

without your dragging the devil into the transaction? If you want to stay top si' with me, I've no objection. Go into the next room. You can put a mattress on the floor and sleep there if you want to. I'll ring for you in case I want anything."

"I no sleep, Mist' Boss—I wake up all time, all same watchee-watchee dog," Bung assured him.

The room allotted to him was a sort of family catchall, piled with bedding and furniture with the indefinite idea of some day converting it into a spare bedroom. Bung sat on a broken-legged chair and folded his hands in his sleeves. On the wall opposite hung a large mahogany mirror which filled his mind with a disagreeable reminiscence, recalling the baneful entrance of the *you-foe* into the world. Finally he could stand it no longer. Rising stealthily, he took the mirror from its hook and banished it to the hall outside.

He sat nearly an hour in deep meditations, as old as the tombs of Ming. With nothing else to do, the obsessing question kept tumbling over and over in his mind. Who was it sent demons to his dreams demanding the removal of his pigtail? Did his holy ancestors require it, or was it a voice from the pit? Maybe the Reformers of China, those devil smitten fools, had despatched the jinnies to plague his sleep. Maybe, on the other hand, his good joss had seen fit to permit the vision—perhaps queues had gone out of fashion among the celestial gods, and it was written that he, Ah Lee Bung, must follow the style. He would go to San José and consult a Taoist priest; he would—

Deprived of his early rustic sleep, Bung yawned. His solitary eye grew heavy. His chin dropped on his breast.

CRASH! A sound of broken glass and an awful smudge, as though hell were burning its joss-sticks right under Bung's nose! There was a thud that seemed to shake the house, and a queer, strangled sort of cry.

"Bung!"

"Yep, Judge Olivah!" The Chinaman burst open the door into the bedroom and fell forward against a mass of black, oily smoke.

The broken lamp on the floor was vomiting flame, a crater of fire. Already the bed was blazing like a funeral pyre. Out of the stifling, burning smudge Judge Olivah had wriggled his tortured body halfway, and lay with his head touching the floor and his legs pinioned in a tangle of bedclothes.

"I catch um devil! I catch um devil!" howled Bung as he seized a carpet rug and leaped like a cat straight at the pillar of fire. After thrashing out the tongue of flame that was menacing his master's body, he wrestled like a mad phoenix with the seething bed, beating, stamping, smothering, until the last red serpent, attempting to escape by climbing the wall paper, died, clouted to death. The fire extinguished, the room now lay in midnight darkness, sickening with the stench of scorched rugs.

Bung crept to the patch of darkness where he could faintly discern the white clad figure of the sick man.

"Mist' Boss—Judge Olivah—you hurt?"

"Don't know—guess not. Ouch! This rheumatism!"

"You get well pretty quick now—bunfire heap good joss for leumatism," Bung reassured him.

"Get me out of this, if you can. Can you carry me?"

"Sho, Boss! I too strong tonight!"

With arms made young by the call of the moment, the old Chinaman lifted his master and carried him to a couch downstairs.

Daisy's familiar hoofbeats and the roll of carriage wheels outside announced Mrs. Oliver's return from the theater. She was startled by the apparition of a tattered, blackened Chinaman rushing up to her in the road and greeting her in the following terms:

"Housee fire! Housee fire! Judge Olivah smoke-bit!"

The good lady, rushing to the house and smelling the smudge, was weak enough to faint, yet strong enough to recover in an instant and set to examining her husband's injuries. The telephone, true to its rural-service-party-line instincts, refused to work when she attempted to call the doctor. She found Bung huddled in a dark corner of the veranda.

"Take Daisy, drive to Santa Clara as quick as you can, and fetch Dr. Forest," she commanded, and went back into the house.

Bung and the scornful Daisy made a getaway that would have shown the Valkyrs some equestrian novelties.

Mrs. Oliver, applying first aid to certain superficial burns on her husband's feet, noticed red stains mingled with the black smudges on his shirt.

"They must come from Bung's hands,"

said the Judge. "I forgot to ask if he was hurt."

The doctor arrived in due course. He came in an automobile, and Bung was not with him.

"That Chinaman of yours seemed rather done up," said he, as soon as he had examined the patient and pronounced him in no bad way. "No, nothing serious. A bit scorched around the hands and neck. Funny thing about it was he seemed sort of happy about the whole affair,—kept jabbering about some Chinaman called Yau Kwei. Better let him loaf for a few days. I'll send him over with your carriage in the morning."

THE excitement of the night wrought a wonderful recovery in Judge Oliver's case. The next morning that gentleman was sitting on the veranda calmly reading "The San José Mercury." Looking down the pleasant road edged with almond and pepper trees, he beheld a large sorrel mare, drawing an open buggy and describing a drunken, zigzag course as she approached. The man in the driver's seat seemed peculiar also; for he appeared to be wearing a wonderfully high collar and a pair of immaculate white gloves. He drove by, whipping the reins and flapping them across the afflicted horse's back.

"It's Daisy; but who's in the wagon?" asked the Judge.

"Nobody but Bung could drive like that," said Mrs. Oliver, standing in the door.

"But what's he got on his hands and around his neck? Bandages!" exclaimed the old man. "And, mercy me! he's wearing a new straw hat!"

"Goo molin', Mis' Judge! What I tellee you? Bunfire cure your leumatism!" said Bung cheerily.

"You're feeling pretty well for an old roast pig," commented the Judge.

"Loast piggee, pretty nice chowchow," agreed Bung.

"Good land! what's happened to you since yesterday? You look twenty years younger, in spite of your burns."

"Ah, you no sabe. My joss he been pretty good to me."

"My joss hasn't been so bad to me," echoed the Judge, becoming suddenly serious. "Bung, I guess if you hadn't jumped into that fire last night and fought like a Mongolian tiger, you wouldn't have had any boss to work for this morning. In plain words, