a bamboo screen.

China is awaking from her long sleep ; her four hundred millions are beginning to rub their eyes and to look about them with all that confusion of ideas which occurs on suddenly encountering the light,—trying to reconcile Confucius with foundries, and Western ideas generally with paper butterflies and gongs. As if to give a last touch to a situation strikingly suggestive of *opéra bouffe* already, the command of expeditions that would be supposed to stand in need of extra intelligence is often a mere matter of barter.

Thus, Wang-Chi-Poo, utterly ignorant of steamships, scarcely having more experience of naval matters than was to be acquired by paddling his little boat on his artificial lake, aspired to command a European-built armada, and was willing to pay down two million chop-dollars for that distinction. One saving clause, however, removed at a stroke the most striking absurdities of the situation,—namely, that his command would be merely titular, and that he really would have nothing more to do with the leadership than the gilded figure-head on the bow of the vessel that bore him. Looked at from another stand-point it becomes more natural still. Wang-Chi-Poo would be merely the representative of his sovereign on the high seas, a commissioner, an envoy extraordinary to His Majesty's own fleet.

This fleet consisted of seventy vessels, principally steamers and of iron or composite construction. I give a list of them, which is official : five armored men-of-war ; two cruisers of the protected type ; two cruisers of the partially protected type ; eighteen unprotected cruisers ; forty-three gun-boats, of which two were protected and eleven partly protected.

The most extraordinary fact, however, is the slight notice the development of this really extensive navy has attracted in foreign lands. We hear of the Japanese navy, but the Chinese navy has been steadily improving till the Celestial Empire to-day is one of the actual naval powers of the world, and yet ninety-nine Americans out of every hundred still believe its fleet to consist of sailing-junks alone.

CHAPTER IV.

Now let us turn to a different quarter of the world, but one with which we shall have more to do ; let us turn to that country whereof the inhabitants “dress in the color of coals and wear on their heads for covering black boxes of silk ; where every fourth year they elect an emperor, and the moment he is up proceed to search out a new one ; to the land whose emperor is a god for his first two years, and a demon during his last, and when he is out, and a new emperor is selected, behold scarce a man can be found so poor as to do the old one honor ;” let us turn to the capital of this emperor, even to the Houses of Congress which make the laws.

It is exactly five months later than the events related in the first

chapter, and the session of Congress is drawing to its close. Many events have taken place during this Congress: for instance, China has made certain preposterous demands in retaliation for the Chinese-exclusion bill, and, failing to receive satisfaction, has just withdrawn its legation. This act, which, if done by a more civilized country, would be held tantamount to a declaration of war, was viewed by the people at large with about as much concern as if the King of the Sandwich Islands had abruptly withdrawn his representative. War was held to exist at this very moment with China, and the prospect of the dragon across the sea at last showing his teeth caused general merriment.

The session of this particular Congress is drawing near its close, as we have said; consequently, in the slang of the day, many bills are being "railroaded through." The River and Harbor bill, for instance, has passed, "under a suspension of the rules," and one among its many clauses is an appropriation of two hundred thousand dollars for widening and dredging Little Log-Rolling Creek.

This bill, be it understood, was not for fortifying the rivers and harbors, but simply for improving them: Little Log-Rolling Creek was to be improved into a river; the edict of the House had gone forth. No one outside of the locality through which the creek passed had ever heard of it, nor was it on any map that the eyes of man had ever seen; but no doubt when Little Log-Rolling Creek had been dredged and widened it would grow into a river, and that was all that could be expected of it. No city stood upon its banks, but once improved many cities might. And at all events its improvement would afford bathing-facilities to the juvenile community thereabouts, of which they had long stood in special need. So the River and Harbor bill passed, and each clause of its many new appropriations was passed with it,—passed with the rush of an express train, and regardless of the fact that there was yet an unexpended balance of \$16,636,362.71 from the appropriation of the preceding year. The bill for defending the harbors, however, which was on the calendar for to-day, was expected to create a very lively debate, and the galleries were packed.

At three o'clock precisely, a certain Mr. Starr arose and clearly demonstrated the unprotected condition of the cities on the seaboard; pointing out, in the course of his remarks, the necessity for providing steel guns, and showing the cost and time required for merely the plant to produce these.

A Mr. Blank replied that iron guns were quite as good as steel guns; while a Mr. Asterisk boldly declared that no guns were needed at all. Going on to speak of Daniel Webster, he touched gracefully on the American Eagle, and, closing in a pyrotechnic display of choice language, said that the glory of the American name was sufficient to keep the enemy from our door.

To this a Mr. Dash replied, in suave accents. "The eloquence of the gentleman who has last spoken," he said, "is as flowery as the flowers that bloom in the spring, but, like them, it has nothing to do with the case: the question is about guns, not eagles, nor can any

skill of rhetoric confound Daniel Webster with dynamite bombs. The gentleman has observed that the grandeur of the American name is a sufficient guarantee against invaders ; this is like the belief of the Emperor of China, during his last war with England, that the list of his titles loudly proclaimed would suffice to stay the advance of the enemy into his dominions. While speaking of the Chinese, every one knows that a Chinese-exclusion bill has been passed, and that, failing to receive a satisfactory explanation of this, the Chinese Minister has demanded his credentials. As for myself, I am not an alarmist, but this action may mean something. Even now there are vague rumors afloat about the movements of the Chinese fleet. Extravagant as it may seem, it is quite possible that these movements may be ultimately directed against our ports or shipping. Three Chinese war-vessels have lately touched at the Sandwich Islands, ostensibly on a cruise of instruction for cadets, but no cadets are on board. Five more ships of the same nation, it is well known, have lately appeared in South American waters, while one at this very moment is creating a deserved sensation in Canada.

“Not only is it within the bounds of possibility that these powerful squadrons may suddenly concentrate on our coast, but, consistently with the code of the most civilized nations, they may be coming to strike in revenge for the violation of our treaties with the Chinese Empire.

“To be sure, such a navy as China possesses, and in the hands of such a people, is like a watch in the hands of a savage ; but the very backwardness of that country would make it oblivious to those responsibilities which would restrain a more enlightened government ; and, having indulged in the extravagance of a large European-built fleet, it might be induced to try its prowess without reflecting upon the likelihood of retaliation. At all events, the appearance of so many Chinese vessels hovering about our shores is most unusual, and, being unusual, it ought to excite suspicion.”

After this Mr. Dash gave a detailed description, obtained from the Navy Department, of China's armaments, and closed with a timely reminder as to the risk of “monkeying with a buzz-saw.”

Alas ! of how little use are such warnings ! nothing is believed till the predicted event has happened.

“What is your idea of Parliament ?” was once asked of a distinguished foreigner after a visit to the classic halls of Westminster. “Why, simply,” was his reply, “how much better and more expeditiously three men of ordinary business capacity could have accomplished the work.”

I am afraid the present case was an instance of the justice of this observation. The overwhelming sentiment of the country, as proved by the press, was unanimously in favor of our adequately protecting ourselves against invasion. Congress, too, as a whole, was in favor of it ; but because one set of legislators desired steel guns and another set iron, the wishes of that minority which desired no guns at all carried the day.

One word more, and then I go on. From the speech of Mr. Dash it will be inferred that wiser counsels must have prevailed at the last

moment in China, and that the pretext for withdrawing her legation from Washington was rather the passage of the Chinese-exclusion bill than the absurd supper-party.

CHAPTER V.

AMONG those who listened to the debate, or rather let me say attended it, was Mrs. Percival T. McFlusterer. Not that Mrs. Percival T. cared a hair-pin for Congress; on the contrary, she despised politics and everything connected with politics, as every fashionable New York woman does. But she had run on to Washington for the benefit of the earlier spring weather, and had attended Congress as she might have done the zoological garden or the menagerie in some strange place. Then, besides, Washington was becoming a fashionable resort, in spite of Congress and its horde of politicians. Unfortunately, however, the spring weather hung fire, and, instead of the balmy breezes she had expected, the session closed in a flurry of snow. The flurry, much to Mr. Percival T.'s displeasure, carried Madame back to New York. For though Mr. Percival T. was anything but a careless husband, and toiled day and night for his wife, he did like just occasionally to have a "let-up" from the opera and a chance to talk stock at his club. In fact, a more melancholy spectacle than Mr. P. T. at the opera can scarcely be imagined. A fish out of water was a weak simile of his case: indeed, to the outer world Mr. P. T. more resembled a fish than a biped, and, so far as spontaneity went, he was quite as cold-blooded. In consequence, he was voted dull in general society, but in the neighborhood of the Stock Exchange he was dubbed the "Razor."

Mrs. P. T., however, aspired to be a social leader, and with a view to that rôle had of course obliged her husband to purchase her a house "on the Avenue." It was at this house, naturally, that Mrs. P. T. arrived, bringing on with her the snow-flurry from Washington.

When Mrs. P. T. was absent, Mr. P. T. invariably put out the fires, on account of the expense, and solaced himself over a register. I can imagine no drearier sight than Mr. P. T. sitting warming his toes over the register, taking his ease; but then Mr. P. T., as we must infer, never looked comfortable anywhere except on the floor of the Stock Exchange.

Mr. P. T. happened to be thus solacing himself when Mrs. P. T. arrived, and the comfort—or the discomfort—of her lord impressed her disagreeably.

Mrs. P. T. had a way of entering a room when she was annoyed that displayed the condition of her feelings without her uttering a syllable. In her heart of hearts, Mrs. McFlusterer was not a cruel woman, but she was an irritable one,—which is sometimes worse.

"I just ran back for the opera," she, however, observed, lightly: "so, if you'll order the carriage, I'll be ready at nine sharp."

P. T. groaned.

"Oh, I won't keep you waiting, dear," she went on, persuasively;

"no fear of that. I found Washington cold as Lapland, and back I am."

At dinner Mrs. P. T. continued her sprightly attack. She even remembered here and there fragments of the speeches she had heard in Washington. "Oh, my!" she ejaculated, "just think, if New York were really bombarded, what should we do?"

"I suppose we'd have to face the music," replied Mr. P. T., with his mind still on the opera; "there's some things worse than a bombardment."

"But just think, if the Chinese should really come! One of those horrid creatures in Congress said that the fleet had left China for parts unknown."

"I hope they'll get there," said Mr. P. T., beneath his breath.

"And such nasty people, these Chinese!"

"I once made a corner in opium," Mr. P. T. observed, reflectively, "but they've stopped the trade now."

"I wish you'd be lively and agreeable like other men," petulantly put in Mrs. P. T. "I wanted you to say there was no chance of their coming, but I feel it in my bones something is going to happen, and I'm sure it is connected with the Chinese."

"If they'll only come and bombard the Opera-House," muttered Mr. P. T., beneath his breath, "I'd be danged if I'd stop them."

Mr. P. T. at the opera, as I have already intimated, was even a more melancholy sight than he was at his family register-side. After he had stood the noisy Wagnerian music as long as he could, he usually retreated into the smoking-rooms, where he found some other congenial spirit and talked over the market.

It was really P. T. who made that now famous *bon mot* (and, it being the only one he had ever been guilty of making in his life, it may as well be recorded),—namely, that, if Wagner's music is the music of the future, "it were a great pity not to postpone it to then."

"Percival, dear," lisped Mrs. P. T., as they were driving homeward from the opera in their smart brougham on the evening of her return, "you must buy me Confucius to-morrow. Now promise me."

"Confucius!" exclaimed Mr. P. T., absently. "I'm afraid it isn't listed: it's one of the fancies, I suppose."

Mrs. P. T. laughed out loud. "I'm not talking of stocks. Can't you ever get them out of your head?"

"I wonder where you'd be if I did?" said Mr. P. T., with unwonted fire; then, more meekly, "You mean the man that wrote a book on China, don't you?"

"Yes, and Arnold's 'Light of Asia,' too. I know the Chinese are coming. I told you before. I feel it in my bones."

Mrs. McFlusterer was a woman of sudden whims and turns; you could no more tell of her than of a swallow which way she would dart next. Thus forewarned, we are prepared for the startling announcement she made to Mr. P. T. the next afternoon when he returned home, like a good New York husband, fairly worn out from his operations in the street, and with the books she had asked for under his arm.

"Percival, dear, I've got a little surprise for you," she said.

P. T. felt uncomfortable; he knew these surprises of old. "What is it?" he asked, feebly.

"Why, we are going to Cuba in the Terror. You know it is her trial trip, and the government has proposed, as a condition of her acceptance, her getting around Cuba and back in a month."

"I wouldn't like to go to sea in a vessel intended for the government," said Mr. McFlusterer, cautiously.

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Mrs. McFlusterer, "she's as safe as a yacht, and if Mr. Puncherry, who built her and knows all about her, is willing to risk it, I don't see why we shouldn't; he wrote this morning to invite us, and I opened the letter, though it was addressed to you."

Mr. P. T. was sorely discomfited. "And may I ask why you opened my letter?" he asked.

"Well, you see, if I hadn't, you might have kept back his invitation. I had three reasons for accepting before you saw it," she went on, in a relenting spirit, "but, as two were on your account and only one on mine, you mustn't be angry."

"And what may they be, madam?" (When particularly refractory, Mr. P. T. addressed his wife as Madam.)

"First, you'll look so well in a yachting-suit," she said, checking off the reasons on her fingers; "secondly, you will really save a great deal of money in household bills, etc., by our being at some one else's expense; and, thirdly, I'll escape the cold weather, which I failed to do in Washington. You see I'm influenced exactly twice as much on your account as on my own."

"It is very kind of you, indeed," he said, grimly; but then the clause about the expenditure was not without its weight.

Indeed, when Mr. McFlusterer came to think over the matter calmly, the plan developed its advantages. He was carrying an enormous line of stocks, and this might be unloaded on a suffering community with less suspicion, and therefore with greater ease, during an absence, than if he were present in New York. His very absence would give a fictitious strength to the market, and therefore might supply what he had long been looking for,—namely, a market to unload on. The street would say, all must be well, when the Razor was satisfied to take his ease for a month. The tone of things, which had been sagging downwards, in sympathy perhaps with the vague rumors from China, might rally. Then, besides, his wife was so continually harping on the necessity of an interval of genial weather between the Arctic cold of winter and the torrid heat of summer, that he had become impressed with the idea that she did need it.

Thirdly, Mr. P. T. had secretly been weighing in his mind that one solitary form of indulgence a wealthy New York business-man permits himself,—I mean the purchase of a yacht. This trip might save him, by its experiences, the extravagance of getting one.

All said and done, he would go,—as in any case he would have been obliged to go, Madam directing.

CHAPTER VI.

"COMING events cast their shadows before," and the vague surmises about the advent of the Chinese fleet were not unfounded. The surest indicator, the stock market, believed it before the public did, and had been growing continually weaker for the past three months. The great armada, in fact, had sailed, and was creeping on, from port to port, often a vessel going backwards as if to China, and then turning about and continuing her course, each one drawing nearer little by little its objective point.

Gladly would I describe in full the incidents leading to the commissioner's departure, as well as the daily occurrences of the voyage, but space forbids. Suffice it to say that poor Wang-Chi-Poo, when it finally came to starting, would fain have renounced his rash determination. He found the desire of ennobling his grandmother weakening in exact proportion as the time of his departure approached. At the last moment it is doubtful whether anything would have induced him to sail, were it not that his two millions of chop-dollars had already been passed in. Besides, he was wroth that his wives and family did not take his departure more to heart. On the contrary, his mission was so extraordinary that it seemed rather to amuse them; and as for his children, they blew their butterflies with increased assiduity into the air, just as if nothing in particular was going to happen.

Long and wearily that last night he had stood in his garden and looked at the artificial stork; long the artificial stork had stared at him. Then he went to the temple hard by, and passed two hours in silent adoration of his ancestors.

The next morning he made propitiatory offerings in the same pagoda, and burnt innumerable little pieces of paper to propitiate the Dragon of the sea,—that horrible demon who causes the waves to swell when he is angry, and the winds to roar as they emerge from his mouth. In due time he repaired to his ship, and truth compels me to relate that when, at the moment of embarking, the boiler suddenly let off steam, Wang-Chi-Poo jumped from the poop in an agony of terror, thinking perhaps that this same demon was coming on board through the funnel.

Upon several occasions too, during the voyage, Wang-Chi-Poo came near setting his cabin and with it the ship on fire, by burning little joss-papers in propitiation of the Sea-Dragon; but, as he was firmly persuaded that only by such pious rites could disaster be averted, he concerned himself little about the lesser evil of a conflagration.

It may be questioned, how so large a fleet could have sailed without attracting more than "vague suspicions," even with the extraordinary precautions that had been taken. They had sailed, as we know, in different detachments, under sealed orders, and to far different points and at different times. It was rather the concentration of these vessels in harbors of the Western Hemisphere that aroused attention, and then it was too late for the United States to guard against them. Indeed, it was left to America herself to bring about the climax, for, when the movements of the fleet could be no longer doubted, a cablegram was

despatched to China stating that, if these vessels continued to approach, their presence would be considered a *casus belli*.

I am sorry to confess that this message was dictated in a spirit of bluff; and when to this an insolent reply was received, America awoke to the disagreeable realization that she had a war on her hands with a people whom it was no honor to vanquish, yet who were better prepared to take the initiative than she was to defend herself.

As for the vessel that bore Wang-Chi-Poo, she had passed around the Horn, and it was really her arrival at Rio that inspired the telegram from the State Department. Throwing off the cloak here, as to her intentions, she joined the squadron previously mentioned as cruising in South American waters, and boldly sailed up the coast. It was exactly one month after Mr. and Mrs. McFlusterer had sailed for Cuba that the fleet skirted that island and approached the shores of Florida. As they drew nearer, Wang-Chi-Poo's curiosity, which had been steadily increasing, rose to fever-heat, and Taonsu, who had come out as interpreter, was kept busy answering his questions about the country.

Land might even now be sighted at any moment, and since early morning Wang-Chi-Poo had been eagerly searching the horizon with his glass. At last he closed the instrument with a gesture of impatience.

"Thou hast said, O Taonsu, that this land is one of many laws, but of little inclination to abide by them. How many laws has it?"

"It has many in name, Great Excellency, but only two laws are rigorously enforced."

"And what are they, O Taonsu?"

"The laws of supply and demand. These laws are harsher than even our criminal code, for they grind the poor to powder, and heap the rich with riches compared with which the wealth of our great Emperor is as naught."

"But I thought this country was governed by the people."

"In name, again, Great Excellency, so that the people may be ground down the more."

"But who grinds them down, O Taonsu? I have heard that this land was a republic, which I take to mean a beast with no head and many tails, meaning by that a country that sits down on its ruling classes."

"Stay, Great Excellency, thou dost not understand the system. There is a ruling class, but it is not, as with us, the official class. On the contrary, the class I speak of rules the official class, being composed of kings,—Kings of the Highways, they are called,—and all products, even those necessary to sustain life, must pay them tribute. Under these are two lower grades, called respectively 'Directors' and 'Stockholders.' The last, however, are held in little account. Another kind of ruler is the 'Silver King,' and still another the 'Coal Baron;' the one owns the silver-mines and makes the nation take his ore at enormous premiums for chop-dollars, and the last controls men's bodies through their love of warmth and comfort. The official class is often but the creature of these kings, and, though they are always prating of the rights of the poor man, they are continually wronging him by helping the rich to grow still richer."

"How so, O Taonsu?"

"By voting the rich special charters and privileges in which they also share in the profits, not always receiving their pay direct, but through a species of middleman, called a 'lobbyist.'"

"But this four-year emperor, is he really of no account to prevent his state of things?"

"Great Excellency, his only function is to shake hands with all his subjects, so that they may feel happy and comfortable and never notice how things are going. I have seen one of these emperors shake hands with fifty thousand people in one day!"

"And that is why they have to choose a fresh one every four years, —he gets worn out?"

"That is why, Great Excellency; oftentimes he does not last so long."

"But this 'progress,' that we hear so much about in Western countries, what means it, Taonsu?—that affairs go forward?"

"It is rather that they go 'round.'"

"Taonsu, thou makest my heart sick with what thou tellest me; of a truth, this land is upside-down. Ha! but what is that? A sail! a sail!"

It was indeed a sail that they had overhauled,—if a long line of smoke against the far edge of the horizon could be so denominated,—the first sail they had sighted for several days. What made that particular steamer take that particular direction was one of those things that could only be explained by an inscrutable Providence which brings the extremes together. To be accurate, if neither the fleet nor the steamer altered their courses, the steamer in proper time would cross their bows. She was evidently taking the most direct route from the Queen of the Antilles to Florida; but at last, as if not liking the look of things, she altered her course in such a way as to steer for the nearest point, Key West, turning her stern instead of her side to the fleet in order to reach that port.

Having yet a start of some seven miles, and barely fifteen to go, she would in all likelihood reach her haven, could she sail one mile to the enemy's two. As if in doubt of this, however, she was evidently putting on steam to her utmost capacity, and crowding on all the canvas she could carry.

CHAPTER VII.

OFF the coast of Florida, like the dot to an *i*, lies the island of Key West, and connected with the island by a long causeway is a giant fortress. This fortress, lying midway as it does between Cuba and the United States, commands, on the south, the approach to the whole eastern seaboard. This fortress, vast and stately, is garrisoned by *one man*. The utter loneliness of Sergeant McKenna's life I can compare to nothing but that of a state prisoner sentenced to solitary confinement.

Sergeant McKenna was both garrison and commander rolled into one. Sergeant McKenna, being a soldier every inch of him, had a high

sense of his duties. Sergeant McKenna tried to fulfil in his one person the duties of the various personages he represented. Thus, he would keep guard, and, when the usual four hours were up and he was completely exhausted, he would *relieve* himself by a fresh guard-mount. To do the honors of the garrison to himself as commander-in-chief was difficult, but at stated intervals he would call out the guard to himself, and regularly on Sundays he would have dress inspection of himself.

Evening parade, too, was seldom neglected; but the crowning achievement of Sergeant McKenna's efforts appropriately to garrison single-handed one of the greatest fortresses of his country was, strange to say, accomplished with—his foot.

Sergeant McKenna, by an ingenious arrangement of strings and pulleys touched at the proper moment by his foot, managed to let off the sunset gun and to haul down the standard, and this, too, without leaving his beat as sentinel the while. To a casual observer who noticed this threefold performance,—who saw the smoke circling upward from one part of the fort, the stately stars and stripes descending the flag-staff in another, and yet who noticed the soldierly figure of the sentinel unconcernedly pacing his beat on still a third part of the fortress,—nothing would have seemed amiss. He would therefore have been ignorant at what a cost in time, thought, and ingenuity this had been accomplished. It is even stated that a Congressman once sailing past was struck by the lavish extravagance of Uncle Samuel in maintaining a garrison at this distant point, and on his return to Washington demanded an investigation. A commission certainly went down with a salary at the rate of five thousand dollars per year for each member, with a secretary in addition at two thousand and a stenographer at fifteen hundred. Collectively they sat on poor Sergeant McKenna, and, since they could not very well cut him off, they cut off his powder.

From that day Sergeant McKenna's spirits began to flag. Sergeant McKenna, though garrisoning the fortress, boarded at Mrs. Ayres's. Mrs. Ayres lived in the village of Key West, and the fortress, as we know, was connected with the village by a bridge. This bridge was some six hundred feet long, and, when the tide was in, the fortress was an island. Now, the boys of Key West, quick to notice the changed demeanor of the sergeant, would wait at the town end of the bridge to observe his comings or goings to and from Mrs. Ayres's, and, as is the wont of boys, would chaff him, shout at him, ask him how the garrison was feeling, and how much Uncle Sam allowed for powder.

At first Sergeant McKenna treated these insults with the contempt they deserved; he would unlock or relock, as the case might be, the padlock of the wooden gate on the bridge, deposit the key of the fort in his pocket, and go his way. But once, when the youths, growing bolder, scaled this wooden gate and attempted to carry the fortress by storm, Sergeant McKenna sallied forth, charged suddenly upon them, and vowed he'd fill them so full of shot that their mothers wouldn't know them. Then the boys' feelings underwent a sudden change, and, from contempt, they began to feel respect for the sergeant. As time went on, they even got to lend him assistance in cleaning the guns, and keeping up the appearance of things generally about the fort, actually

at last paying out of their own pockets for the gun-polish and the blacking, as any recent visitor to Key West will testify. Nevertheless, in spite of these evidences of devotion, the sergeant was growing morose. He, too, had long felt it in his bones that war was imminent, and as soon as war was declared (though no one believed that actual combat would result) he laid in as large a supply of powder as his slender means admitted of, further utilizing the boys in training them to load and manœuvre the cannon.

Each day, after returning from Mrs. Ayres's he would sweep the horizon with his glass, and would watch for the enemy of whose arrival his poor old bones had warned him long before his government had.

Sergeant McKenna was not only losing spirits, but was losing his flesh, and his bones were about all that was left of him. Smile as you may, there is something grand in the spectacle of this poor old man standing by the government that had so cruelly neglected him.

Tattered and torn, hungry and sorrowful, the butt of ridicule for all men, he: and yet there was an unexpended balance of \$16,636,362.71 belonging to our Little Log-Rolling Creeks! The late patriotic demands on his pocket had made serious inroads on his stomach; he paid half board and got half fare at Mrs. Ayres's. A reef in his belt for breakfast, a long walk for dinner, and a sweep of the glass for supper would have constituted before long his sole apology for diet. But an end was coming,—an end was coming soon.

* * * * *

It is a warm and balmy afternoon,—one of those soft, sensuous days when the sky and ocean seem to meet in a long lover-like embrace. Far to the south lies Cuba, and far away behind a yellowish haze that may be water, or may be sky, so indistinct it looks, Sergeant McKenna thinks he sees something. His eyes, however, in general sympathy with his physical condition, are a little weak, so he takes another look, first wiping well the glass; then at last from out of the haze he sees the Chinese fleet coming, preceded by the strange steamer, all with their sails set and gleaming, and with long lines of smoke standing out behind them.

Sergeant McKenna, warned by his bones that the on-comers must be the long-expected foe, summons the boys from the village forthwith, and makes them a stirring speech. He tells them how much the government has done for them, and how happy they ought to be for this opportunity to serve it: stating that, if they will accurately obey his orders, they can yet strike a blow for American honor; that heretofore their efforts had been principally directed in keeping things in repair about the fort, but now the country demanded a return for the privilege which it had so magnanimously allowed them. Then he touches upon the youths of Lexington, and, after seeing them load the guns and close the gates, he sends one of them up the flag-staff to nail the standard to the mast.

All this had consumed some fifty minutes, and in the mean time the fleet had drawn quite close, with the chase still nearer in.

To a careful observer, the steamer in the lead would appear to be laboring badly, and evidently trying to double a ledge of rocks ex-

tending out from the fortress, and so around into the harbor which the fortress protected. Then at the moment when she would naturally turn and go around this ledge of rocks, she puts down her helm, but, owing to some defect of machinery, or to the severe strain her flight has subjected her to, her steering-gear fails to work. There is much confusion and swearing on deck; a stout man gives contradictory orders, and a lady faints. At last, however, she—the vessel, not the lady—does “come round,” but, coming around too far, is unable to be stopped, turning when she has once got started, like a balky horse, a wilful child, or a wound-up machine, and gaining in speed and obstinacy till she is whirling around on a pivot like a thing possessed. It was at this moment of all others, when her broadside was presented full, and at a distance of barely six hundred yards, that—either astounded at her behavior or unable to contain their impatience any longer—the boys in the fort “let drive.”

CHAPTER VIII.

DURING the pursuit, Wang-Chi-Poo had been standing on the deck, regarding the vessel they had been so quickly overhauling.

“So thou thinkest it is one of their new junks intended for the navy?” he exclaimed, turning to Taonsu.

“Great Excellency, there is no doubt on that point; she is now returning from her trial trip around Cuba, as it was telegraphed us at Rio she would do, by our agents in the United States. Her description exactly tallies with this paper.” And the secretary looked at a sheet whereon was written a full description of the Terror, her dimensions, the guns she was to carry, the conditions of her acceptance, her machinery, and particularly an improvement on the Kunstadter patent screw which was intended to give greater rapidity in turning.

“It seems to me, then,” said Wang-Chi-Poo, “that we have little to fear from their fleets if perchance they resemble her; she is too weak to fight, too slow to run away,—and this last we have proved without firing a gun.”

“Great Excellency, that is the reason I counselled thee *not* to fire on her. Had we done so, it would only have proved the weakness of her armor. As we have now tested the slowness of her engines as compared with those of the whole fleet, you can fire when you like.”

The commissioner was on the point of following out this suggestion when the fortress opened fire itself.

The astonishment of Wang-Chi-Poo at this unexpected occurrence took off his attention from the object of their pursuit, and was only equalled by his rage.

“O Taonsu,” he exclaimed, turning angrily to that official, “thou hast misinformed me; thou didst tell me there was no fortress fully equipped the entire length of this coast.”

Taonsu was himself astounded. “Great Excellency, I must admit that it is strange. Perchance this is the one solitary exception to the rule. But see, Great Excellency, they have saved us our powder. They

have sunk their own junk, and not only settled the question of the efficacy of her armor, but also that of the Kunstadter turning-gear, which they are trying on a vessel called the *Nina*, so as to apply it to their other new ships."

It was too true. The shot, while rattling off the sides of the Chinese fleet like peas off a plank fence, had perforated the iron plates of the *Terror*, and all that remained in evidence of her now was a small boat containing three people rowing frantically on the waste of waters.

Wang-Chi-Poo's blood was up.

"It will never do to leave this place in our rear; it must be carried," he said; and the fleet continued their advance. After the first outburst, the fortress had subsided into a suspicious quiet. As they closely examined it through the glass, men's heads, as it appeared, showed over the ramparts, and the glitter of steel could be seen as of bayonets. The fleet, led by the flag-ship, continued on, opening fire as it came; still no sound, no response, after that first discharge.

The marksmanship of the fleet was admirable, and after each shot huge splinters of stone rose in the air, or, if the projectile were a shell, great showers of dust.

"Of a truth," exclaimed Wang-Chi-Poo, "this is most mysterious. Perchance they wish to draw us into some monstrous trap. What counsellest thou, O Taonsu, thou who knowest what these foreign devils be? Perchance it were better that thou took the boats and carried the place by assault. I will remain here with the fleet, to see that no evil betide them."

"Rather let us stop and pick up the fugitives from the steam-junk," said Taonsu, who little relished the proposal of his master. "The rest of the fleet, having no precious life like thine on board, can carry this accursed fortress as they will."

"Thy advice is good, O Taonsu. It is the part of a great commander to guard properly his own safety. Moreover, it is only humane to succor the afflicted."

In view of this magnanimous proposal, the flag-ship stopped, leaving the rest of the fleet to continue on.

The fort by this time was pretty badly damaged, and its capture would not seem a difficult operation; still the bayonets flashed from the ramparts, and the heads of numerous men showed mysteriously above the walls, for the sergeant had skilfully placed such cannon-balls as he might not require, at various points of vantage, and alongside of each a musket, upright. Yet the same suspicious quiet reigned.

The shape of the fort was a pentagon, and the vessels as they approached finally fronted a new side. Then another sudden discharge belched forth. To be sure, the fire did little damage, and what few shots struck the vessels rattled, as I have intimated, on their iron plates like peas shot from a glass tube. Still, the manner of defence was peculiar,—these hysterical outbursts, succeeded by fits of remorse, as it were. One more discharge only there was, and then the boats were manned and lowered.

CHAPTER IX.

THE phenomenon which so surprised the invaders would have been easily understood had they been aware of the reduced condition of the garrison. Sergeant McKenna, short-handed as he was, could not direct the cannon, and was obliged to wait till the fleet got opposite each successive battery of guns. Sergeant McKenna was weak with much fasting, and saw with dismay his youthful garrison falling away around him. When the boats left the fleet, he gave orders that the firing should cease, and, calling the boys that yet remained alive to his assistance, they dragged a small swivel loaded with canister up to the gates of entrance. The sergeant knew, from the direction the boats were taking, that the landing would be made on the bridge, and he directed the swivel in such a way as to command this.

Then, attaching to the gun one of his old arrangements of strings and pulleys by which it would be discharged on the bursting in of the gates, he sadly closed them, and marched out with the remnants of his plucky battalion.

Sergeant McKenna, I have heard, has since been severely criticised for not having held on longer to the fort which his government had placed in his charge. Truth compels me to say that I think these criticisms unjust. Sergeant McKenna "held the fort" till his garrison was decimated, and only left because the sturdy boys would not leave without him.

As for Wang-Chi-Poo, as we know, he had stopped behind to pick up the survivors from the sunken steamer. Nevertheless, the particulars of the assault had been signalled back to him in all its details, including the terrible sacrifice of life that met the invaders when they burst in the gates, and after all the retreat of but one man and half a dozen boys. There was evidently something unnatural about such a defence, and Wang-Chi-Poo stands talking with his *fidus Achates* over the extraordinary occurrence :

"Of a truth, O Taonsu, this is a strange land, where they confide their fortresses to children. It passes my comprehension, however, that the demon who must have assisted them did not provide them with guns to perforate our ships' sides. By the bones of my grandmother, we must accept the combat as a happy augury, since, with all their commotion, they have only sunk their own steamer. But hush! what is that?"

And, as they listened, a long wail rising over the cadence of the waves was wafted to them from the shore.

"It is the grief of the female devils weeping for their offspring, Great Excellency, and they will not be comforted, because they are not."

Wang-Chi-Poo pondered deeply.

"By the way, O Taonsu, talking about female devils, didst thou not mention that one was picked up in the boat of the sunken junk? My attention was so sorely distracted by this accursed fortress that I did not notice the survivors when they were brought on board."

"Yes, Great Excellency: it is now six years since I beheld one

of their white-skinned women, but I'm sure a female devil was among the saved. She is now in the cabin along with her two mates."

"Have them all up, O Taonsu: I would feast my curiosity on these strange beings."

Taonsu gave the necessary orders; and in a couple of minutes afterwards Mrs. McFlusterer in a dead faint, Mr. P. T. in a fancy yachting-suit, and Mr. Puncherry in a towering rage and a profuse perspiration, were before their Eastern captors.

Wang-Chi-Poo bowed low, brushed the dust from the seat of a cane-bottomed chair, and then brought Mrs. McFlusterer back to life by tickling her facetiously under the chin with his queue.

"Tell them," he said at last, turning to his interpreter, "that I find the she-devil fair, and ask them to what class in life they belong."

Mr. P. T., with the idea of a heavy ransom in his mind, was in the act of explaining that they were poor gentlemen travelling for their health, when he was interrupted by a volley of expletives from Mr. Puncherry, whose fat leg one of the monkey-like crew took occasion to pinch as he was sitting down on a seat.

As for Mrs. McFlusterer, she looked at Wang-Chi-Poo, and instinctively regretted that she could not have had him at a dinner as a curiosity for her friends on the Avenue. In some respects she thought him a handsome man, and his embroidered tunic would make such a lovely tea-gown; nevertheless, she was palpitating with terror as she reflected on the predicament she was placed in.

Mr. Puncherry was the first to demand an explanation. "Will you tell me," he asked of Taonsu, "what the devil this all means, that a vessel intended for the United States government should be pursued on the high seas by a lot of cut-throats from China?" And Mr. Puncherry stretched out his legs and folded his hands as if he had propounded an unanswerable conundrum.

"It means, O inhabitant of the West, that the righteous claims of his Celestial Majesty having failed to meet with recognition, we have come at the head of this mighty fleet to enforce them."

Mr. Puncherry drew a long whistle, and looked at the "Razor," and the "Razor" looked at him. Mrs. McFlusterer raised her hands to her brow and gave vent to an hysterical sob. "Oh, Percival, oh, Mr. Puncherry, this is what comes of never having stopped in a port during our trip! China has declared war."

"How the mischief could I stop in a port, when I only had a month to make the trip in?" said Mr. Puncherry. "Around to Cuba and back is thirty-seven hundred miles. I had to steam a hundred and twenty miles a day to do it. I consider it a great feat, a really great feat, and never to have been obliged to put into port during so long a time is more than most ships in our navy could boast."

Wang-Chi-Poo was not a cruel captor, and the grief of the lady touched his heart.

"Tell her, O Taonsu, I find her fair, and I like her none the less because her nails are cut; tell her, though her feet, as compared with our daughters', are as the blades of paddle-wheels, they are not uncouth in shape; tell her, therefore, to curb her sorrow, and, though many

wives are praying for my return, I will take her home with me, where she shall ride in a palanquin of ivory and gold; tell her, O Taonsu," continued Wang-Chi-Poo, gaining enthusiasm as he went on, "that I love her, for she resembleth my grandmother, in form, spirit, and beauty, very much." Then Wang-Chi-Poo subsided into his cane-bottomed chair, arranged the folds of his robes in what he considered a becoming style, and proceeded to ogle the lady over his fan.

Adequately to portray the feelings of Mrs. McFlusterer as Taonsu translated this speech literally, defies my powers of description; indignant protest struggled for supremacy with rage and indignation, as she glared at Wang-Chi-Poo, who, taking it all for approval, sat in his chair, like one of those squat Chinese figures, smiling and nodding his head.

At last Mrs. McFlusterer, giving up the mandarin, somewhat illogically turned upon her husband.

"If it had not been for you," she cried, with a great gasp, "we would not be here now; it was you that brought me, you, *you*, YOU!"

"Me?" said Mr. McFlusterer, with very natural surprise.

"Yes, *you*. At least it was you that made me want to come; if you had been like other men, I should have been content to remain at home."

This interesting discourse was interrupted by the man at the mast-head suddenly announcing fresh signals from the fleet, and the captives were hurriedly remanded to their quarters in the rear cabin. It was not an uncomfortable locality; the port-holes were open, and, had it not been that Messrs. McFlusterer and Puncherry were secured by chains to ring-bolts in the side, they might have imagined themselves on board of their former luxurious craft.

The cabin evidently adjoined that of the commissioner, and was not lacking in emblems of Western civilization, though they were somewhat misappreciated. For instance, on a table stood a stove, but manifestly for ornament; in a corner was a French clock, with its face to the wall; while the sides of the apartment were adorned with pictures hung upside down.

Mr. McFlusterer, as soon as his fetters had been again made fast, demanded of Mrs. McFlusterer, in a slightly injured tone of voice, wherein his difference from other men could be held responsible for her desire to risk the dangers of the deep.

"Why," exclaimed his wife, "if, for instance, you had joined the Jockey Club, as I wished last year, we might have been driving on a coach to the races at this very instant. It was just to save the initiation-fee, Percival," she continued, in a dramatic tone of voice, "that you have sacrificed me your wife, Mr. Puncherry your best friend, and, what you probably consider of greater moment, yourself, for twenty-five dollars!"

"Oh, Lord! I wonder what they'll do with us," exclaimed Mr. Puncherry, anxious to draw off the fire from his friend; for Mr. Puncherry, though touchy, was a good-hearted gentleman. "Curse it! this infernal idiot has got my chain so short I can't sit down. Here,

you black-tailed imp of darkness!" he continued, vainly calling after the vanished attendant, and then to Mrs. McFlusterer, who alone of the party had the free use of her lower limbs. "Might I beg you, madam, to see if you can find a bell?"

Mrs. McFlusterer, thus appealed to, began a search which the civilized appearance of things generally gave promise of being successful.

"It's very awkward, but you see I can't even sit down; it keeps me so tight to the wall. How is yours, Mr. McFlusterer?"

"It might be worse," replied poor Mr. P. T., who endeavored to cultivate on all occasions a cheerful and philosophical frame of mind. "It's better than being drowned."

"I'm really glad, though, the vessel sank," said Mr. Puncherry, in a meditative way. "There were a lot of improvements in her machinery which it would never have done for these fellows to have seen and adopted."

"I guess it will be a big loss," said Mr. McFlusterer, with the slightest possible tinge of irony.

"Oh, no," replied Mr. Puncherry, who besides being kindly was a large, hopeful man. "You see, I'll have her raised up and pumped out, and then I'll sell her to the next administration."

"I wonder what they'll do with us?" asked Mr. McFlusterer, to change the conversation.

"Why, they'll hold you both for enormous ransoms and sell me into slavery; you heard the proposal of that odious wretch. Oh, no, I forgot: you are both to be tossed overboard to propitiate the Dragon of the Sea." Mrs. McFlusterer said this with a slightly irritating tone of decision: the delightful ecstasy of the thrust, indeed, alone saved her from a fresh fit of hysterics.

"I think," said Mr. McFlusterer, with a return to his usual caution, "we'd better avoid all appearance of being rich: it might raise our price."

"Great heavens! how the papers will talk, when they hear we are captured!" cried Mr. Puncherry. "Gad! if I could only get hold of the end of a telegraph-wire, I'd begin a suit against the government for sinking my ship."

"Do you really think it will get into the papers?" inquired Mrs. McFlusterer, as a ray of hope lightened the murky horizon; for Mrs. P. T. revelled in a sensation.

"Of course it will: does anything of interest keep out of them, madam?" Mr. Puncherry, among his many possessions, owned a hundred shares of newspaper property.

Mrs. McFlusterer at this moment screamed. A dark figure, stripped to the waist, had entered the room without her knowledge, and was crawling along the floor behind her.

"Melican woman's tongue too long," angrily exclaimed the wretch, rising on his knees and glancing down at the blade of a murderous knife that was stuck in his belt.

Mrs. McFlusterer screamed again, while both of the gentlemen, chained to the wall, could do nothing but stare in dumb horror.

"Melican woman all foot and all tongue; not miss a little of either," continued the intruder, in the same pigeon English.

In point of fact, he was simply a new attendant who had come in answer to the bell. But, unfamiliar with the customs of the East, Mrs. McFlusterer was alarmed by his crawling in on his stomach; while the servant, on his part, probably annoyed at his reception, did not hesitate to give his coming a more sinister interpretation than necessary. At all events, Mrs. McFlusterer had retreated to the far end of the cabin, and her screams brought in the guard, headed by Taonsu.

She appealed to him, throwing herself on her knees before him.

"O lady of the West," he exclaimed, looking severely at the servant, "this creature has exceeded his instructions. Thy privilege it shall be to allot his punishment."

In the ecstasy of her supposed deliverance, Mrs. McFlusterer flung her arms about his neck. Taonsu blushed, if the sickly flush that penetrated his sallow skin could be so denominated.

"He shall be beheaded, daughter of the West, and his head shall serve to ornament thy bridal state-room."

Mrs. McFlusterer had the utmost difficulty in dissuading Taonsu from the immediate execution of this grim sentence. Then, as a mark of his favor, she induced him to give the two gentlemen a little more slack in chain. Shortly afterwards the table was spread for dinner, and, though they were a little suspicious of the dishes, their appetites were such as to make them do ample justice to what was put before them.

At the close of the meal, Mr. Puncherry pushed back his chair as far as his chain would permit. "You see, I go in more for safety than for speed," he said, with the same delightful assurance, as he recurred again to his vessel. "To be sure, that infernal fort sank her, but round balls, as every one knows, are obsolete, and my armor wasn't prepared to withstand them; indeed, it is my principle to get rid of a projectile as quick as you can; it's better for it to go slap through and away, than to stick, particularly if it's a shell that might burst on board. You must confess too, McFlusterer, that it ain't every ship that can sail around Cuba and get back in a month."

"It certainly is not," acceded Mr. McFlusterer; "at least, every ship that you build."

Mr. Puncherry failed to notice the subtle irony. "Great Scott!" he continued, "the idea of the only garrisoned fort in the country letting drive at the only really well-equipped vessel! it's like the story of the Kilkenny Cats. I tell you what it is, if we go on like this, we will soon have no navy at all to fight these rascals." And Mr. Puncherry lay back in his chair and lighted a cigar.

CHAPTER X.

MR. PUNCHERRY was right. Everything does get into the papers, and it was scarcely possible that so momentous an event as the arrival of the hostile fleet off the shores of America could be omitted.

A detailed account of the defence of the fort was flashed up from Key West, also of the sinking of the *Terror*, on which so many hopes had centred. A full description of her successful trial-trip around Cuba, too, was given, and the rash assumption was ventured that if she had not been overtaken and run down by the enemy she would have been an honor to the naval armament of the nation. As to the exact manner of her destruction there seemed to be a wide discrepancy of opinion, but the report most favorably received was that she had been sunk by the Chinese fleet.

"Of her crew," this version went on to say, "but three persons are known to have been saved, and they are now in the hands of the enemy. There is reason to hope that Mr. Puncherry is one of these three survivors, since he always kept ready at hand for instant use on his own vessels a small life-boat answering to the description of the one seen frantically pulling away from the *Terror* as she went down."

As it happened, China's proclamation of war, or, to be more accurate, the message which amounted to a declaration of war, was received at Washington the day after the sailing of the *Terror* on her ill-fated trip; thus New York, along with the country at large, had barely had a month for preparation. These thirty days having now elapsed, the enemy were already off the coast and steadily advancing northward, having, presumably, for their first objective point the richest city of the New World. Let us see what New York had done to protect herself during this interval.

After her first paroxysm of astonishment, indignation, and alarm, she had set herself valiantly to meet the emergency.

She had ample talent at her disposal, and hastily called a meeting of the same Board on Fortifications whose counsels she had shortly before despised.

This board had previously suggested that steel towers and sunken batteries should be located at Sandy Hook, at points near Forts Hamilton and Wadsworth, and, besides this, at Throgg's Neck to protect the entrance to the city by the Sound. The board had further suggested that a series of small islands running like stepping-stones from the extreme east of Long Island to the Connecticut shore should be fortified as outer bulwarks against approach from the sea. These several batteries, properly equipped, would have amply guarded New York, and they could have been constructed at a total cost of fourteen million dollars, being but little more than one-half of one per cent. of the value of that city's destructible property, which has been estimated at \$2,574,490,678. Thus for fourteen million dollars, or one-half of one per cent. of its destructible wealth, New York could have been made secure; and this fourteen million dollars, curiously enough, was two millions less than the unexpended balance due upon our Little Log-Rolling Creeks before many millions more were voted for their further improvement. It has been shown, however, that it would require five years to obtain a "plant" sufficient to make the guns wherewith to equip such forts. To be sure, it may be parenthetically observed, a march had been stolen on us; for we never could believe that China—this quintessence of absurdity, with its stock-still conservatism, and its boy

monarch sitting on an ivory throne behind a bamboo screen—would ever involve us in a real war. But suppose hostilities should spring up between us and Germany, France, England, or even Chili, let me ask, would these nations magnanimously allow us five years for preparation? You reply, America, wishing to live at peace with all the world, will take care to involve herself in no complications. European nations will be equally cautious, if from no other motive than because any trouble with the United States would be extremely unpopular with the masses of any such country, which, in their hearts, sympathize with the experiment of democracy here being essayed. This is all very true; but you forget that the act of some hot-headed lieutenant on one of our own ships at some distant port or station might put us in a position from which we could not with honor withdraw.

You also forget that the unprotected condition of our harbors might prevent us from maintaining our just claims in some case where an immediate settlement might be demanded.

But to return to the Board on Fortifications. As it was naturally impossible to procure steel guns in thirty days, and as the guns that we had would be worse than useless, and, further, as the various forts that decorated the approaches to the city would be more dangerous to the garrisons than to the invaders, the board suggested that, in the emergency, the chief reliance should be placed on torpedoes. The result, at all events, would settle a much-disputed point,—namely, whether torpedoes alone would not adequately fulfil all the purposes of harbor defence.

Now, these torpedoes were made both by the government and by private individuals. As the principal torpedo-stations belonging to the government—viz., at Willett's Point and at Goat Island—had been long without appropriations, it was deemed advisable to trust to private enterprise to supply the machines.

Not to enter into a technical description of the various kinds of torpedoes, it will be enough to state that they can be divided into two principal classes. First, the "controllable" class,—that is, machines directed by the operator on *terra firma*, or even from a vessel. Second, the "stationary" or "submarine mine," which is anchored, and discharged either by contact with the enemy or by electricity from the shore. The first class generally have this objection, that if they are to be directed from the shore they are limited in their flight, and hostile fleets, knowing their range, keep just out of reach. There is a third class,—namely, the "automobile torpedo,"—but, as the United States is the only nation that possesses none, I have not included them in the list. There was discovered to be an additional objection against controllable torpedoes, so far as the present emergency was concerned, for, when they came to be experimented with, they were found to be a singularly uncontrollable machine; as one of them, after rushing a few hundred yards towards its imaginary enemy, suddenly turned around, and, coming back in its course, exploded among the spectators, with terrible effect. Under these circumstances, it was deemed best to trust to the stationary torpedo, and a force had been sent out to lay these along the various channels by which the fleet might approach the city.

Though such an operation is usually conducted with the utmost secrecy, in the present case the hurry was great, and proper precautions to keep away spectators were neglected. Many people, therefore, witnessed the work, and amid the swarm of crafts that were tempted forth, a small row-boat escaped any particular notice. She came from a long, rakish schooner that hovered about in the offing, and at the oars was seated a man with a slouch hat and a dirty face, who stopped and marked on a little map the exact location of each torpedo as it was anchored.

"And where was the great American navy?" you ask. I will tell you exactly where it was at the time of the declaration of hostilities.

Four vessels were being sold at auction at San Francisco,—viz., the *Cyane*, the *Shenandoah*, the *Wachusett*, and the *Lackawanna*; one was being sold at League Island,—namely, the *Pilgrim*; and three more at Brooklyn,—viz., the *Tennessee*, the *Powhatan*, and the *Ticonderoga*. Of our effective fleet we had the following encouraging particulars, which I quote verbatim from the official report that was received, curiously enough, a few days earlier.

"The *Swatara*," it stated, "is at Portsmouth. She is to have new boilers and extensive repairs made in her hull; she will be ready for sea, it is hoped, in a few months, and will then in all likelihood join the North Atlantic Squadron if she can reach it. The *Nipsic*, *Enterprise*, *Thetis* (an old whaler), and the *Richmond* are almost ready for sea. The former will relieve the *Pinta* at Alaska, and the latter will become the flag-ship of the North Atlantic, *i.e.*, the Home Squadron. The *Nipsic* and the *Enterprise* will be ready for sea within a few months, and will also join the Home Squadron. The *Trenton*, at Norfolk, will require several months for necessary repairs. To take the place of the condemned vessels we have the *Porpoise* and the *Pacific*, and a cruiser called the *Hub*, now in process of construction."

Such were the condition, locality, and situation of the best part of the American navy on the declaration of hostilities. In addition to these were a half-dozen old monitors, one of which, lying off the Brooklyn Navy Yard, immediately sank when it was taken into deep water. Nevertheless, the ferry-boats and the magnificent Sound and River steamers might be utilized; and, these being faster than any ships the government possessed, it was proposed to man them, to run down rapidly upon the enemy, and to throw on each of the iron-clads a sufficient force to carry it by assault. It was a desperate undertaking, but, the times being bad, and many people out of work, sufficient numbers for the purpose answered to the call for volunteers, and they were immediately put into training.

You ask, What did Congress do? Was it not appealed to? Of course it was. The President called an extra session, but, as munitions of war, not speeches, were what the poor cities wanted, the extra session was a work of supererogation. To assist every seaboard city in so few days was a matter of utter impossibility; and while enormous sums of money (ten times greater than any that had been previously asked) were voted, and while every ship of the navy that

could float was hastily ordered out, the inhabitants of the exposed towns were practically told that they must look to their own resources.

As regards the State of New York, the Governor had called out the militia; the Knights of Labor had come forward as knights of war; the police were reinforced by special constables; and, not to be behindhand, the young club-men had volunteered *en masse*. They were dubbed the "Fancies," and, the question of uniform exciting so bitter a difference of opinion, they resolved as a compromise to stick to their usual attire. Its essentials were a high, glossy black hat, and a light overcoat, with little swallow-like tails projecting out behind, and the effect was decidedly military.

These several classes of forces, it was hoped, would repel at all events a landing; and, to have them ready at hand, sheds and temporary barracks had been erected in the principal parks and squares of the city.

Nevertheless, the great majority of well-to-do citizens looked somewhat askance at these extensive preparations, and they had already begun to leave the city slowly. When the news was telegraphed up that the hostile fleet had reached Key West, however, their desire to get away received a sudden impulse. Fifth Avenue became one moving caravan, and valuable pictures, silver, and statues were being hurriedly flung into vehicles of all kinds. Here would be a Fortuny lying on the side-walk, and there a bust by Launt Thompson, waiting to be moved. I myself bought for ten cents a priceless Jules Breton, which a boot-black told me had fallen out of a cart and which he had picked up in the gutter. On every side was confusion worse confounded, and the agonized haste of others growing contagious, as at fires, people were throwing valuable mirrors often out of the windows, while they carefully removed their mattresses by hand. Happy were the owners of a horse and wagon. Cab-fares, never low in New York, rose to unheard-of altitudes, and it is stated that a driver received two hundred dollars for driving a bronze copy of the Venus of Milo beyond the city limits in his cab. Every species of vehicle was brought into requisition, and even hearses were seen carting away the precious plunder, or sometimes packed with living babies whose fond mothers could secure no other description of conveyance to transport them from the scene of danger. Many people, however, did not move their children or effects,—people that lived down in the Five Points, and had no effects to move,—people that lived in tenements even higher than the cab-fares, but had no cab-fares to give. The people, in general, who lived in the crowded purlieus of the great city, having no works of art, did not move them; and, having nowhere to go themselves, they remained where they were, with their offspring.

Thus endeth the first lesson of the Dream of Conquest.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a lovely spring morning when the fleet again approached the coast, in the vicinity of Hampton Roads.

Mrs. McFlusterer was standing on deck, pensively regarding the sea, and anon looking in the direction of the country she had come, so to speak, to devastate. The probable commiseration of her fate by the public, the sensation that her capture must have in all likelihood occasioned, the fact that at this very moment she was probably the one absorbing topic of conversation in ten thousand homes, tinged her sadness with a sense of gratification impossible to describe.

She was looking over the taffrail deep down into the dark-blue water, observing a school of porpoises that were playing about the vessel, when Taonsu approached and interrupted her reveries:

"Ah! the lady of the West is sad to think of the proud cities that are to be laid low, the homes that are to be desolated, and the multitudinous graves; but little did thy people heed it, O daughter, when the English sailed into our harbors, destroyed our cities, and laid in ashes the summer palace of the very Son of Heaven himself."

It was sweet to the ears of the captive to be called "daughter," and her gentle sadness took a more sentimental cast.

"But thou must know, O Taonsu," she urged, adapting her style to the formal phraseology of her companion, "that we have revolted from England. Rememberest thou not George Washington, who never told a lie, Daniel Webster, Jefferson, and the other great men who struggled and bled to free us from England's tyrannical rule?" Mrs. McFlusterer, like many other fashionable women that I know, was somewhat weak in her history.

"What are thy revolutions compared with the sum of China's antiquity?" replied Taonsu. "You are English sprung, and, according to the word of your sacred book, the sins of the father shall be visited upon the offspring unto the third and fourth generation thereof." Taonsu, as we know, spoke English fluently, with only the slightest possible accent.

Mrs. McFlusterer resolved to make one last appeal to him.

"But is it right, O Taonsu," she exclaimed, still continuing in the style of speech she had adopted, "that thou who hast benefited by this Western civilization shouldst come to destroy it? What good will it do thee?"

"Lady, we in the East do not measure everything by the profit that accrues; such is the habit of money-changers, and of those who, as with you, deal in stocks."

Mrs. McFlusterer unconsciously turned and regarded her husband, who, attached to the end of a long chain, was being led up and down by a Chinaman, like a dog by its master, for his morning walk on the deck. On the other side of the deck, Mr. Puncherry was being similarly conducted. How the unfortunate gentlemen could have prevented this undignified treatment, Mrs. McFlusterer did not stop to puzzle out; but, as she gazed at them, there appeared something so ignoble

in their situation, and even in their character, that it gave emphasis to Taonsu's remark. Like a woman, she unreasonably despised them.

How pointed, indeed, were the observations of this quaint young man! "Those of the West measure everything by the profit that accrues;" and, were they landed at this very moment in New York, she felt obliged to confess that nothing but the chains that now held her two friends would keep the one from the Stock Exchange and the other from his place of business.

"Taonsu," she asked, with a weary sigh, "what is to be my fate?"

"Thou hast learned, O daughter of the West, that his Great Excellency is to bear thee with him back to his home across the sea, where thou shalt ride in a palanquin of ivory and gold."

"But is this proper, O Taonsu? Thou forgettest I am a wedded wife."

"At thy wish thou canst be freed, O daughter, for thou hast but to say the word, and thy two husbands are struggling in the waves."

Mrs. McFlusterer turned away resolutely from this tempting prospect.

"But why does he wish to take me across the sea?" she asked; and visions of hareems, of fountains, and of beautiful Georgian women suddenly floated before her mind. "Why does he wish to tear me from my home?" she continued, sentimentally; then, with a blush of embarrassment, "He said I resembled his—his grandmother, and that my feet were as the blades of paddle-wheels: wherefore should he say this, if his heart longeth for me?"

"Ah, fair daughter, by this he intended to signify his great affection. We in the East venerate our ancestors, and the greatest compliment is to compare our loves to them. Filled out to suit the Western fancy, his words meant this: that thou dost resemble his grandmother when she was in the first flush of her glorious youth and beauty."

"And dost thou really think he meant this delicate flattery?"

"As surely, fair lady, as his treatment of the servant that offended thee was delicately flattering to thee."

"And what of him, O Taonsu?" asked the lady, unsuspectingly.

"Why, he has already partaken of him."

"Already partaken of him?" cried Mrs. McFlusterer, with vague horror.

"Partaken of him in the spirit, fair daughter of the West. His tongue was served him for breakfast, his ears for luncheon, and what there was over was left to the crew,—not to be actually eaten, but to serve as a feast for the eye and to show the danger of offending thee. Deemest thou not, therefore, that his affection for thee is unbounded? It is strong and abiding, and as certainly exists as the vessel that approaches is the one that will quickly pilot us to our destination."

Mrs. McFlusterer looked in the direction where Taonsu was pointing, and saw that they had approached, without her notice (though signals from the steamer must have announced the fact before), a rakish schooner that was lying-to. Indeed, a boat was already rowing from the craft towards the flag-ship, and, as Taonsu spoke, the latter slackened up. The lady's surprise was so great that for a moment she forgot

the revolting nature of the communication just made to her ; or let me say that the hope of some unexpected assistance was inspired by the stoppage. As she gazed down into the boat, however, the appearance of the man in the stern-sheets gave her little encouragement. He wore a low felt hat ; the cast of his countenance was villanous, and his face was so dirty that it actually suggested a negro's. Nevertheless, she would appeal to him : no American would be so lost to patriotism as to pilot a fleet against his own country. Alas ! she knew not that the wife of the enemy had engaged a hated Canadian, nor had she calculated that before the stranger reached the ship's side, herself and her two companions would be summarily dismissed below.

CHAPTER XII.

THE captives, we say, were hurried down below ere the man with the slouch hat and dirty face had mounted to the deck. Until now she had scarcely realized the nature of the people in whose power she was, but the communication of Taonsu woke her up to the full realities of the situation. What should she do, what steps should she take for her escape ? Ignorant of the exact locality on the coast opposite which the fleet had arrived, she yet knew sufficient of its geography to realize that they must now be less than two days' sail from her native city, since she had been on board already five days, and from early this morning they had been sailing on in sight of land. During these five days, too, the captives had been treated with courtesy, not to say kindness. To be sure, there had been that question raised once or twice about flinging Mr. Puncherry and her husband into the waves ; but the object of the proposal, when she came to analyze it, was that she might be maritally unencumbered, and the offer had only been made with a view to meet the prejudices of Western propriety, so to speak. With regard to these chains, too, it was several times explained to the prisoners by Taonsu that their being tied by the foot was merely complimentary, intended to show that they were persons of very great distinction ; and, though both gentlemen had energetically expressed their willingness to forego these marks of honor, Wang-Chi-Poo, through the same interpreter, again and again insisted that he could never bring himself to treat them with so little consideration as to let them loose. Indeed, their evident displeasure at their fetters was entirely misinterpreted by Wang-Chi-Poo ; for, thinking that they were dissatisfied because the form of their captivity was lacking in punctilio, he was only persuaded by Taonsu not to "grade up" their distinction by incarcerating them in a couple of bamboo cages reserved for prisoners of the most exalted rank.

Looked at from one point, horrible as it was in itself, the punishment of the servant was intended as a courtesy ; and, although her abhorrence at his fate could never be overcome, the spirit that dictated it was flattering, and must be recognized. In short, her heart was touched, or rather let me say her womanly instincts were gradually beginning to reassert themselves.

Barely two hours after the prisoners had been dismissed below they

were unexpectedly told that their presence was again desired, and particularly that of Mr. Puncherry. At the companion-way they were met by the commissioner and his interpreter, who, ceremoniously leading them on deck, accompanied them to the forward part of the ship. Here, on the fore-castle, they found, to their surprise, a number of chairs facing forward and ranged as for private theatricals, with a large one, like a throne for royalty, in the middle. On these the captives were told to seat themselves, Mr. Puncherry being directed to take the principal chair.

Then Taonsu explained that the pilot who had so recently come on board brought news that the American fleet was in the offing, and, the ships having just been sighted, he thought that perchance the patriotism of the party would be fired by the proud spectacle of seeing them come into action.

And in truth, as they bore down, it was a sight to make any American feel proud, even Mr. Puncherry, naval expert that he was. Here was the Swatara, with her newly-tinkered boilers and her patched-up hull. Here were the Nipsic and the Enterprise, hastily got ready; here was the Trenton, with a great gaping hole in her bottom stopped up with tarpaulins; and here were the Pilgrim and the Tennessee. Next came the Powhatan and the Ticonderoga, taken from under the very hammer of the auctioneer at the Brooklyn Navy-Yard, and, though condemned, commissioned. After all, with uncertain motion and most melancholy, came the Pinta, which had just returned from Alaska to die.

And indeed it did seem cruel to bring out these decrepit old vessels that twenty years ago had so well earned a needed repose. In many of them the scars of the late war had never been obliterated. Serving as a sort of escort for the squadron were the new steel cruisers the Porpoise and Pacific. Like a host of lame men in charge of a couple of small but vigorous boys, the fleet hobbled forth to meet the enemy, bringing with them the recollections and traditions of a glorious past, when the flag they carried at their peak was borne to victory instead of ridicule.

As I have intimated, the Porpoise and Pacific were steaming around these vessels, now rendering assistance to one and now to another, and trying to bring them all up in proper shape into action.

Wang-Chi-Poo is smiling with a mild sort of irony. "O Taonsu," he exclaimed, turning to his secretary, "this is most remarkable: these people, thou hast told me, protect their industries, but fail to protect their coasts. How is it?"

Mr. Puncherry at this point broke in upon the dialogue. He failed to comprehend the commissioner's words, but that they were inspired by the decrepit appearance of the fleet was manifest, and it angered him to be set up on a throne, as it were, to behold the ignominy of his country.

"We've spent more money on that fleet than you have on your entire navy," he said, rudely; and he looked at the commissioner as if he dared him to contradict the statement.

"But which of the two is the more proper subject of pride?" demanded Taonsu,— "that much is spent on one's fleet, or that much is

accomplished by that expense? Of a truth, O inhabitant of the West, we do not wish to quarrel; if you are satisfied, so are we."

"It's all very well to crow," said Mr. Puncherry, "because you've stolen a march on us. Suppose you can lick this fleet; fightin' ain't the only quality demanded in a navy. S'pose you can sail round it; sailin' ain't everything. The great use of a navy with us is to encourage American ship-building; and if it wasn't for patchin' up them old hulks,—which is all Congress allows me the money for,—where would I be?"

Before a fitting reply could be found to the question, the American squadron, which by this time was barely two miles distant, endeavored to perform what was for it a highly complicated manœuvre,—namely, to fall into line of battle. In the act of doing so, most of the ships ran foul of each other, owing to the rottenness of their equipment, for, though principally steamers, their engines were weak and it was necessary to assist the operation with their sails. Yet the top-hamper was so defective that in the act of coming about a sheet would give way, or a yard would get jammed; and it was not surprising that they should, for you cannot expect to take condemned vessels from under the auctioneer's hammer and have them in first-class sailing trim in a month's time.

Wang-Chi-Poo still stands just where he was, with his hand resting on the back of Mr. Puncherry's chair.

"Of a truth," he observed, meditatively, to the interpreter, "the progress these Westerners make so much boast of is not shown in their ships; and as for their forts, they have arrived but at the Stone Age. How is it I have heard you say that they call us backward?"

In the mean while the distance between the two fleets was being rapidly lessened, and the nearer the Orientals drew the more astonished they were at the appearance of everything on board. So great had been the haste in getting these vessels ready that in many cases their tattered sails and rigging had not been changed for new. Hence, shortly afterwards, as they came opposite to the American flag-ship, and when it became necessary for it to send a force of men aloft to take in a tattered sail, Wang-Chi-Poo distinctly saw the ratlines of the shrouds give way under the sailors' feet, causing them to slide back, one after another, to the deck, as on so many greased poles. Yet it was a glorious evidence of American valor that men should come out at all in such poor old tubs; and this was the view that principally struck Wang-Chi-Poo. Indeed, the commissioner, with all his faults, was a gentleman, a man unwilling to take any unfair advantage even of an enemy. It went against his grain to fire upon such brave fellows, and he felt that respect for them which none but the brave can feel. So he waved his hand affably, as is the wont of Orientals, at the American admiral as he passed him in his flag-ship, and, sailing through the very thick of the fleet, left it to be settled by a heavy squall that he saw gathering on the edge of the horizon.

And indeed we may as well allow this storm to be a veil and draw it gently over the poor old hulks.

As for the Porpoise and the Pacific, the new steel cruisers, I can say nothing. Their efforts were principally directed to lending such assistance to the others as would keep them above water. The Chinese officers were of the opinion, however, that they were too large for torpedo-boats, and too small to carry guns of sufficient calibre to contend with their larger vessels. Certainly, armed only with six- and eight-inch guns, the projectiles which, I have forgotten to state, they hurled at the foe, could not be expected to penetrate steel plates tested to resist sixteen-inch guns; and while the contract for their construction stipulated a speed of fifteen knots an hour, they could not very well run down with their rams vessels that steamed nineteen. All the Chinese officers were agreed, however, that the one—from her propensity to roll—was very well named the Porpoise, and the other—from the little injury she seemed capable of inflicting—the Pacific.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was late on the morning of the third day after leaving Hampton Roads when Mrs. McFlusterer awoke. The sun was shining brightly into the cabin. Both her husband and Mr. Puncherry assured her that they had arrived off Sandy Hook at daybreak, and that there they had lain for the past three hours. They were again in motion, however, and Mrs. McFlusterer could hear the blades of the propeller striking the water; yet they were proceeding cautiously, advancing slowly, and frequently stopping. Mr. Puncherry, whose eyes were glued to the port-hole, explained in professional language that they were removing the outer line of torpedoes that New York had probably set out for its defence. Overseeing this work was a steam mosquito-boat called the Fang, which he had often noticed during his promenades on deck. When the steamer would slacken up and swing around with the tide, this vessel would frequently be disclosed to him; and, although Mr. Puncherry made light of her, it may as well be stated here that, according to the opinion of the English Admiralty, the Fang was the fastest and best-equipped boat of her kind in any service. Built for the Chinese government by Messrs. Yarrow & Co., of Poplar, the well-known English builders, she could steam the incredible speed of twenty-four and three-eighths knots an hour.

At the wheel, directing her movements, stood the dirty-faced man with the slouch hat, studying a map which he had made at the time these very torpedoes were set out. Mr. Puncherry also explained that they had been subjected to a heavy fire from certain earthworks at Sandy Hook; but, as Mrs. McFlusterer had failed to be disturbed by this, it can only be inferred that the damage had been slight. Yet that morning seemed very long to the poor lady, and she thought it would never come to an end; she was weary of the continual stoppings and backings of the vessel and the rattle of the donkey-engine, while her nerves absolutely refused to grow accustomed to the bursting of torpedoes, harmless though their explosions generally proved.

Towards mid-day her ennui was relieved by a really thrilling contest

between the Fang and a little white-topped vessel shaped like a tooth-pick, that suddenly darted out upon them from under protection of the shore. Mr. Puncherry cried out that she was the celebrated Stiletto. She carried a large tin pot on the end of a long improvised bowsprit; and it was evidently her intention to jam this pot, which contained some fifty pounds of nitro-glycerin, against the side of the steamer. So quick was her coming that the fleet were unable to get their aim adjusted upon her, and she was already inside and below the range of their heavier guns before they could do as much as fire on her.

The Fang was, however, on the alert, and, waiting till she got quite close, made a dash at her, spoiled her aim, and then, sliding up, ran along by her side, warding off her approach. Around and around the flag-ship they tore, the Stiletto outside, the Fang inside, shoulder to shoulder as it were, like boys playing football, the one protecting, the other endeavoring to reach, the "base."

Mr. Puncherry, in his agonized curiosity, stuck his head so far out the port-hole that he was unable to get it back; consequently, he not only blocked up the most favorable outlook, but, by his smothered cries and violent contortions to extricate himself, prevented Mrs. McFlusterer and her husband from enjoying the spectacle as they might have done through the other port-hole. Nevertheless, as it was, the lady saw enough of it, and was extremely relieved when their unwelcome visitor turned suddenly away from the Fang and started in a bee-line for another ship. It was a dangerous move. When she had got far enough to admit of being aimed at by the flag-ship, the discharge of a heavy gun thrilled through the steamer; and Mrs. McFlusterer saw their valiant little enemy forge downward, throw her stern in the air, and disappear. Being only steel-braced instead of steel-plated, the vessel failed to resist the shot, which, with its downward pitch, entered her deck amidships and came out through the bottom just forward of the engines, perforating her through and through.

In the mean while they had drawn quite near to Coney Island, and Mrs. McFlusterer could see people like ants crowding the shores and the tops of houses to survey the contest.

The rest of the afternoon was agreeably diversified by the fruitless attempts of sundry earthwork batteries here, and at a point opposite on Staten Island, to reach the fleet with their antiquated ordnance. Had these earthworks, according to Mr. Puncherry, been only provided with sixteen-inch steel guns, instead of the old steel-lined Rodmans brought from Fort Hamilton and the neighboring fortresses, it would have been quite a different matter for the fleet.

Mr. Puncherry, according to his wont, became quite animated over the subject, and showed her how the positions on these two islands, together with Sandy Hook, constituted the angles of a triangle, only some seven miles apart, stating that, if these three points were only provided with such ordnance as he had described, there would thus be formed two lines of defence for the city,—namely, an outer one between Coney Island and Sandy Hook, and, secondly, an inner line between Coney and Staten Islands, should the first be successfully passed, as had just occurred; he even affirmed that one properly-equipped battery

where Sandy Hook Light-House stood could have made it extremely difficult to pick up the torpedoes between that point and where they had now arrived. Mr. Puncherry further went on to add that the protection of these waters could only be made complete by a large navy; but the value of this last assertion was not enhanced by his explaining that the building of its ships should be strictly confined to his own yards.

Nevertheless, Mr. Puncherry was quite right so far as generalities went. To be accurate, the fleet had anchored during the night off the Dry Romer shoals. At the point where the Gedney Channel divides, like the prongs of a pitchfork, into the Main Ship and the Swash Channel, the fleet had separated into two divisions, the smaller vessels taking the latter, and the larger ones, owing to their greater depth, the Main Channel. This had brought them directly opposite Sandy-Hook Light, and much closer to the shore than the Swash Channel did the other division. Both these channels, along with the inlet leading into them, had been sown with torpedoes, with sunken mines, and with scuttled vessels, for they were the two only approaches navigable for ships of such draught. The way these various obstructions were disposed of, however, by the fleet, offered food for reflection to those many estimable people who consider torpedoes and mines sufficient for harbor defence. In the first place, the exact location of most of these was already accurately known, as I have explained, and the sunken vessels amply proclaimed their own locations. Besides, the mines and many of the torpedoes were to be exploded from the shore, and their several bases of operations were protected by earthworks. The cannonading which Mr. Puncherry had first heard was that of the fleet as it passed Sandy Hook, either destroying these earthworks with their two-thousand-pound projectiles, or shelling out the garrisons, thus preventing the mines and a large portion of the other torpedoes from being utilized. Then the fleet would slowly pass over the now harmless position, and anchor just beyond it. In case the obstruction was a sunken vessel, the Fang would dart out and throw a dynamite torpedo from a curious deflecting gun that she carried in her bows; or, if that were not sufficient to remove it, she would send down a diver who would deliberately set to work to blow it up.

Heavy guns would have been effective, and proper forts or batteries for their protection were needed, because without them the mines and the torpedoes that were connected with the shores could not even be discharged. Of course I include under the head of "torpedoes connected with the shores" the controllable class,—*i.e.*, those which were to be sent out against the enemy in leading-strings, so to speak. Consequently, with the destruction of the earthworks, there remained only those torpedoes which, anchored in the channel, were to be exploded by collision. It was more particularly these last that Mr. Puncherry had seen the Fang remove.

Indeed, this is so important a point that I crave the indulgence of my readers to express the opinion that, except in rare instances, experience has shown torpedoes to be a delusion and a snare, and as dangerous for the one side as for the other. If fleets are matched against fleets, they

obstruct the movements of each fleet equally; if, on the other hand, no fleets are ready to engage the hostile ships, they are generally harmless; while if both torpedo-boats and forts do not co-operate with them, they are absolutely useless. Look at it rationally. Hostile fleets may vanquish protecting fleets; hostile torpedo-boats may out-manceuvre protecting torpedo-boats; there must remain forts to give the *coup de grâce*.

Without these various auxiliaries a seaboard city is handicapped in its defence, and resembles a pugilist with either one leg or one arm, perhaps both, tied up.

As regards forts, earthworks, which are indispensable for some purposes, can yet be destroyed by shot, the largest kind of which can now penetrate through seventy-five feet of embankments; masonry must be more than twenty-four feet thick; while even iron, unless thirty inches through, is useless against the latest Krupp or Armstrong projectiles.

At this point Mr. Puncherry relieves me of the duty of entering into further particulars, by explaining to his companions that the only kind of protection which has been proved capable of resisting such guns as the fleet was amply provided with was the German cast-iron dome, such as forms a part of the defence of Antwerp. "An improvement in this dome might even be effected," he went on to say, "by building it of steel in the manner advised by Bessemer; while disappearing batteries according to General Sheridan's plan have many advocates." Thus Mr. Puncherry could very well see what was needed in forts, if he could not in ships.

But, meanwhile, the fleet had arrived off the west end of Coney Island, and a second cannonading had begun from the batteries there and on the Staten Island shore. The fire of the last was as quickly silenced as that of Sandy Hook, but to the fire from Coney Island the fleet had not yet replied. Now, the reason for this was so extraordinary that I fear if I state it my veracity will be doubted. The fact of the matter was, that Wang-Chi-Poo suddenly caught sight of the huge artificial elephant that towers over the cardboard hotels and the shingle palaces of Manhattan Beach, and feared to excite it by any discharge of his heavy ordnance in that direction. No arguments could persuade him that it was not alive, and, dreading it more than any of the infernal machines New York had yet sent out against him in her defence, he allowed the rest of the afternoon to glide by in masterly inactivity. Nor did the fall of evening's shades arouse him from his stupor. Thus closed the night, and any inmates that the shingle palaces and the cardboard hotels yet contained went to bed, very likely, attributing their immunity less to the guardianship of the elephant than to the beauty of the edifices reflected in the waves hard by.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT is some five hours later, and Wang-Chi-Poo is seated in his cabin, pretending to study a large map; anon he looks up and gazes about him absently.

Wang-Chi-Poo is thinking of his distant home, and his thoughts

make him sad. Wang-Chi-Poo remembers the little Wang-Chi-Poos, and the butterflies he used to make mount into the air for them. He can see, in his mind's eye, the very figure of the bamboo mat on which he used to play with them, and can hear their cries of delight re-echoing in his ear when a butterfly would fall within their grasp.

After all, of what good was it coming to this barbarian land, where the elephants walked on the tops of the houses and took their meals out of chimney-pots? Would he ever be permitted to return home,—to his home in the Flowery Kingdom, where things were fixed up and regulated as things should be? Alas! he sometimes felt that he should never return again. And if he did return, what would his wives say when he suddenly presented to them the fair McFlusterer? Ah, it would be better to cut their nails extremely short too. Wang-Chi-Poo felt very sad, and, the cabin being close, he went up on deck. Overhead it was a lovely night, but along the surface of the water lay a heavy mist. Looking shoreward, he imagined he could make out, every now and then, as the haze lifted, the great hotels of Coney Island, which he had naturally taken for pagodas erected for the purposes of worship by these strange people. He could feel the soft land-breeze laden with fragrance blowing on him gently through the mist, but ever and anon his gaze reverted to the spot where he remembered the huge elephant had stood, rising high above the pagodas.

It may be parenthetically observed that anything lofty in the way of a building is thought by the Chinese to deflect and dissipate the evil spirits that may be hovering about in the air. Pagodas are thus a kind of spiritual lightning-rod; and, to prevent any unfair advantage that a rich man might have by the rearing of a lofty edifice, a strict law in the Celestial Kingdom rigidly limits the height of all buildings. Nurtured in this belief, the very height of these buildings had appealed to the superstitious side of his nature, and he looks over to where the elephant ought to be, and shudders. And, as he stands there, he begins to think he can dimly make out its huge whitish form through the mist, and he looks at it with a strange fascination; anon he can almost fancy it is moving, and certainly it does seem larger than his recollection of it in the afternoon would warrant. Yes, it is moving, he is sure, it is growing bigger, too, and the faint muffled sound as of some huge beast breasting the waves suddenly strikes upon his ear. Wang-Chi-Poo feels the very marrow of him freeze. His legs refuse to support him as he clutches the gunrail to sustain himself. He must be mistaken, however; his fears are father to his thoughts; and he closes his eyes and listens intently. First he thinks himself deceived, then he changes his opinion, but at last there is no doubt,—the noise grows every instant more distinct, and he can actually hear the feet of the creature striking the water as it swims. But other quick ears have already detected the noise, and the electric light is suddenly turned on in the threatened direction. Then, surely enough, scarce a thousand yards distant, is revealed a great whitish form, rising tier above tier, coming mysteriously out of the misty night. As they gaze upon it, spellbound, the mass seems to dissolve into many parts, each part, like the parent mass, rising also tier above tier and striking out for a sepa-

rate vessel of the fleet. In an instant the flag-ship is alive. In response to the shrill whistle of the boatswain, men suddenly aroused from sleep tumble up the hatches and, seizing what arms come first to hand, rush to their posts. Not a moment too soon, for, quicker than I can relate, the great white object is moving down upon them and strikes them with a terrible thud, blended with three ringing cheers for Uncle Sam.

Wang-Chi-Poo sees a torrent of men pour down from the upper parts of this formidable visitor, and, once convinced that it is not the elephant, draws his gold-mounted cutlass from its scabbard and, like the brave man that he is, calls loudly on his men. Then, alas, what a horrible *mêlée* ensued in the glare of the electric lights and in the flash of lanterns!—a horrible hand-to-hand struggle all over the decks, with quarter for no one; now backward, now forward, the hip-hip-hurras of the one party mingled with the “zing-yous, zing-yous” of the Chinese. Indeed, the last, though half asleep, fought like devils, but the *élan* of the attacking party seemed carrying everything before it.

Mrs. McFlusterer had thrown herself on the sofa for a brief nap, and was only awakened by the commotion of the ship preparing for action. Poor woman! she invariably used a sofa now, that she might be better prepared for any emergency. She could hear the hurried tramp of men as they crowded up the hatchways, and the hoarse voices of the officers as they gave the necessary orders. She felt, too, the crash of the vessel striking the steamer, and the dropping of men as from a great height down upon the decks above her head. Then came that awful sound of fighting, of hacks and blows, of sudden reports, of sharp crackling discharges, intermingled with cries of agony, and cheers for her patron saint.

I can imagine no more thrilling situation than the prisoners found themselves in. They knew, of course, that some desperate attempt was being made to carry the steamer from under the very feet of their captors, and waited the issue—an issue fraught with so much consequence to themselves—with bated breath. They could distinctly trace the tide of battle, too, as it ebbed and flowed up and down the deck; for now the American cheers would prevail, and now again the cries of the Chinese. Finally the Chinese, it was evident, were being driven back: their battle-shouts grew fainter as those of the Americans grew louder and more enthusiastic,—so loud and enthusiastic as to give the captives the impression that their fellow-countrymen were victorious.

But then, at the very instant of Mrs. McFlusterer's expected deliverance, in the crisis of her delightful anticipation of being set free, her ecstasy was changed to a chill horror that riveted her to the floor where she stood.

Once when the boatswain was practising the crew in the various calls of his whistle, Taonsu had explained that a certain one of them was the signal for blowing up the vessel. It was this call she now distinctly heard. It ran through the ship like wildfire, stilling in an instant the combat, and petrifying each contestant with the dread of instant annihilation.

But what is this? At the very moment she thought her last, the combat is renewed, the "zing-yous, zing-yous" of the Chinamen are heard again, in the very teeth of their enemies' success. It was as if the tide had been suddenly turned by some unexpected occurrence in favor of their captors. For some five minutes the suspense continued, then the cheers for Uncle Sam grew fewer and fewer, fainter and more indistinct, and a hush as of the grave fell on all things, followed by an explosion as of a distant ship.

When Mrs. McFlusterer looked about her, Mr. Puncherry lay in a dead faint upon the floor, while her husband was rocking to and fro, completely beside himself, and gibbering to himself like one of those foolish old cronies we read of in Lever's novels.

She heard the splash, splash, splash as of bodies hastily flung one after another into the waves, and the next instant the vessel, still hard alongside of the flag-ship, went down with such suddenness that the iron-clad seemed likely to be swallowed up in the vortex of disturbed water.

And in truth the combat, if short, had been decisive, and that it had not resulted in the success of the Americans was owing solely to the fact that only about one man in ten had reached the enemy's deck. Though the upper decks of their steamer towered over those of the flag-ship, the distance to jump was wide, and so great had been the anxiety to board, and the consequent confusion, that the greater number of the assailants fell between the two vessels' sides. Those that did arrive in safety were many of them strained and hurt by their leap, and were received with repeated discharges from the Hotchkiss and Gatling guns that decimated their ranks; nevertheless, so great was the enthusiasm of the Americans that at first they carried everything before them, and the signal was actually given to blow up the ship, on the supposition of her capture. It was at this moment, this supreme emergency, that Wang-Chi-Poo, who had been swept by the tide of battle far back into the stern, succeeded in disengaging himself and saved his vessel. He had noticed a large, powerful man at the head of the boarding force, and thought if he could only succeed in putting him *hors de combat*, the others, being few, could be quickly mastered. As soon as he was free, therefore, he sought him out and faced him; an instant the two leaders stood there, as if measuring each other's prowess, when, suddenly stamping his foot, Wang-Chi-Poo flung his cutlass with an unexpected flourish in the air, flashed open his fan with a snap directly in his enemy's eyes, and, taking advantage of his astonishment at such an unusual attack, squatted down and seized him about the middle, then, summoning all his strength in one concentrated effort, he flung him clean over his head, far over the bulwarks, into the sea.

It was this contest between the champions that stayed the command to fire the magazine, and its issue that revived the drooping spirits of the Chinese.

But Wang-Chi-Poo's blood was up: as in the case of many other men, success alone was needed to bring out his mettle, and after this his shining cutlass was seen gleaming in the rays of the electric lights, and, like the sword of Mohammed, devouring all before it. It was not

till the dead (for no wounded were left) had been flung one after the other into the waves, and the decks cleared of the most ghastly evidence of the combat, that Wang-Chi-Poo looked about him.

Of the fleet, one vessel had been captured by the Americans, and had been blown up under the captors' feet. Warned in time by the flag-ship, the other vessels of the fleet had either sunk the several vessels of the attacking party as they advanced, or had so crippled them that they failed to reach their destinations.

One of these vessels, however, was almost stripped of its courageous legions by their own anxiety to get at the foe, for, crowding pell-mell to the side on which they were to board, they had caused the vessel to topple over so far as to spill the greater number into the cruel waves.

The cries of these unfortunates gave additional horror to the situation, and a lurid light was thrown upon the scene by another vessel catching fire and subsequently blowing up.

Thus we have in this second combat another glorious example of American pluck. That its success was hindered by so trivial a fact as Wang-Chi-Poo's superstitious horror of an elephant will rob it in no wise of its historic lustre.

Thus, too, was destroyed at one fell swoop a large part of New York's summer fleet of travel, and the waves for many a day afterwards were littered with boats and life-preservers, pieces of wreck and débris, bearing such peaceful names as the Bristol, the Day-Dream, or the Mary Powell.

CHAPTER XV.

IN a little shop in the lower portion of the threatened city a shirt-maker named Smith plied his peaceful trade. He was an odd man in some respects, but a conspicuous illustration of the versatility of American genius. A shirt-maker, as we say, by calling, he had during his idle moments turned his attention to inventions, and had perfected a boat that could be propelled under water at will. With this he claimed that he was able to conquer the greatest fleets of the world in detachments. He had certainly given several successful exhibitions of his boat long before the war was dreamed of, and had clearly demonstrated the fact that he could guide her at a high rate of speed under water.

Worked by a small "fireless engine," in which the motive power was a solution of caustic soda, she carried a large supply of compressed air for breathing purposes, thus enabling the inventor to extend his submarine voyages, as he expressed it, "for as long a time as his canned tomatoes held out."

She was thirty feet long, seven and a half feet wide, six feet deep, with room for holding two persons comfortably.

From the nose of this boat, like the proboscis of a sword-fish, extended a spar, on the extreme end of which was fixed a glass cylinder for nitro-glycerin.

The proposal of this intrepid man had been to start out by himself

and, single-handed, to encounter the whole fleet as they sailed up the coast, for in his own opinion the work of the authorities "didn't amount to shucks."

It was not, however, till the fleet had arrived off Sandy Hook that his arrangements were completed, and he had left the city at the same time with the huge flotilla whose destruction has been recorded in the preceding chapter.

Nevertheless, as yet he had failed to put in an appearance, and Mrs. McFlusterer was awakened the second morning by the peaceful cadence of the donkey-engine again hoisting the anchors, and the roar of the boilers again getting up steam. Brief as it had proved, the respite was a much needed one, for the poor lady had already learned that a trip in a hostile fleet coming to attack one's own country was more to be dreaded than even a cruise in the Terror. The horrors of her position were indeed accumulating up to a point beyond which she thought she would soon lose all reason.

To make matters worse, the terrible barbarian seemed actually in love with her, and would seize every available chance to escape from the deck and to pass the time in her society, intruding as an unwelcome guest at the prisoners' meals, and bringing along the interpreter, who would explain what was going on.

Now, sometimes a small and comparatively trivial incident will make a more lasting impression than the most momentous calamity. There was nothing in all that she had gone through, nothing in all that was yet to come, nothing even in the event that was immediately to follow it, or indeed in any circumstance connected with her capture, that remained so indelibly stamped upon Mrs. McFlusterer's memory as the one I am about to relate. It occurred this very morning towards the close of breakfast, to which the commissioner and his shadow, Taonsu, had as usual invited themselves.

A glass bowl, with half a dozen goldfish swimming about in it, had just been placed on the breakfast-table, and Taonsu was explaining that they had been brought out as a delicacy in special reservoirs on board the ship, when the servant in attendance, darting into the bowl a sharp-pronged fork, harpooned one of the fish, and, proceeding to split the quivering body down the middle with a knife, deposited one half upon the lady's plate. The prisoners jumped from their seats in a body. Mrs. McFlusterer, placing her handkerchief to her eyes, with a shudder, went as usual into hysterics; Mr. McFlusterer seized the bowl and threw it out the port-hole; while Mr. Puncherry punched the head of that servant till he collapsed, a jellified mass, on the floor, and, facing the astonished Wang-Chi-Poo and his interpreter, glared upon them like a veritable god aroused. How this ebullition of feeling would have been received will remain forever unknown, for at this moment a strange sensation, as of the ship's bottom being violently assaulted, as it were, by the proboscis of some submarine monster, changed the temper of all to sudden alarm. Wang-Chi-Poo himself, springing to his feet escaped to the deck, and, Taonsu immediately following, the prisoners were left to themselves.

Mr. Puncherry was the first to break the dread silence. "It's a

“sword-fish!” he exclaimed, aghast; “I know it’s a sword-fish: one of them sunk the best steel-armored vessel I ever built, down in the Gulf of Mexico. This must be a far bigger fellow than that, though. Great Scott! here it comes again!” he cried, as the same mysterious attack was repeated. Then, as the three captives stood awaiting whatever doom the assault foreboded, a deafening report was heard, the vessel seemed to rise up under their very feet, and they felt a shock as of a huge column of water descending on the deck above their heads. Presently the whistles blew, the bells rang, and the vessel came to a dead stop.

While the unfortunate captives were regaining their composure as best they could, the commissioner and Taonsu were on deck engaged in setting a huge wire netting about the ship, called, in nautical language, a crinoline. This, Mr. Puncherry finally recovered himself enough to explain, was intended to protect the vessel against horizontal attacks beneath the water-line. Parenthetically, we may observe that, except for her distance from the shore, her petticoats would have been spread to little purpose, since a distinguished officer of the army, who had spent several years in bringing to perfection a new form of air-gun, thought the present a favorable opportunity for opening fire upon the fleet. So extraordinary was this invention that it warrants a moment’s notice. Sixty feet in length, it resembled an enormous astronomical telescope on wheels, pointed reversely, and was braced by supports not unlike an elevated railroad. It carried a cylindrical brass torpedo, holding a charge of sixty pounds of dynamite, and by a deflection of aim, according to the distance, the missile was calculated to enter the waves and to explode under the ship. The government did not own this gun, but it was coquetting with the inventor for its purchase, since its balance was so nice, and its mechanical arrangements so perfect, that but one artilleryman was required to manage it,—an all-important consideration for a seaboard depending on a series of Sergeant McKennas for its protection.

The name of the redoubtable weapon was the Pneumatic Dynamite Torpedo Gun, and its discharge had caused little noise, no smoke, and as yet no damage.

With his machine the inventor had just commenced a series of experiments on his own hook, from behind a hastily-constructed earth-work. The only trouble was that the Chinese, being perfectly instructed in the flight of all such projectiles, kept not less than five thousand yards from shore, the outside range of this particular piece of ordnance being four thousand two hundred and fifty yards.

The flag-ship in the mean time was only just moving, and it suddenly occurred to Wang-Chi-Poo to utilize the occasion by the punishment of the lookouts for not having sooner detected the enemy the previous night. For this purpose one of the large bamboo cages in which it had been proposed to confine Messrs. Puncherry and McFlusterer was brought into requisition, and heavy shot were chained to the bottom of it. Then the five culprits were put into it and the cage was dropped over the ship’s side. Of course it was not allowed to sink immediately, but was only submerged for some thirty seconds and then tantalizingly

pulled up by a rope: this having been repeated some half-dozen times, the end of the rope was let go.

This entertaining little diversion occurred just under the cabin port-hole, and Mrs. McFlusterer could see the agonized faces of the men, like those of five drowning rats, pressed against the bars on each occasion that the cage was pulled up. It did not tend to cheer her, or to raise her opinion of the people among whom she found herself placed.

Mr. Puncherry and Mr. McFlusterer, to whom the sight was hardly less repellent, sought relief to their feelings by observing the antics of the Fang, which kept continually circling about the ship. Indeed, the way she twisted and waltzed around her monster charge in her solicitude to ward off any conceivable danger was most diverting. Each ship of the fleet had just such a zealous little champion too, only the Fang was superior to them all.

Mr. Puncherry confessed that, had as many of these boats been available for our defence as were possessed by the enemy, the fleet might very likely have been kept outside Sandy Hook to this time. "If we will spend all the resources of the nation," said he, "in widening our Little Log-Rolling Creeks, of course nothing remains for protecting our harbors." Mr. Puncherry highly disapproved of wasting any money outside of his own shipyards.

All the rest of the day the fleet lay-to, or when it did advance it only moved at a snail's pace, backing and turning, now stopping completely, and progressing barely three miles the entire afternoon. Indeed, they had been simply going around in a circle, searching the most effective position for the attack upon the city, and waiting for the co-operation of the other squadron expected to arrive at Throgg's Neck or near it, in Long Island Sound. At five o'clock the huge chains were heard rasping their way through the hawser-holes as the great Leviathan came to her final stop.

CHAPTER XVI.

THEY had been at anchor barely half an hour, when an extraordinary sight was beheld. It was nothing less than a huge flag, apparently supported on nothing, and floating down towards the fleet, like a sign from heaven, along the water. On a nearer approach the miracle was revealed, for the boat (a steam-launch) that carried the flag was so narrow that she had simply been invisible before. On she came, undoubtedly the bearer of a flag of truce, since the flag was white. The ecstasy of the prisoners can better be imagined than described as they detected her approach, which was, however, cautious, permitting the flag to wave to one side instead of straight out backward.

You ask, perhaps, how it was that the prisoners could be so well aware of everything that was going on: the fact will be appreciated when I explain that the cabin, being in the stern, ran directly across the ship, and that there were three port-holes, one on each side and one astern. As each captive had a port-hole and passed most of the weary

time while confined below before it, a pretty good lookout was maintained in every direction except forward.

"Yes, I told you it was a flag of truce!" cried Mr. Puncherry. "It's probably the result of a spontaneous rising to demand my surrender. I'll be extremely sorry to leave you both," he continued, turning to his fellow-captives, "but you see, in their emergency, the American people require my services."

"Why, she's full of men!" ejaculated Mrs. McFlusterer, whose attention was so absorbed that she had failed to hear Mr. Puncherry's remarks, "and they seem to be all writing. How odd!"

"At all events, they'll bring us the latest news of the market, whoever they are!" exclaimed Mr. McF., with a sigh of relief. "It's quite awful to have been away so long, when you come to think of it."

"Why, they're reporters!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Puncherry, straining his eyes very severely. "Upon my word, it's very kind of them. You see, I own a hundred shares of the *Trumpet*, and they've probably come to carry me back with them."

In the mean while the launch continued to advance, raising the hopes of the party to fever-heat. At the moment when all were sure that she was coming to board the steamer, she turned as on a pivot; then of a sudden, the opposite side of the flag being presented, appeared in large and startling letters, "Read the New York *Trumpet*. Half a million circulation." The next instant she was flying back over the water with a speed that was in sharp contrast to her cautious coming.

The indignation and disappointment of the captives knew no bounds. Mr. McFlusterer, in his despair of learning the condition of the market, craned his long neck far out of the port-hole and piteously cried after them to at least inform him of the latest quotations in Erie. Mr. Puncherry, from his port-hole, angrily shook his fist; while the lady, with the true sentimentality that distinguished her, dropped from hers a silent tear to mingle with the sad and cruel waves.

Regardlessly, however, the launch kept on her way, if we can so express a retreat that partook in its velocity of the nature of a projectile hurled from a gun. Indeed, it was even more rapid; for when the fleet appreciated that a flag of truce had been merely raised as a subterfuge, they opened fire, only to perceive that their shots barely caught up with her. Perhaps you will moderate your astonishment when I explain that the little vessel was no other than the world-renowned *Daisy*, and that Mr. Puncherry had had so little to do with her construction that his eye had never so much as fallen upon her before this moment,—it having been computed that by merely looking at a vessel he knocked off five knots per hour from her speed.

During the night the Fang and her fellow mosquito-boats atoned for their failure to apprehend the *Daisy*, by announcing the advance of a large army of men in life-buoy suits, led by the indomitable Captain Buoy himself. Each swimmer carried a hand-grenade of dynamite; but as it has been deemed necessary to fill the latest-invented projectiles with five hundred pounds of the same, and as the sides of the larger vessels were twenty-five inches thick, these missiles, containing less than six pounds of explosive, would presumably have had little effect. Besides, it would

have been necessary to fling them over the nets which were hung a distance of twenty or thirty feet from their iron walls. In fact, however, few of the swimmers were allowed to approach within a mile, and such as got nearer and within the rays of the electric lights were immediately opened upon by sharp-shooters and Gatling guns from the ships. The pop, pop, pop, as the bullets penetrated the wind-inflated suits, suggested a sharp cross-fire upon a consignment of large and tightly-corked champagne-bottles floated down by the tide.

It was late the ensuing morning when Mrs. McFlusterer was awakened by the loud knocks of an attendant, who hurriedly explained that her husband was wanted on deck. As it happened, this summons interrupted a blood-curdling dream touching the instant execution of this very gentleman. In the confusion of her hurried awakening she imagined that his last moment had come. Wildly she clung to him. She was convinced that he was to be cast into the sea at the very least, and reiterated and reiterated again her convictions, between her paroxysms of grief.

There are some occasions, I am sorry to confess it, when the tears of a woman are a nuisance,—when, for instance, they are accompanied by the reiterated lamentation that you are to be flung overboard as food for fishes. Besides, Mr. McFlusterer was not of a particularly impressionable temperament, and he hated tears. This will perhaps account for the almost rude manner in which he broke away from his wife.

Mr. McFlusterer, as he gained the deck, hesitated for a moment and surveyed the scene. The fleet must have moved down nearer the city during the early morning, and New York—or, more strictly speaking, Jersey City—was suddenly disclosed through the Narrows as if a veil had been lifted, with its spires and pinnacles, its steeples and its towers, as brightly shining as if neither terror nor dismay were crouching at their base. The fleet was at least seven miles away, but in the clear morning light the buildings looked quite distinct. Close to the left lay Staten Island, with its smart villas and large hotels.

On the davits Mr. McFlusterer found a steam-launch with steam already up, and in her bows a staff bearing a white flag. Taonsu was already seated in her stern, and, at his direction, the prisoner took his place alongside of him. Mr. McFlusterer was of a philosophical cast of mind, and long ere now had resigned himself to the inevitable. At all events, being let down into the sea with a stout launch between him and the water was better than being flung headlong into the waves. He even began to congratulate himself on the prospects offered by the flag of truce of learning at last the condition of the market. Poor man! he little knew what was before him.

Once clear of the steamer, Taonsu removed from his pockets a couple of formal-looking documents, bearing large seals and directed in English. One of these, Taonsu proceeded to explain, was to be left by Mr. McFlusterer at the Chamber of Commerce and the other at the City Hall. As the city authorities, in all likelihood, would be obliged to consult the State Department, time was allowed to communicate by telegraph with Washington. Taonsu then went on to add that, in case he, Mr. McFlusterer, failed to meet the steam-launch at four o'clock, on

its return to the fleet his wife and Mr. Puncherry should both suffer the penalty assigned by the Chinese criminal code to parricides ; that is, they would be chopped into the finest mincemeat, peppered and salted, fried in lard, and then served to the crew as a special delicacy for supper.

Mr. McFlusterer was looking forward, moodily taking in these agreeable particulars, with his eyes resting on what seemed an enormous dead fish floating on the water some five hundred yards ahead. Before they had arrived sufficiently near to decide as to its exact nature, the object mysteriously sank. Taonsu, however, resumed his instructions, and was just explaining what was to be done in case no answer was received from the State Department, when the mysterious object rose suddenly alongside of the boat like a thing of life, and with a puff of smoke unexpectedly gave utterance to a violent snort. The consternation of the crew, some half a dozen all told, on recognizing at last their dread enemy the Demon of the Sea, can be imagined. Taonsu seized the rudder from the palsied hands of the helmsman, and directed that the highest pressure of steam should be put on. Then began the most terrible race that probably the New World has ever witnessed, and certainly the Old has never surpassed it. Every now and again the monster would make a dash, which it took all the skill of Taonsu to avoid ; sometimes under water, and sometimes above the surface, whither it would rise as if to gain fresh air or a clearer view so as to direct another charge. The speed of pursuer and pursued was so nearly matched that fortunately when the Demon would go beneath the waves he would lose ground, and, as if becoming convinced of this at last, he confined himself principally to the surface, snorting with indignation and lashing the sea into foam as he surged on : nevertheless he would now and then plunge downward, dive under the boat, and, emerging into view on the opposite side, try the same game there. After one of these submersions, he was on the surface again, and evidently making one last desperate effort to get sufficient distance ahead to turn and destroy the launch. The increased steam was beginning to tell, however, and, after passing through the Narrows, they raced for fully two miles side by side, each straining every nerve. Now the steam-launch appeared gaining, now the Demon. Finally, as they were rounding the cheese-box fortress on Governor's Island, the monster with one last effort redoubled its exertions, and gained by a spurt some fifty feet, then with a downward plunge he disappeared. A tremendous explosion followed ; a large column of water rose into the air, and the boat rocked like an egg-shell in a pool of Niagara as countless numbers of dead or stunned fish rose slowly to the surface. Taonsu, by a rapid appreciation of the danger, had put the helm hard a-port, and had only avoided annihilation by an inch. It was a terrible experience ; but the crew, after their first astounded bewilderment, had displayed the utmost stoicism.

The coming of the steam-launch had been telegraphed to the city, and Mr. McFlusterer, more dead than alive, was put ashore at the Battery. An enormous crowd was in waiting to receive him, but, disengaging himself from these, he took a cab, and drove directly to the

office of the Mayor. His instructions were clear and explicit; and, after depositing one of the documents in the hands of that official, who happened to be engaged in writing one of his famous letters on the situation generally, Mr. McFlusterer proceeded directly to the Chamber of Commerce, where he left the second document, the crowd accompanying him all the way and much impeding his progress in their anxiety to learn all that they could about their dreaded foes.

Next Mr. McFlusterer stopped at his own office, and remained closeted with his confidential clerk for at least an hour. He had not intended going to the Stock Exchange, but, as his office was in its immediate vicinity, the temptation to visit his old haunts once more proved irresistible. The scene here beggars description: even his presence at first was lost sight of in the general hubbub. Huge blocks of stock were being offered at unheard-of sacrifices, and, more from force of habit—namely, to buy when things were cheap—than from belief in their present value, Mr. McFlusterer found himself purchasing whatever was put up. Indeed, he soon became aware that he was the only buyer, and, lest he should be compelled to support the entire market, he at last retired.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE Chamber of Commerce had been convened in extra session, but, like most extra sessions, it decided on nothing definite; consequently, Mr. McFlusterer repaired from there to the Mayor's office again, only to learn that no reply had yet been received from Washington relative to the terms proposed by the invaders. Leaving word, therefore, that should any news come it should be sent down by messenger to the steam-launch, he went back to the Battery, as the time for his return to the fleet was drawing on. Here for a brief ten minutes he watched the drill of the various organizations to which the city had confided its defence,—the Knights of Labor (for whom he had always had a special abhorrence), the Tooth-Brush Brigade (so called because strictly confined to members of the Tooth-Brush Union), and sundry regiments of the National Guard; here he saw, too, the now famous Brigade of Dudes, and noticed the rapt admiration of the female sex at their dapper appearance and martial tread. Besides these, he saw being trundled out a celebrated piece of ordnance that had figured in the War of 1812. It had been lent for the occasion by the State Armory on Thirty-Fifth Street, and so formidable was its appearance that he was obliged to confess that if the invaders landed they would have a hard time of it. Indeed, all that he saw revived his confidence to such an extent that a strong temptation came over him to allow the crew the indulgence of the dainty dish mentioned by the interpreter; but the doubt as to whether, in that case, a considerable sum of money loaned to his bosom friend Mr. Puncherry would be paid up by his heirs, induced him to put behind him this cowardly impulse. These reflections still occupying his mind, he found himself opposite the Barge office. Alongside of this, as every one knows, is a basin built in the masonry of the esplanade, for the accommodation of small boats. Around the edges of the

basin a great crowd were gathered, and so engrossed were they all that he had to inquire several times before he learned that a certain shirt-maker, on whom the city had lately been relying to relieve her of her enemies, had just returned from an unsuccessful expedition against the fleet. Elbowing his way through the people, he at last stood on the very brink of the basin, and there, to his surprise, saw the same dark monster that had so nearly proved disastrous to the steam-launch in the morning. It was lying torpid now on the surface of the water, and more resembled an enormous fish than ever. Its steering-apparatus was made in the shape of a tail, and, instead of having any clearly-defined deck, its body was rounded like a cylinder, black and shiny all over.

As if to carry out the suggestion of a fish, it had two large glass port-holes set in its head like eyes.

A sort of hatchway, some three feet square, was open in its back, showing an interior of sufficient size to accommodate two men comfortably. Just below this hatchway, but on the outside of the boat, were a couple of hooks, to hang torpedoes on, or any such tools as the operator might require when the hatchway was open. From the nose of the uncouth creature projected a wooden spar broken off short.

Mr. McFlusterer shuddered as he looked about in vain for the captain of this queer craft. He gathered, however, from a young man engaged in polishing the engines, facts going to prove that what Mr. Puncherry a few days before had taken for an attack by a sword-fish was in reality an ineffectual thrust of the torpedo-spar of this boat; and, further, that the explosion on the morning of the present day had been due to her striking her nose against a rock instead of against the bottom of the steam-launch as intended. The young man was of a loquacious turn, and "guessed," as he passed a quid of tobacco from one cheek to the other, that the annihilation of the fleet would now be not long delayed. He concluded his remarks by observing that the "boss" had gone to dinner.

There was one comfort in the last piece of intelligence,—namely, that, under the circumstances, the "boss" might not be back in time to repeat the same lively chase he had given them this morning. To further guarantee this, however, a sudden device came into Mr. McFlusterer's mind. "But is it right," he observed, anxiously, "to attack a vessel bearing a flag of truce? Reflect, young man: it is against all the usages of war; and besides, as I understand this very launch is the bearer of despatches looking to the retirement of the enemy, the fate of the whole city may hang on your course."

"Go to thunder!" replied the young man, obdurately; "me and the boss is runnin' this business on our own hook; we're tryin' to sell this boat to the government, too, and we ain't goin' to be balked by a bit of white rag."

Sadly Mr. McFlusterer turned away, and, as the hour fixed for his departure to the steamer had now arrived, he walked over to the other side of the Battery, near Castle Garden, where he had landed. Here he found the steam-launch already waiting, and an immense crowd gazing in horror at its strange crew. As he passed them to go on board,

many uncomplimentary epithets were hurled at his head by the ignorant rabble, who imagined him in league—poor man!—with the Chinese. Suffice it to say, the return to the flag-ship was made without further incident, and Mr. McFlusterer congratulated himself that his appeal to the youth in the submarine boat had after all been not made in vain. To add to his satisfaction, his wife was for once in her life rejoiced to see him. She had passed the entire day in the state-room with Mr. Puncherry for her sole companion; consequently, even her husband brought a welcome relief from the long-winded dissertations of that estimable gentleman on ship-building and the real requirements of the American navy.

It was not till dinner was over, and the commissioner and Taonsu had retired, that occasion offered for Mrs. McFlusterer to hear her husband descant upon all that he had seen. She too recalled Mr. Puncherry's apt allusion to a sword-fish on the occasion of the attacks during breakfast the other day, and a feeling akin to horror seized her when she realized the peril in which they had all been placed from that shirt-maker's ingenuity. Poor lady! she did not know the terrible experiences before her yet, and in how extraordinary a manner her fate was to be influenced by that submarine boat.

She made her husband describe its every detail, the hatchway cut in its back, its eye-like port-holes; and, her interest exciting that of Mr. Puncherry, he began himself to ask questions, pondering deeply over what the hooks in the side could be meant for. He was to discover what purpose these same hooks might serve before long; and his interest about so trivial a detail will be admitted later as a most remarkable instance of second-sight.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TAONSU also brought back news of the great city; and now, as he and Wang-Chi-Poo watched it, and saw the distant lights come out one after another, they conversed on the strange scenes the interpreter had beheld. At last Wang-Chi-Poo turned with sudden inspiration to his *fidus Achates*.

“Why shall I not make of this land a vast feudal province, and with the fair McFlusterer share the vice-regal throne?”

“Great Excellency, thy project, so far as immediate conquest is concerned, were impracticable: thou wilt accomplish it better by the extension of the Burlingame Treaty. This is probably the clause in the conditions which they are most reluctant to yield, as is natural after they have in effect repealed that treaty by the anti-Chinese law. They will be forced to accede to it, however, bitter as is the pill, for thou holdest them now in the hollow of thy hand. Thus will this country become the asylum of our sick and of our weak, for into it we will pour our surplus population.

“By this means, too, we will rid ourselves of the palsy and those hideous diseases which we have inherited from our greater antiquity, and at the same time we will inoculate this haughty people with evils

till they fall an easy prey. I have noticed that a young civilization is largely free of these diseases. Their people smoke not opium, and are therefore of a ruder and more vigorous growth than we. Thus to endeavor to overthrow their empire at one fell stroke were impossible; the slower course is better and surer. Our civilization has seen all others die before it; this civilization is destined, Great Excellency, to perish before it too."

"Taonsu, thy words are as the flying swallows, graceful, but not straight-winged."

"Then, Great Excellency, to be more explicit, let me say that the extension of the Burlingame Treaty goes further than the mere repeal of the anti-Chinese law, and is of greater moment than the enforced payment of an enormous ransom. These people are peculiar, lost to every consideration but the making of chop-dollars. If we demand too much, and deprive them of the hope of regaining by their energies what they pay, they will in all probability sail to China and retaliate. But if we try to squeeze out of them a moiety of their wealth, they will pay it, and only think to make chop-dollars afresh. All other religions have died out here save the making of these chop-dollars, and this religion they cling to with an enthusiasm approaching frenzy."

"Thy advice holds wisdom as the bucket of a well holds water, O Taonsu, but thy bucket is not always full, and sometimes its contents are muddy. Tell me rather what thou wouldst advise me to do with these foreign devils whom we have captured. It goes against my grain to hang them, lest they become stiff-necked and lost in pride at the honor."

"Excellency, I have it. The one that is a great feudatory of the highways (for I have learned this much from their secret converse), him I would retain as an intermediary between ourselves and the city; whereas the other, who is a great naval architect, him I would let go, in order that he may make more ships for our enemies."

"Ah! Taonsu, now the water in thy bucket is clear and sparkling and veritably is supplied from the well of truth. The first I will continue to send to town till the extension of the Burlingame Treaty, as thou callest it, is signed, and a moderate ransom is paid up in full; then shall he be made into mincemeat for the crew. The other I will gladly liberate, for such a one is the best ally we can have. Taonsu, thinkest thou the fair McFlusterer admires me?" And Wang-Chi-Poo struck an attitude of rapt attention.

"Great Excellency, she is immersed over head and ears in her admiration of thee."

"Taonsu, thinkest thou that the fair McFlusterer loves me?"

And Wang-Chi-Poo now struck an attitude of strained coquetry.

"Great Excellency, her affection clouds her reason."

"Taonsu, I believe thee: of a truth, my very walk is irresistible."

And Wang-Chi-Poo placed his fan at a right angle with his face, and strutted off with that peculiar mincing gait and stilted gesture which a ballet-dancer assumes when she leaves the stage after an immense ovation.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE terms of these conditions, which we have as yet only vaguely hinted at, called for the payment of fifty million dollars, in satisfaction of the well-nigh forgotten indignity offered to the Chinese Legation. Further than this, a sum measured at the rate of one hundred and twenty-five dollars per inhabitant of every city on the coast was demanded, payable in bimonthly instalments of a hundred millions each.

Thirdly, and what was far more disastrous to the welfare of our people than the mere repeal of the anti-Chinese law, was the extension of the Burlingame Treaty, so that practically the hordes of overpopulated China could find entrance into the United States. This last proposal was telegraphed on to Washington, and was placed before the extra session of Congress; it was this that caused the delay. In the mean while, the "surplus" offered a ready means of meeting the first instalment; but, strange to say, with all the trouble the disposal of this same surplus had given every one, when it came to parting with it the nation drew a long face.

These conditions bore with especial harshness on New York; and having received news, the day before, that the squadron which we left at Hampton Roads had escaped the storm (because no storm had really occurred), the city was bracing up for one grand and last heroic effort at co-operation with it.

The plan was to fill with explosives every steamer, ferry-boat, and tug that yet remained to the city, and to send them down upon the enemy in such overwhelming numbers that a few might be expected to escape his destructive fire. At the moment of collision the explosives were to be ignited by concussion, an electric button being fixed in the bows of each vessel. As the previous attempt to capture the fleet by assault had proved so disastrous, there were merely to be sufficient men on board to steer the vessels and to manage the engines and furnaces. These were to take to small boats an instant before the collision, and to trust to the expected confusion among the enemy to make their escape. It was a desperate undertaking; but the New York pilots are the most skilful and venturesome of their species, and a sufficient number were found for the purpose. But when it came to filling these vessels with explosives, the supply of powder and dynamite gave out, and it became necessary to make up for the deficiency with petroleum. Indeed, this far predominated over the explosives proper, and was stored in huge tanks on the vessels' upper decks.

So secretly had everything been managed that, although the preparations were under way when Mr. McFlusterer visited the city, he never so much as suspected that any further attempt was to be made, while the Chinese were equally off their guard because of the pending negotiations.

I am not prepared to discuss the morality of the attack. A hostile fleet anchored off your city ready to open fire on you at any moment does not tend to make you over-scrupulous about the niceties of international usage.

Besides, civilized nations have not always displayed an equal regard for these niceties in their dealing with semi-barbarous people as with each other. Be this as it may, Wang-Chi-Poo was awakened the next morning by the now more attentive lookouts, and, on gaining the deck, saw, to his dismay, the lately-deserted waters of the Narrows covered with shipping. As far as the eye could reach ahead, the waves were alive with vessels; boats of every description there were, all bearing down upon the fleet,—swift and graceful steamers like yachts, blunt and short steamers like tugs, ferry-boats, and even sail-boats. The wings of a few of these contained painted advertisements showing the purposes the crafts had originally served. Here was "Tarrant's Seltzer Aperient" coming down to kill. Here was "Hots Pepper Bitters" on the same errand. Here were "the world-renowned Chokum Pills," while the sails of still another craft held aloft the timely suggestion of a Dr. Walker to use a certain remedy against ague and to "Shake No More." Indeed, it would seem that America in her emergency had resolved to fight the enemy with her quack medicines, sagely recognizing their superiority in deadliness to dynamite or guns.

Such an array of vessels had probably never been seen before, and all of them that had steam-whistles were blowing them, as at the finish of the International yacht-race. Naturally astonished by all this in front of them, the attention of the lookouts was distracted from the rear, and they failed to sight the sluggish approach of the American squadron which we left at Hampton Roads.

Now, the Chinese, imagining the purpose of the enemy ahead to be similar to that of the other night, directed their fire at the water-line of the fire-ships; consequently, as the explosives which they carried were stored on the open decks above, these vessels were generally sunk instead of being blown up, thus concealing the dangerous nature of their cargoes. Indeed, it was not till the one that was leading the way had arrived within three-quarters of a mile, that a shell striking a little higher revealed, by the explosion that followed, the actual peril of the fleet. I say actual peril, for, although many of the fire-ships were already sunk, and more sinking at every moment, they were yet so numerous that a fresh one was ready to fill up each gap. And so little were their ranks thinned that it was already manifest that they could not all be destroyed.

The fleet was in a disagreeable predicament. It could easily have repelled an army of boarders, for, having sufficient time to prepare, each vessel could draw her crew within herself, close up all but a third of her deck, and then with her Gatling and Hotchkiss guns sweep off any number of assailants that might have gained a foothold on the limited space remaining.

To repel a flotilla of fire-ships, however, coming with an impetus that promised to crash through any steel crinoline as through a spider-web, was a very different matter.

The vessel that was now ahead, too, had her steam-whistle adjusted to music, and, to add astonishment to confusion, was loudly whistling "Yankee Doodle." So surprised were the Chinese that they ceased their fire for a brief space, and it was during this interval that they

first became aware of the presence of the American squadron in their rear. Its coming, however, reassured the Mongolians. The vessels looked so decrepit and innocuous that they actually cast a halo of peacefulness over the scene. They had required all the time since we left them to get up from Hampton Roads, and their exertions even to accomplish this feat had aged them conspicuously. To prevent any one ship from sinking without the rest, chains had been passed under the hulls of all, and the whole squadron came on in one wide outstretched file, the Porpoise and the Pacific on the flanks, as before, now towing the vessels and tugging at them, and anon shoving back this one or that one as it seemed likely to fall out of line. The Chinese were in a trap, their enemies closing in upon them from in front and from behind, for if that mass of chained-up rottenness struck them it might very likely involve them in common disaster. Little time, too, was given for deliberation; the advance guard of the fire-ships was already almost on top of them, and the inspiring strains of "Yankee Doodle" sounded now like the screech of doom. There was really but one course open to the Chinese fleet: it must sail down on the chain-bound squadron and dispose of that first. To accomplish this, the Chinese fleet was obliged to come about, since it faced the city. Now, it requires a considerable amount of sea-room and no little time to turn vessels of such draught. The majority of them, however, accomplished the operation successfully; but the one that lay directly north of the flag-ship and the nearest of any to the fire-ships was a little slow. Just as she came around, and before her propeller had got adjusted to her new course, the Yankee Doodle, on the lead of the fire-ships, putting on a spurt, struck her with a terrific crash. They say that the report that followed the collision was heard for twelve miles inland, and that the iron plates of the steamer were flung clean to the beach. At all events, so perfect was the construction of the musical apparatus that it held together compactly, and, flying on ahead past the fleet, it never stopped whistling till it sank beneath the waves. But it was not the destruction of the two vessels that was the most terrifying; it was not the noise and the smoke, nor even the extraordinary performance of her musical attachment, but rather the burning oil that escaped from the fire-ship at the explosion and spread itself over the water.

Now, Wang-Chi-Poo had been summoned from the breakfast-table of the captives at the first alarm. When he got up on deck, and imagined that a hand-to-hand conflict was imminent, he had returned to his cabin for a particular cutlass set with rubies and brilliants. This weapon, belonging to an ancestor of his, was held by him in especial esteem, and Mrs. McFlusterer, seeing him don it, knew that the occasion was one of extra moment. She could hear the rapid firing of the fleets, and, having no relish for being confined in the cabin during another engagement, she seized the occasion of the commissioner carelessly leaving the door opened behind him to follow him out. Being a privileged character, no one interfered with her, although when the other two prisoners endeavored to keep her company they were ignominiously cuffed back. Indeed, after the punishment of the servant, Mrs. McFlusterer, as might seem natural, was universally avoided by the crew,

and, the only other person having authority to address her being the interpreter, she had but to escape his eye and that of Wang-Chi-Poo. Nevertheless, she proceeded stealthily, taking advantage of every chance cover to conceal herself, and curbing the wild yearning for liberty that came over her. She arrived on deck about ten seconds after the explosion, and the sight that met her gaze was calculated to make the stoutest heart quail. The sea for miles about was on fire, and the fleet in full retreat; every instant, too, the area of the fire was increasing; for as the flames reached one after another of the fire-ships, and licking their sides caused them to explode, more burning oil was poured on the water, and fresh fuel was added to the flames. Both tide and wind, too, assisted its spread in the direction of the fleet, and so intense became the heat that she could scarcely breathe. At one moment she thought they might escape, but the next instant the fire would take a leap and, springing from crest to crest, would run on after them, as if actually hungering for them. Mechanically she watched the outward edge of the huge burning area growing larger and nearer, hissing after them as if actually alive; she felt too the heat each moment growing more and more intense; then a puff of wind bore the fire down upon them, and they were in a flaming sea. The effect on Wang-Chi-Poo was most extraordinary. In his despair of being able to save his ships, his terror suddenly changed to insatiate animosity, and it was directed against the squadron he was rapidly bearing down upon. The flight became a charge. To involve the enemy's line of battle in the common destruction seemed now his only aim, and, as his fleet sped on, he waved his cutlass in the air and shouted like a maniac.

I can imagine no more terrible spectacle than the onslaught of the Chinese, enveloped in flames as they were, with the flag-ship leading and gaining fresh speed from their very momentum; the crews, too, taking the cue from their leader, all waving their cutlasses in the air, shouting their barbaric war-cries and beating their gongs, perfectly beside themselves. Like a blast from the mouth of Hell they went.

I maintain that none but Americans could have withstood such an onslaught. Chained up as they were, however, they were unable to avoid it. Nevertheless, as if in contempt of the danger, the admiral orders out such poor old dented and battered musical instruments as the government had left him, and the glorious strains of the "Star-Spangled Banner" float upward like the greeting of the gladiators to the cruel Emperor,—“We salute thee, though about to die.” The air is caught up along the shores,—the shores which are lined and crowded with excited people till there is scarce standing-room on the roof of any house or at any point of vantage,—and they re-echo back the strains from ten thousand throats. On sweep the barbarians, on, on, on, the fire and the smoke sweeping on with them, at times completely to envelop the fleet; not much longer can the shock be delayed, and men and women along the beach stand clasping each other in their arms with horror during that terrible suspense. Nearer, now nearer, and then Mrs. McFlusterer—to whom we must return—felt herself thrown to the deck; she felt the vessel rising up under her as a charger in leaping, and next a scraping and gliding as over crunching timber.

When she raised her eyes she caught a glimpse through the smoke of the admiral, standing up on the sinking stern of his ship, with the flag of his country wrapped about him. Wang-Chi-Poo is like a veritable god aroused. He gives the signal to come about and charge again. Three times he charged the sinking fleet with the burning fleet; then the sea closed over the American navy, leaving only three vessels to represent it,—viz., the Nipsic, the Vandalia, and the Trenton, which on the way up had drifted apart from the rest, and were only then preserved to perish lamentably, and but too soon after, at Samoa.

CHAPTER XX.

BUT what means this? has the oil burnt itself out? Yes, to a certain extent, and the disturbed water has scattered it into little islands of fire. The steel plates of the flag-ship are like the sides of an oven, but the ships are not themselves on fire. Then, too, when the Chinese came to look about them, they found that the steel crinolines had acted as Davy lamps against the flames, keeping back the volume of oil outside their line of contact with the water,—that is, about twenty to thirty feet from the ship's sides.

You ask, perhaps, how the vessel had managed to charge, with these nets on. Well, in certain experiments made by the British off the Irish coast, and more recently confirmed by the French in their own waters, it was found that vessels thus attired could steam nearly eight miles an hour.

In the present case, however, the nets were seriously damaged by the collision with the American squadron, and on this injury to them the fate of two of our prisoners at least is destined in a very short time to hang. Nevertheless, the heat had charred the wood-work of the cabins, and it was not till the walls of the magazines had been deluged with water that the Chinese felt relieved of all danger from being blown up.

As might be expected, the oil had proved fatal to the fire-ships, and now, as the fleet quietly steamed back to its original position, charred and smouldering hulls were seen in every direction littering the water.

You ask, perhaps, why Wang-Chi-Poo did not immediately begin to fire now upon the city. The fleet returned to its original position for that purpose, but still he hesitated to give the necessary orders. Indeed, the fact is so extraordinary that, had I not previously mentioned a somewhat similar cause of hesitation connected with Coney Island, I should hardly dare to mention it now.

The fact of the matter was, that on her second return the flag-ship anchored a trifle nearer to the city, and from this her new position Wang-Chi-Poo suddenly caught sight of the colossal statue of Liberty on Bedloe's Island.

Mr. McFlusterer, along with Taonsu, was again despatched on the following morning to the city in the steam-launch, to demand an increased sum as indemnity for the injury done by the fire-ships to the

fleet. During his absence, Mr. Puncherry and the fair McFlusterer were taking an outing on the deck, the gentleman still talking about ships and armaments, and the lady listening to him in the resigned manner that was to be expected of a lady who had gone through so many other trials.

Mr. Puncherry was even a little spiteful this morning: the iron ring round his ankle pinched him, and his attendant at the other end of the chain, who followed him up and down like his shadow, refused to allow him any relief. Being unable to vent his spite on him, he vented it on his own country.

"It's derved hard, derved hard," he said, "after all I've done for the American public, that there's not a spontaneous rising to demand my ransom. To be sure, I haven't built such ships as these people have, but for all practical purposes mine are better. No, marm," he continued, "I don't take much stock in these new-fangled navies: why, the very armor they carry weighs them down so that they can't answer the helm. This heavy plating is all a mistake, but the public want it; so I just put tin on my ships, paint it over, and the public's satisfied."

"But would a real iron-plated ship have leaked like yours did the day we encountered that dreadful storm off Cape Hatteras? You remember, Mr. Puncherry, you were dreadfully alarmed yourself, and since that day have invariably worn a Boyton waistcoat; indeed, if I remember correctly, you confessed in a fit of candor that, being called the Terror, she was the best-named vessel that ever left your yards."

"I won't deny, marm, that she leaked somewhat; but then, you know, when wood is new and before it gets well seasoned, seams will gape. Indeed, the seams in a ship are like the pores in a human: to be kept healthy, they ought to open every now and then."

Mrs. McFlusterer looked dubious.

"S'posin' she wasn't water-tight," he continued, "tightness ain't everything. She was built from stem to stern in an American ship-yard. What's the use of a navy, marm, if it ain't to encourage American ship-building? I'm an American ship-builder myself, marm, and I don't believe in going to Europe even for my ideas; it's unpatriotic."

Mrs. McFlusterer, with a sigh of relief, for which she nevertheless felt guilty, saw Wang-Chi-Poo advancing towards her. He still wore his magnificent jewelled cutlass at his side, and the dragon worked in gold thread upon his breast looked especially brilliant. The graceful way in which he walked, not to speak of the almost coquettish manner in which he carried his fan, could scarcely escape the notice of so susceptible a lady. He evidently had something very particular to say to her, which in the absence of the interpreter he was unable to explain. At last, taking her by the hand, he led her to a seat in front of a small stage which had been improvised without her knowledge just under the poop. Mrs. McFlusterer had long given up being astonished at anything, and, taking the chair, began to watch the crew assembling as an audience. At last the curtain went up on what was really the billionth

act of a Chinese drama, which, beginning with the early dawn of that people's history, would go on, an act for each victory, to the end of their existence. The present act was intended to commemorate the victory of yesterday, which Wang-Chi-Poo rightly considered as decisive. Mrs. McFlusterer naturally failed to appreciate the point of the performance. But the strained, unnatural voices of the players, pitched in a high falsetto, their weird and peculiar movements, and their grotesque attires, filled her with an alarm quite appropriate to the situation. It was all so unnatural, so unhuman, so uncanny! Their facial expression under no circumstances ever underwent a change, but was fixed and immutable as that of a Chinese doll. This was the more curious, contrasting so oddly as it did with the spasmodic movements of their bodies. It was like the performance of beings of some different sphere, of another world, only half human; and so unpleasant was it all that even Mr. Puncherry was affected, and, to the evident displeasure of his attendant, who was deeply interested in the play, he walked over to the side of the ship, dragging perforce his unhappy attachment after him. With the fascination of a horrible dream, Mrs. McFlusterer felt herself gazing at the chief actor: he was tall and well made, and, though human in shape, he put her more in mind of a huge bird. From the back of his head rose a couple of feathers from a peacock's tail. What he was intended to represent she failed to imagine, but every now and then he would emit a peculiar screech like the scream of a peacock, and, with his eyes fixed on space, would walk stiffly three times around the stage. This accomplished, he would clash together a pair of brass cymbals fastened to the palms of his hands. Then the players, who filled the rôle also of musicians, would go up in a body to a brass gong hanging on a side-scene and, as a transported orchestra, hammer on it collectively.

Altogether, the performance was the weirdest, most uncanny spectacle she had ever witnessed; and, taking everything into consideration,—the circumstances that attended it, the locality where it occurred, here barely eight miles from New York, now beleaguered by this foreign fleet,—she could scarcely realize that she was not the victim of some hideous nightmare, that would have some more terrible ending.

She was still gazing on this peacock-like individual as he was circling the stage for the fourteenth time, when a fresh troop of actors appeared on the scene from behind. Thereupon began a procession of all the actors around the stage. Round and round in dumb silence they went, all with the same fixed expression of utter vacuity. Then, without a moment's warning, without rhyme or reason, but with a sudden clash of gongs, the procession jumped from the stage in a body, and seemed advancing on her. Mrs. McFlusterer's nerves were at that exact degree of tension that they could stand nothing more.

It was merely the wind-up of the performance, and what in China is considered an artistic finish; but, not knowing this, she rushed over to Mr. Puncherry. "Jump, Mr. Puncherry! jump!" she cried, in an agony of fright, and she gave him a sudden push in the back. Mr. Puncherry was standing near an open port-hole, sniffing contemptuously

at some new contrivance for closing it; he was even leaning well out of the port-hole in his examinations, and the push in the back caused him to lose his balance and to topple overboard, jerking the chain from the hand of his attendant; then in her terror, wild and unreasonable as it was, terror at what she herself could scarce explain, she jumped out herself, and came down with a great thump on that gentleman's back, as his stout person lay struggling on the waves.

CHAPTER XXI.

How slowly each step in the progress of mundane tragedies often seems to move, and yet how little it requires at the last to bring about the climax! A Chinese play, an instant of alarm, a woman's push, and the long-retarded thunderbolt is hurled.

In this case Wang-Chi-Poo is the Jupiter, and on that fair city that lay apparently so calmly dreaming over the distant surface of the water, the thunderbolt is soon to fall; not caused exactly by the escape of the prisoners, but undoubtedly accelerated by that event.

Now, the etiquette of China prevents, in cases of sudden emergency, a mandarin of high rank from running. He may, with perfect propriety, hasten when there is no need to hasten; but when anything has happened that in lesser mortals would warrant speed, he must advance slowly, turn at every third step, and bow. Thus it resulted that Wang-Chi-Poo took ten minutes to go ten yards, and consequently arrived at the ship's side too late to understand the extraordinary phenomena he beheld,—namely, a disturbance of the water in the spot where Mrs. McFlusterer had fallen, as if she had been swallowed by a sea-serpent; and Mr. Puncherry, not under the stern, where any one would naturally have looked for him, but, instead, fully half a mile distant, and travelling over the waves as if hooked to the same creature's tail.

Wang-Chi-Poo's blood was up; attributing the escape, however, to supernatural agencies, he yet hesitated to fire on Mr. Puncherry, but, ordering the fleet to clear for action, he let drive at the city. This, too, in spite of the statue of Liberty, which up to this time had protected it.

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Though the shock caused by her immersion failed to bring Mrs. McFlusterer back to a full realization of the case, she yet reached out her hand for something to catch hold of, and it came in contact with a long cylinder-like object that hugged the stern of the ship. There was apparently a man on the top of it, or rather a man inside of it, who, interrupted in whatever he was doing by the double fall, looked at her in bewildered astonishment.

"Save me!" she cried, "oh, save me, good sir, and, if there's room, Mr. Puncherry also!"

"Two's company, but three's a crowd," said the gentleman, politely; then, as he assisted her to enter, "If my boat were elastic, madam, your friend would be welcome; but, as it is, he must take his chances outside."

Mrs. McFlusterer, in pushing Mr. Puncherry overboard, had seized the end of his chain, and, like all drowning persons, had kept tight hold of it. Just as the lid of the hatchway was closing on top of her, she instinctively slipped this chain over a hook on the outside of the boat, against which her dress had caught as she was being pulled in, and then she fainted.

Miraculous as it may sound, for a man who built such ships, Mr. Puncherry was not a good swimmer. He, however, remembered a piece of early advice,—viz., if ever in deep water, to keep perfectly quiet and lie on his back. In this position he suddenly remembered, too, his Boyton waistcoat, and, getting the mouth-piece of the connecting tube between his lips, he began to blow it up, keeping his eye the while fixed on the boat, which he every minute expected would come to his assistance. He had inflated the lower portion of this waistcoat, which was divided into sections, and which, contrary to what its name would indicate, extended inside his trousers almost to his calves, when he saw the boat that he had expected to pick him up, take a downward plunge and disappear; then, a sudden jerk almost pulling his leg out of its socket, he was as suddenly slung around, and, to his horror, felt himself being hurriedly towed away by the foot over the troubled surface of the waters, bobbing and plunging like a huge animated buoy, and prevented from expostulating by the entrance of a breaker every time he opened his mouth.

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Mrs. McFlusterer opened her eyes with the firm but disagreeable conviction that she was in a coffin meant to hold two, a coffin that was plunging downward, diving and turning, squirming and twisting, and forging ahead generally in a mad career. So great was the speed that the water fairly hissed past them, and, as she gazed through the heavy glass of a couple of eye-like port-holes, the water looked green and cool. Numerous fish of uncouth shape and enormous size passed them, but one huge dolphin attached himself to them as a companion and swam with them for at least a quarter of a mile; his left eye came directly opposite to the right-hand port-hole, and Mrs. McFlusterer could notice the astonishment with which he looked in at her. He evidently wondered what kind of a soul animated this new species of *confrère*, and Mrs. McFlusterer found herself wondering whether after all she might not herself be a fish. Mrs. McFlusterer, however, was a practical woman, and these fancies were only the after-effects of her recent terrible experiences. Her full consciousness was returning, only it was returning slowly, and she had that languid sensation of indifference that comes as a reaction after all great shocks. She began to realize, too, that this must be the very submarine boat her husband had described to her, and she found herself wondering how the air was kept so pure and fresh in such a cramped-up interior: indeed, the fit was so tight that the navigator could barely give the necessary attention to the machinery, and during most of the time they lay together side by side. Great as was the rate of speed, the action of the engines was without noise or jar, and the whole mechanism seemed to obey the very word of the inventor, as if it were a thing of life. Now he would argue with

it, now he would praise it, and anon he would chide it as if it were veritably his offspring.

"I don't know why it is," she heard him say, "you ain't as spry this afternoon as usual."

"I can't make it out," he continued, more directly addressing his companion. "She'll only range downward a certain depth, and then, when I try to go deeper, I'm suddenly pulled back, as if I were tied to something on the surface."

"It's Mr. Puncherry! Oh, it's Mr. Puncherry!" she cried, "and he must be drowned! I hooked the end of his chain on to the boat when I came on board." Then Mrs. McFlusterer had to enter into a hurried explanation of the circumstance.

"Ah, true enough. I remember now there were two of you that took to the water." Then, more consolingly, "But there's no danger of his drowning, madam, if he's *the* Mr. Puncherry. A man would never build the ships he does, if he could drown like an ordinary mortal: it's only his ships that drown."

"But he *is* drowned? I know he is!" she continued, blaming herself for his misfortune. "Let's go up immediately to his assistance. Quicker! quicker!" she urged, as the boat was directed towards the surface. "He must be already dead, I'm sure."

"If you're so sure of that, madam, I don't see the use of hurrying; but the will of the ladies always rules."

The boat now showed by her increased speed that something had certainly been detaining her; they could feel the water sweep by them like a mad torrent; then the port-holes ahead showed greener and paler, lighter and whiter, and in an instant afterwards they reached the surface, and shot clean beyond it into the air, like a fish that had miscalculated its ascending impetus. A great thud fairly shook the breath out of the lady as the boat dropped back again on the surface, and they were lying calmly rocking to and fro.

"Open the hatchway, quick! I'm sure he's dead!" she cried. Then the hatchway was thrown open, and, raising their heads, they beheld Mr. Puncherry, inflated as to his lower extremities to about four times his usual dimensions, and apparently seated on the top of the waves.

He waved his hand affably to them. "Wind her up again," he cried, "only don't start off too sudden. I've got a new idea for a ship."

"Great Scott!" he added, in a different tone of voice, "they've begun to shoot. I guess you'll have to make room for me on board, after all."

It was true: a large missile, followed by a distant report, sailed past them.

"If they've begun to shoot, I guess I'd better say good-day," cried the inventor, drawing his head in like a snapping-turtle; then, the trap-door closing, with a twist of a crank, a little whistle, and a swish of the tail, the extraordinary craft again plunged downward, and, burying herself under the waves, disappeared from Mr. Puncherry's sight.

This second instalment of submarine travel was in most respects a repetition of the first. Nevertheless, Mrs. McFlusterer felt more in-

clined to listen to the shirt-maker, and to hear his explanations as to why he had not succeeded in blowing up the ships. The first failure he attributed to the slow action of the mechanism for exploding his torpedo; the next, to the steel crinolines, in the meshes of which the proboscis of his craft had unfortunately got entangled, thereby preventing his approach; while as for this morning, he had merely come out on a reconnoitring expedition, and had not known till he got quite close that the vessels had removed their crinolines, probably for the purpose of repairing such damage as had been sustained in the collision with the American fleet. When Mrs. McFlusterer had fallen into the waves so near him, he was in the act of examining the hull of the flag-ship to find a weak spot, "so as to follow it up under water."

Shortly after this explanation, the lady felt the nose of the boat pounding along the bed of the river, and now, for they had well-nigh reached their destination, against the sunken piles of the wharves. Just as she was giving up all hope, however, that they would ever arrive, the craft took another sudden upward dart, and, springing out of the water as before, only with a greater flourish of the tail and a little louder whistle, lay rocking in the very basin that her husband had visited two days earlier. But what had become of the crowd that usually received the vessel? There was no crowd here. A dire plague, a hush, a cathedral stillness, had fallen over the city, broken by an occasional crash or distant boom. Could it be? It must be! The bombardment of the city had begun!

Mrs. McFlusterer and the shirt-maker gazed about them with feelings impossible to describe. What few people were visible were cautiously peering around the corners of houses, or were taking advantage of a lull in the firing, like children playing puss-in-the-corner, to slip across from one spot to another.

As his family might need his protection, the shirt-maker insisted upon repairing to his home, and Mrs. McFlusterer was about to accept his offer to convey her thither, when Mr. Puncherry, whom she had entirely forgotten, entered the basin, safe and sound, by the novel process of pulling himself hand over hand by his chain. A belated hack-driver, who had been caught behind a house when the firing began, and had since been too terrified to leave that retreat, was finally induced to convey them up-town to the lady's residence, and to drop the shirt-maker at the nearest point to his house. The three thereupon entered the carriage, and the horses were put to a full gallop towards Broadway.

The aim of the fleet seemed principally directed at the lofty buildings, and barely had they passed Wall Street, when they saw Trinity Church steeple rock and fall.

Opposite the Western Union building a cab was lying across its horse, while a party of gentlemen were struggling to extricate themselves from the interior.

But still the same absence of crowds. What had become of so many people? They could scarcely have all left town. At City Hall Place, however, a vast number had congregated. Mrs. McFlusterer turned away her head, as a shell exploded in their midst with terrible

carnage. Faster, faster, driver! To remain here were death, and yet the narrow highway before them scarce were safer. Was there no less dangerous road than up Broadway, no wider avenue?

Though this street was mostly deserted, yet a few belated persons were hovering about their stores, running back to lock a door, or to remove some last forgotten article. Down the side streets, however, people could be seen in greater numbers, getting out their sick and aged, while around these hung women in anguish,—over all the sharp, whip-like crack of the shells, and the jar of walls continually falling. Great God! It was truly a terrible drive, and, with the unerring instinct of women in emergencies, Mrs. McFlusterer jumped to the right conclusion,—namely, that the bombardment had been hastened by her escape. She would go back, she would do anything to stay it; and, becoming hysterical, she implored her companions to return, weeping and wringing her hands convulsively, and losing all that flippancy and lightness of character which we have tried to depict. Even had her companions been willing to accede to her request, it were now impossible, for their return was suddenly cut off by a mass of people like a drove of cattle wildly sweeping around the corner of Canal Street up Broadway, mangled and bleeding, many of them but propelled onward by their terror. A train on the elevated road, conveying up town the last lingering hordes from the lower parts of the city, had either been struck by a shell or had met with some other accident. The carriage was still ahead, however, and kept its distance, the throng growing behind till it resembled a huge troubled sea with hands emerging here and there from above the surface, as of people veritably drowning. Opposite Grand Street a cry, as of ten thousand imprecations rolled into one, reached the carriage, and its occupants on looking back beheld a column of smoke rising behind the crowd high into the air. The lower part of the city was on fire. On, on, on!—no use in loitering; the most heroic valor could accomplish naught: walls falling on every side, shells exploding everywhere, a sea of flames in pursuit, distance was the only refuge.

Suddenly the explosions ceased, a death-like stillness reigned supreme, and the word went up that the enemy were landing! It was at this moment, this supreme moment of terror, that the distant sound of fife and drum was heard; louder and more distinct it grew, shriller and cheerier as it approached, calming the confusion and allaying the alarm. Then the carriage was compelled to pull to one side, and the "gallant Sixty-Ninth" swept by, changing their step from a march to a double-quick, and that into a long sweeping stride, as they pressed on to meet the foe. After them came the finely-equipped "Seventh," in their trim uniform and with their admirable discipline; then, more regiments of the National Guard. The Knights of Labor, ready this time "to strike" to good purpose, followed the troops, and next in turn came the United Brotherhood of Tooth-Brush Makers, *bristling all over*; after them, the Brigade of Dudes, armed with umbrellas spread and nicely raised on high, not to protect their heads, but, O tempora, O mores! their shiny black hats from the dust of crumbling masonry. They numbered exactly four companies, and their dainty attire and

particularly the dainty way they all pressed the common earth with their neatly-varnished boots together elicited hearty plaudits from the crowd. On they swept, bearing a flag on which was proudly printed, in golden letters, "Behold, the Real Four Hundred."

Closing the procession was the Revolutionary piece of ordnance lent by the State Armory on Thirty-Fifth Street. For what purpose it was trundled out, save to gratify the popular craze for antiquity, is hard to say. Possibly it was fired by the general enthusiasm of the troops, as it could be *fired* in no other manner, and had pleaded to accompany them; or, more likely, it argued that it was too old to be left behind unprotected, and had been brought along out of commiseration. Poor thing! Men and women dropped sympathetic tears as it feebly rumbled on.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE bombardment ceased simultaneously with the conflagration, which, as it turned out, was that of the Produce Exchange. Fortunately, the valiant efforts of the fire-brigade succeeded in extinguishing this, and, when the regiments of the National Guard arrived at the point where the enemy were supposed to be landing, it was to find the report erroneous. No military force in the world, of the same numerical strength, would have received the enemy more courageously; but, when you reflect that the government had supplied them with Springfield cartridges for their Remington muskets, you can appreciate that they might as well have been provided with clubs. At any other time the parsimony and short-sightedness of the government would be almost laughable, but it was no laughing-matter now. On the contrary, all maintained that it was a case of *crying* injustice. Nominally Uncle Sam allots four hundred thousand dollars a year among his forty-two nephews, but instead of paying cash he very unkindly pays in kind,—in other words, trades off at his own valuation any old military rubbish that he has no need of himself. Thus, during the preceding year the New York appropriation had been paid up partly in old saddles and partly in cartridge-boxes, the last at the rate of a dollar apiece, and which had been in the government's hands since the War of 1812. To give an almost burlesque touch to the situation, a cavalry troop had got the cartridge-boxes and an infantry regiment received the saddles. The disbandment of State cavalry troops in New York dates from this gift. And yet all the time Little Log-Rolling Creek is being improved into a river, merely that the boys who live along the banks may have somewhere to swim without the danger of getting drowned.

Now, while the bombardment had really taken place in a fit of spleen at the loss of Mrs. McFlusterer, nevertheless, had it begun only fifteen minutes later, it would have been in full accordance with the usages of the most civilized nations. Mr. McFlusterer had returned in the steam-launch without bringing back with him any distinct guarantee that even yet the terms were accepted, and Wang-Chi-Poo had vowed to open fire on the city if such guarantees were not received by four o'clock. Not only so, but the assault on the flag of truce by the shirt-maker would have excused the attack at an earlier stage still.

To recur to Mr. McFlusterer, however: he had passed his wife, on his return from his second trip to the city, without knowing it, and he had, moreover, passed Mr. Puncherry. His astonishment at beholding his old friend inflated to four times his usual size, and waving his hand to him from the top of the waves, caused Mr. McFlusterer to forget all about his wife, and, though Mr. Puncherry had pointed downward to her as he called out her name, he naturally failed to see the connecting link that there really was between her and that gentleman's flight.

The very escape in itself was so extraordinary that Mr. McFlusterer could think of nothing else; for, though he knew that Mr. Puncherry, from long experience with his own ships, protected himself against sudden immersions by wearing a patent inflating waistcoat, he did not know that this waistcoat was in fact a tunic divided into compartments, and that when the proper compartment was inflated it made of the seat of Mr. Puncherry's nether garments a very comfortable air-cushion. This it was that raised Mr. Puncherry so high above the waves, and gave him that exultant and Arion-like appearance as he rode them. So great was the Razor's astonishment, that he failed to notice the comparatively trivial fact that the fleet had begun to fire on the city, and long before he gained the vessel's side this firing had developed into a pretty brisk cannonade.

Now, the strangest part of this bombardment, to use a Hibernicism, was its sudden termination. The abruptness with which it began was only surpassed by the extraordinary abruptness with which it ceased. Was the motive merely to give the city a taste of what the Chinese could do? If so, it amply served its purpose. Men won't suffer their residences, their places of business, their Penates and their Lares, their churches, and particularly their banks of deposit, to be hammered into smithereens if they can save them by buying off the enemy. Without stopping to question the reason for this cessation of hostilities, however, or to ask themselves why it had not been explained by the fleet, the twelve principal gentlemen of the city (for after the warning of the Centennial Ball I don't wish to make invidious distinctions by mentioning names) constituted themselves, on the first cessation of the firing, into a select committee and hastily called a meeting of all the less well-known gentlemen of New York in the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

A hush of expectation fell over the city, as people waited to hear what these Solons would agree upon.

At last it was decided by the less well-known portion of those present that the select portion should be allowed to continue in their self-assumed mission, and should prove their right to the claim of public spirit by going over to the fleet in a neighborly, friendly way and making the best terms they could with the barbarians. It was with extreme reluctance that this proposal was finally agreed to by the twelve, and the account of their expedition, the marvellous incidents that attended it, and, last but not least, the discovery of the extraordinary cause of the city's immunity from a further dose of shot, can best be given in the graphic words of a newspaper man who volunteered to accompany the party.

"We embarked in a ferry-boat at the foot of East Seventh Street,"

he said, "at about six o'clock in the evening, though it was quite dark before we finally got away. How well I remember it!—a hot, sultry night, without a breath of air, and a duplicate set of stars seemingly fixed beneath the water, so bright were the reflections. At first each of us tried to keep up the spirits of the others, as we sat huddled together on the deck. Then some one—I don't remember who—began a song,—not a jovial college song, but a sad weird song, and one suited generally to the occasion; after this, because human nature *is* human nature, and reacts naturally from one extreme to the other, some one told a story, and from that we all fell to talking of the extraordinary mission we were on, the extraordinary fact of a Chinese fleet being in our waters at all, and what blank fools these Chinese were not to reflect on the terrible retribution that would come upon them later. We all agreed, however, that we were in a very awkward predicament; being pillaged, so to speak, by a burglar who in the end would pay dearly for his crime, but who in the mean time was making things decidedly uncomfortable about the house. Such was the general verdict, and it was impressed upon my memory because at the moment of its expression there was a frightful explosion, caused by the paddle-wheel striking a torpedo. For all decided that it must have been a torpedo, and probably one of those set for the Chinese, which had either got loose from its moorings or had been detached by that fleet itself. Nevertheless, it didn't do much harm, since it only knocked out a couple of blades from the paddle-wheel.

"The curious feature about the trip was, however, that the further we left the city behind us, and consequently the nearer we approached the enemy, the more intense became the sadness with which we had started out. Opposite Governor's Island our conversation turned to the subject of a future life, and we actually discussed it until we entered the Narrows. On passing through them we shortly reached a point from which the waters of the outer harbor began to spread out quite wide, and at last we succeeded in distinguishing the dark hulls of the enemy's ships, all grouped together in one black mass ahead of us. I have no language to portray our sadness at this sight. The tide was running swiftly, and we were dropping down on the fleet more rapidly than we imagined. Indeed, we must have got within half a mile of it before any one reflected that our intentions might be misunderstood. The prominent gentlemen of New York owe their prominence rather to their status in commercial affairs than to their experience of war, and understand better the cutting off of coupons than of heads: consequently, the possibility of our being taken for the advance guard of some desperate assaulting party never struck any one. At last some one did venture the suggestion, and, in view of its plausibility, we stopped and blew the whistle.

"Not a sound from the fleet. There they lay calmly at anchor, their spars faintly limned against the starry sky, and their huge bodies, painted gray, rising now more like huge octopuses out of the water. Then we advanced anew, but with greater caution and increased sadness, and blew the whistle again. Were they waiting for us to get quite close? were they then going to annihilate us at one fell swoop?

Assuredly, our presence by this time ought to be known. One would think that they would challenge us,—would blow a whistle in response to ours, to ask our intentions, as it were. But not a sound. Our sadness grew actually appalling; there was something mysterious about this silence, too, something uncanny and suspicious: it fairly made the flesh of our several bodies creep. I really think, if each of us had not been ashamed to show his feelings before the others, we should all have proposed turning around instanter, much as the Western trapper did when he found the 'bar's track gettin' too plagued fresh.' We had now arrived within three hundred yards of the largest vessel, and there was the same deep quiet. Were these phantom ships? Were they creatures of our imagination, after all? The ordinary tokens of life that could be looked for in a fleet on such an occasion were completely lacking; and then, oh, horror of horrors! at the very instant when it might be necessary to beat a retreat, the cursed paddle-wheel gave out, and we drifted without steerage-way directly upon them.

"Until now we had no idea that we were so close to them, and before we could realize it we felt our accursed tub grating and pounding against the iron sides of the largest vessel. I, for one,—and I know the others joined me,—threw myself flat down on the deck to avoid the discharge that must come now. But not a shot, not the cry of a sentinel, and for sound only the thumping and grating of our ferry-boat, as the tide pressed her down against those iron walls.

"'They're deserted,' at last cried the captain; 'I know they're deserted. Follow me.' And, carrying the gang-plank to the top of the upper deck over the cabin, he rested one end of it on the bulwarks of the steamer, strode intrepidly across, and we followed him cautiously half-way. Then I shall never forget—no, not till the last hour of my allotted time arrives—the sight I beheld. The vessel was the largest in the squadron, evidently the flag-ship, and with more deck-room than iron-clads usually possess. Instead of these decks being deserted, however, they were actually thronged with people, just as if the crews from all the other ships had congregated here; but the strangest fact was that of this crowd not a soul was moving. Even where we were we must have been distinguishable, but not an eye was raised to meet us, nor a cutlass drawn. There they all stood as if cut in stone or congealed in various attitudes of rapt attention. It was as if some huge momentous catastrophe had interrupted them in the midst of the bombardment and had suddenly petrified them. Here were the appliances about the guns for loading them, and fresh cartridges just as they had been left on deck. Among these stood the crew, like stone images, dressed in silks or the variegated attires of their different ranks, down to the humblest sailor, all looking towards a common centre, and with a fixity of gaze that could hardly have been surpassed had they been posing for a photograph.

"It was our captain who first recovered himself. 'Who'll follow me?' he cried; but no one did. What a brave man we thought him! Indeed, taking everything into consideration, I deem that captain the most courageous man I ever beheld. As for us, we stood on the plank just where we were, midway between the ferry-boat and the steamer,

looking down on him. We could see him push through the crew, disturbing their long flowing robes as he swept by, occasionally upsetting the equilibrium of one after another of the figures as he jostled by them; but, though pushed to one side, the figures would quickly fall back into their original positions. At last we saw him make his way through the ring of the inner circle and lean over the common centre of attraction. Here he stopped; but what was he waiting for? He did not return. Instead of explaining, he did not even answer, though we all called his name, and we called it again and again. We could see him leaning over further and further. Good heavens! he appeared to be assuming an attitude like all the rest. Had the same nefarious spell begun to operate on him? Then, curiosity rising superior to fear, one of the rest of us followed the captain down into the ship, with identically the same result. Neither would he return nor answer when we called. Next another of us went to look after the last, and so on, one after another, till I remained alone. Finally, curiosity or the same fatal spell also beginning to take effect on me, I went myself, drawn I know not by what invisible agency. I advanced through these figures; as I passed them I saw that they were not of stone at all, but only still and motionless as if engaged in some religious rite of extra solemnity. As I moved by I touched them; their muscles were firm and their flesh felt warm. I even got to where my companions were, and, looking down, this is what I saw: a china basin serving as a cockpit, surrounded by a ring of lanterns, and in this basin a couple of small black beetles fighting. Then it was all explained to me. I had read in some book of travels on this extraordinary people, that, if they are engaged in battle, and by any chance a lesser strife occurs in their midst, it is considered in the light of an augury, and their own combat must be postponed till the result of the latter be determined. They must stand perfectly motionless, pay no attention to the enemy, and must suffer themselves even to be slaughtered without resistance. Thus, in the Tai-Ping Rebellion, at Wasso, in the upper provinces of the empire, a party of five hundred suffered themselves to be massacred to a man by the enemy as they stood entranced over a combat—what do you think?—a couple of ants. A fight between two beetles, however, is considered an especial augury; and the beetles in the present case were ordinary ship-roaches, that had probably been disturbed from their retreats in the seams of the deck by the violence of the cannonade.

“We had evidently come, however, towards the close of the duel, for even as I gazed the larger beetle had seized the smaller in his claws; giving it one last shake, a faint struggle ensued, and, a thrill passing over each, they both rolled over on their backs stone-dead.

“At this instant a gong sounded with a terrible clash, the people suddenly came back to life, and, while a detachment surrounded us with their drawn cutlasses, the rest of the crew flew back to their guns, and the long-interrupted bombardment was on the eve of being resumed.

“Great heavens! I thought, is the fate of a city of fifteen hundred thousand souls to hang on such a circumstance? How

many lives had the pugnacity of those two little creatures thus far saved?

“This was my principal reflection, and so engrossing was it that I failed to notice that a large and not ill-favored man had in the mean time pushed through the drawn cutlasses of our detainers, and was bowing before us, and brushing, with the folds of his gorgeous blue tunic, the seat of a cane-bottomed chair which he dragged forward. After this I heard myself addressed in faultless English by a small, narrow-chested young man, who seemed to understand that we were envoys from the city. Even yet, however, I scarcely know what would have been our fate, had it not been for the amused astonishment of the big man in the blue tunic at our hats. He would examine them, take them off our heads, and then place them on his own with the utmost complacency. Finally, when our mission was fully explained to him, we were taken down below into his cabin, where a sumptuous repast was set out for us. Nevertheless, despite the hospitality of the reception,—a hospitality that is really extraordinary when you reflect on the way we had arrived,—the terms we offered were absolutely refused. Wang-Chi-Poo raised his demands higher than those originally made, and even put in an extra sum for the steamer destroyed by the fire-ships. His ultimatum was this: a ransom of one hundred and fifty dollars per head, instead of one hundred and twenty-five dollars, for the inhabitants of every seaboard city, and one hundred and fifty million dollars to be paid by New York before to-morrow night; that Washington should agree to the extension of the Burlingame Treaty without further delay; and that a certain lady, whose name he gave, should be returned to the fleet. In addition to this, that twelve of New York’s most distinguished citizens, perhaps we the very envoys ourselves, should be given up as pledges for the fulfilment of these terms. Then we, the envoys, decided that it was about time to retire, and, as the vessel which had brought us was quite unequal to stemming the tide, we very ignominiously had to accept Wang-Chi-Poo’s offer to get out the steam-launch for our safe return. In so great a hurry, indeed, were we to get away, and so fearful lest the permission to go might be rescinded, that we failed, until the last moment, to notice a melancholy object in a large bamboo cage chained to one of its bars by his foot; and, though he appealed to us piteously in our own language and begged us to take him back with us to the city, we pretended not to see him. I must confess, however, that our regret at leaving him was somewhat mitigated by the fact that this same gentleman had got ahead of several of us before in transactions in Wall Street.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

It is still night, and the lamps in a luxurious room are beginning to burn low. Silken portières are drawn across the doors of the apartment, and on a sofa, soft and velvety, reclines a woman, deep sunken in its cushions,—a woman not exactly beautiful, but not altogether plain.

A changed woman she looks,—not precisely aged, but one who has

gone through some long and terrible ordeal,—a woman who has at last “collapsed.” She is breathing heavily; she has reached the ultimate term of endurance.

The windows of the apartment are open, to catch any lingering breath of air; for, though the trees in the Park opposite have not as yet put on their summer livery, the night is oppressively hot,—intensely hot, one of those hot nights which are occasionally thrown into the fickle, womanly-like month of April, as a faint indication of the summer soon to burst, like the blast from a furnace, over the land. A strange hush, too, has fallen over the city, broken occasionally by the call of a sentinel, or the plaintive cry of a child from the thronged humanity bivouacking in the Park. All is otherwise still,—strangely still,—and the woman on the sofa is strangely still, too. At last she turns weariedly, and, pressing her hand to her brow, thinks,—tries to think calmly, with the half-distinct foreboding that evil is yet to come; and indeed the very silence that prevails on every side is the hush rather of anticipation than of relief.

As regards the manner of Mrs. McFlusterer’s safe return to her home, suffice it to say that after the lull in the bombardment she had been conducted thither by Mr. Puncherry, who, after leaving her, returned to his own house.

Far removed as her residence was from the centre of the city, it had not entirely escaped injury, as the occasional cracks in the mirrors or windows would go to prove. One of the chimneys, too, had come down with a crash, and all the servants had decamped, with the exception of the old housekeeper, whom alone Mrs. McFlusterer had found to receive her. Though it was now nearly two o’clock in the morning, the domestics had not yet returned.

Mrs. McFlusterer, when we left her, had just put her hand up to her brow. She was tossing restlessly on the sofa, and she returned to consciousness from the semi-conscious state with the uncomfortable feeling that there was some one either in the room with her or near the room,—some one who did not belong there, and had no part or parcel with the surroundings; some one who had entered surreptitiously, who had perhaps crept through one of the windows, and whose coming now made her very flesh creep. She arose with a sudden start: she called; no answer; then she looked about her. The room was half darkened, and the dim light there was gave no indication of any presence.

She looked at the portières: one of them was stirring. She screamed violently. A man with a long white beard, narrow-chested and small, suddenly came out from behind it.

“Daughter of the West, it is I.” And, removing his beard with a sudden jerk, Taonsu stood before her in European attire. “Ah,” he exclaimed, “thou thoughtst, fair lady, to escape us. See, by this card, which thou didst leave on the cabin-table, I have tracked thee, and I have come to take thee back.”

“Never will I return!” exclaimed the lady, with a shudder.

“Then thy husband dies by the most execrating tortures, and the bombardment is resumed. Thus has Wang-Chi-Poo, my master, spoken.”

Mrs. McFlusterer wrung her hands: until now she had forgotten all about her husband. He added fresh difficulty to the dilemma.

What should she do? She could not allow him to be slain. Oh, was ever a woman placed in so terrible a predicament?

"Thou hast but a short time to decide, O daughter."

Then she turned upon him suddenly: "Why dost thou pursue me thus? why dost thou so zealously do thy master's bidding?"

His answer came: "Because I love thee, fair one."

"Thou lovest me? But why then dost thou come in another's behalf? Why not in thine own?"

"Because, fair lady, according to the ways of China, those we love we never seek to wed ourselves, but rather try to marry them to our friends."

This extraordinary announcement struck Mrs. McFlusterer with such astonishment that she could only gasp; there was a tinge of irony, too, pervading the assertion, but whether this was intentional or not she was unable to decide, nor did the face of the speaker give any indication to assist her.

"Make up thy mind, fair lady," he resumed, "whether thy husband is to suffer, and thy city to be destroyed. I have just brought back the envoys from the fleet, and thy return was one of the stipulated conditions."

"Give me until to-morrow,—only till to-morrow," she cried, falling on her knees.

"That is already granted, fair one, but by that time must thy decision be made."

Thereupon Taonsu retired, put on his white beard, and, as he walked down to the East River in the neighborhood of the docks, he would have readily passed for an ordinary pedestrian, so perfect was the disguise of his beard and his European clothes.

Now, the harbor had been comparatively deserted lately, for, though large numbers of torpedoes had been destroyed by the burning oil, there were yet sufficient loose ones floating about to make the waters far from agreeable as a resort: consequently, no one interfered with Taonsu as he rowed out in a small boat he had left in the deep shadow of a wharf. It was some twenty minutes later that he gained the steam-launch, unnoticed as when he had left it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

POOR Mrs. McFlusterer was having a hard time of it. It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back, and any resolution she might have had not to give herself up as a willing sacrifice was to be broken yet.

Up to this time she could scarcely have imagined this proposal of Taonsu's to be serious, and the morning sunlight was beginning to dispel the shadows of the past night.

The state of affairs could not be so terrible, after all. The city authorities would never permit such a sacrifice, and they must be ap-

pealed to in order to relieve her. The liberation of her husband must be inserted as a special condition in any pending treaty. She would go down immediately to the Chamber of Commerce and to the City Hall. Her spirits were reviving, and she toyed with her egg-shell and her spoon with more of her old manner. As she glanced out of the window, too, she could see the children of the bivouackers playing opposite to her, and the very leaves seemed to have sprouted through the night; all, everything on every side of her, seemed lighted with hope, and the people, by their joyful expression of countenance, appeared to feel that the siege was soon to be raised. Yes, she must go down to the City Hall at once; and she rose from her seat with the intention of getting her cloak and bonnet.

But what is this? A body of troops passing by? Yes. No, for they do not pass. On the contrary, the tramp of their footsteps ceases just opposite her house; how odd!

After a moment's delay, steps are heard on the stoop, and the bell rings loudly.

Mrs. McFlusterer had stood just where she had risen, with her hand pressed to the folds of her dress as she swept them back from the breakfast-table. Under ordinary circumstances her curiosity would have carried her to the window, but there was something in the very echo of these footsteps, something in the very ring of the bell, that riveted her to the floor.

She hears the old housekeeper descending the stairs on her way to the front door; she hears a smothered discussion in the hall; and the next instant a conclave of twelve gentlemen, headed by Mr. Puncherry, solemnly enter the apartment.

They were all eminently respectable gentlemen, and most of them she had previously met in society; but there was an expression of deep sadness on their faces that completely altered them.

At first they said nothing to her, but stood regarding her pityingly through their glasses. Mrs. McFlusterer could support their silence no longer.

"What is it, gentlemen? tell me what it is," she cried. "I know you come with something terrible to announce. Has my husband been sacrificed?"

Instead of replying, they all nudged one another, as if each wanted to force the other into the duty of spokesman. Mr. Puncherry, being nudged the hardest, was almost physically forced to a prominence of position from which he was unable to retreat.

"It's very awkward, it's very awkward indeed, madam," said that gentleman, with his face very red, and rubbing his hat the wrong way with the cuff of his sleeve.

"The fact of the matter is," he continued, in a fit of sudden inspiration to escape the disagreeable task of explaining matters himself, "these gentlemen stopped at my house and asked me to bring them over and introduce them." Then, calling out each gentleman's name in turn, Mr. Puncherry bowed himself cleverly out of the situation into which he had been so cruelly thrust.

"The fact of the matter is rather, madam," said the gentleman

whose name had been the first called, "that we were yesterday deputed as a committee of twelve to take in hand the difficult task of getting rid of the enemy. For that purpose we heroically visited the fleet last evening, and were almost blown up on the way." The old gentleman stopped somewhat abruptly, for Mrs. McFlusterer stood looking at him so fixedly that her gaze made him uncomfortable. He took out his handkerchief and sponged the top of his bald head, then, as if thereby receiving stimulation, he went into a long-winded account of their expedition, stating the terms Wang-Chi-Poo had finally consented to accept, and last, but not least, describing the pitiable appeal of Mr. McFlusterer as he sat in his bamboo cage tied by the foot. "This ultimatum," continued the old gentleman, "we presented to the city authorities, and they have just sent us to ask of you a very great favor, —or, let me say, to state to you what a heroic sacrifice they would consider it if, in the interest of your native city and the country at large, you would consent to sail back with the fleet to China. It wouldn't be so disagreeable if you only look at it in the proper spirit; and before very long Mr. Puncherry's ship-yards will have turned out an American squadron which will sail over and bring you back. It is very awkward, but you see if you don't return by to-night they resume the bombardment, and your husband will be immediately sacrificed." Then the speaker stopped and looked at her inquiringly. "Madam, we await your answer."

Mrs. McFlusterer stood there like Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt; she was quite as rigid and quite as blanched. So her city threw her off! and, flinging herself on the sofa, she burst into a wild paroxysm of weeping. And yet as she wept the great sacrifice she was asked to make appealed to her by its very magnitude: was ever a woman asked to make such a sacrifice as this? By one of those extraordinary instances of clairvoyance, too, her husband was revealed to her just as he was in his bamboo cage. He seemed to be imploring her, as he piteously told her of the fate that hung for him on her decision. Above all, the terrors of the bombardment recurred to her, and again she saw the frightened women, the dying children, and the crashing walls.

"Gentlemen," she said, abruptly rising and facing the deputation, "the men of America having failed to provide for the defence of their women, it remains for a woman to make the sacrifice. I go,—yes, I will go." Then the deputation withdrew and left her to herself.

The news of Mrs. McFlusterer's decision spread like wildfire.

It became the sensation of a much-excited town; crowds of those that yet remained of the city's population came to gaze at her windows, and she found that the publicity she had always courted was gained; not that she cared for it now,—on the contrary: but the principal condition of success seems to be that when we gain what we have been struggling for all our lives, we gain it in such a manner, at such a time, or hampered with such conditions, as to make it valueless.

Even in the strained situation of affairs, committees were formed to wait on her, and bands of music came and played funeral dirges, appro-

priate to the occasion, as they paraded up and down in front of her house. Yet there was a large faction of the opinion that she ought not to be allowed to go under any circumstances. These, however, were mostly the impotent ones who possessed neither banks of deposit nor bank-accounts.

Now, in spite of his previous protestations to the contrary, Wang-Chi-Poo, on learning of Mrs. McFlusterer's decision, had finally agreed to receive a lump sum down in lieu of the various instalments he had originally demanded: this had already been sent out to the Chinese. Then, too, commissioners appointed by telegraph from Washington had just signed a treaty for the free admission of the Mongolian race; consequently, there now remained only the exchange of Mr. McFlusterer for his wife, which was to take place midway between the fleet and the shore at six o'clock in the afternoon.

How that day dragged for Mrs. McFlusterer! When once we have decided on some heroic act, it is the small and trivial details that irritate.

It was five o'clock when the deputation called for her, and this had been joined by a band of the fairest women New York yet contained. They were dressed in white tunics of the coarsest stuff, and walked before her carriage slowly, wringing their hands and tearing their hair. Now, New York, when it sets itself to do anything, does it remarkably well; and in response to the popular craze for processions the children of the various hospitals and charitable associations with which the lady had been connected were provided, at the city's expense, with clean pocket-handkerchiefs, and were marshalled in line. After the school-children came the various city guilds; and, as there had been no time to get the legislators from Albany, the Board of Aldermen closed the procession.

So great was the concourse of people whom her martyrdom drew forth that, on arriving at the wharf where she was to embark, it was with difficulty she could pass through their ranks; nor even here would the band of fair women leave her, but, accompanying her on the ferry-boat which had been engaged to take her out, they sailed down the bay with her, making the sad waves sadder by their wailing and their gestures of woe. Punctually to the hour, the steam-launch brought Mr. McFlusterer out from the fleet to the common point of meeting, and for a brief ten minutes husband and wife remained clasped in each other's arms. Then, just as she was getting into the steam-launch to take his vacated place, he weakened, and, jumping back after her, vowed that he'd remain by her side through thick and thin and go with her to China or to the devil himself. Thus the deputation of twelve respectable gentlemen and the band of disconsolate fair ones returned to the city without the "Razor;" and the several forts along the Narrows, which had been so useless for war, appeared to fire minute-guns as they passed, and there was a weird sadness over all things.

Then these discharges grew more frequent; even the foreign fleet seemed to be taking part in the demonstration.

By the time the deputation had got back to the city, however, shells were bursting over their heads, and walls were tumbling again. Was

Wang-Chi-Poo enraged at the "Razor's" return? It would seem so, for the bombardment had been renewed, and was increasing in severity. Indeed, the former attack paled into insignificance before the new. Deeming that trouble was over, the people had moved back into their houses, and were therefore taken completely by surprise. Such a scene of horror was probably never witnessed before. Here were women in their frantic terror throwing their own children out of windows, and men and boys stretching their arms on high in mute appeal to the Deity.

One of the shells exploding in Gilmore's Garden, temporarily occupied by Barnum's Circus, caused in some miraculous manner the beasts to escape, and these suddenly stampeding made confusion worse confounded, as they tore down the streets, trampling all before them; huge elephants trumpeting their alarm, uprooting lamp-posts with their trunks, and lashing their tails; hippopotami with their tusks tearing and rending everything they met; affrighted giraffes craning their long necks upward and thrusting their heads into second-story windows, as they dashed by. Such a terrible sight I never saw. After this all grew confused. I have an indistinct recollection of going down the bay with the deputation that conducted Mrs. McFlusterer, and on my return of lending my assistance in the capture of these escaped animals; after that of throwing myself, completely exhausted, upon my bed, regardless of what might ensue, and of trying to sleep through the bombardment. At first I seemed to succeed fairly well, but was disturbed at last by the gradually increasing noise of heavy ordnance, of the crash of falling masonry growing louder and nearer, and particularly by a great light shining in my eyes. The main pipe of the Standard Oil Company, crossing the East River, had been burst open by the frantic inhabitants, and the oil ignited as it flowed over the waters of the harbor. By this flaming light I seemed to see for an instant Wang-Chi-Poo standing, not on the deck of his ship, but on the lofty Brooklyn Bridge, surveying, like Macaulay's New Zealander, the desolation about him.

Then the glare grows more intense and the booming of the cannonade nearer and more terribly distinct. Adjacent walls are falling,—ay, the very walls of my own house.

I spring from my bed, and stare about me in bewildered astonishment. Instead of its being night, the glorious rays of an April sun are shining in my eyes; the walls of my room are standing, but the reports of heavy ordnance still continue. I fly to my window,—but what is this? No panic-stricken people, no troops of enraged elephants and bizarre giraffes, no deputations of fantastically-draped females wringing their hands and tearing their hair. On the contrary, the same prosaic people are passing up and down on their every-day affairs as are wont to pass every morning of the year.

Can it all have been a dream? No, for the cannonading, instead of growing fainter, rather gets louder. I fly to the door, and my landlady hands me a note.

"Have they gone?" I ask.

"Bless your soul, sir, of course they've gone. Here I've been knocking for the last fifteen minutes. You couldn't expect them to wait the answer that long."

"I mean the Chinese."

"The Chinese, sir? Laws-a-massy! what's got inter you, sir?" And the old lady started back alarmed. Indeed, I might well have terrified any one, especially so staid and eminently respectable a party as Mrs. Archer was, as I pounced out upon her.

She had dropped the note in her fright, and I could hear her steps pattering down the stairs as she hastily descended.

As I picked up the letter I recognized the handwriting, and particularly the coat of arms, as Mrs. McFlusterer's. Doubtless she had sent it from the fleet, I thought, as a last farewell. I opened it hurriedly, and this is what I read:

"Mr. and Mrs. McFlusterer request the pleasure," etc., etc.

Then all was clear. I had simply been dreaming, and I could account for every incident in my nightmare, however distorted. A term in Congress; a trip at the close of the last session to the "Queen of the Antilles," where I was strongly impressed with the evils of Chinese immigration, and the inevitable ruin to a newer civilization when inoculated with the moral and physical diseases of the East; the meeting while on that beautiful isle with a courtly and not uninteresting specimen of the Chinese race, who was travelling with his secretary; and, lastly, on my return the accounts that met me of the Samoan trouble,—these several incidents, coupled with an extensive reading of what has been published concerning our defenceless coasts, and a voyage under water with my friend Mr. Smith, who is actually my shirt-maker, in the trial trip of his boat, supplied warp and woof of this hideous dream-tissue, everything as distinct and clear as I have tried to make it; the details as to marine warfare, steel plates, explosives, etc., when I came to compare them with fact, being in perfect accordance therewith, and my own personality, as so frequently occurs in dreams, now gliding into one of my characters, and now into another. Nevertheless, dream that it was, there is a vein of common sense running through it like a silver thread, and it is this:

If we wish to preserve in peace the wealth and prosperity our energies have produced, we ought to devote some small portion to defending ourselves against those attacks which our very wealth and well-being invite.

So much at least common sense dictates: guarding against reckless expenditures whose results may become useless in the next ten years, let us at least spend sufficient to keep our proper place in the march of improvement; for so only can the just demands of a great power be enforced when it becomes necessary to enforce them.

Si vis pacem, para bellum.

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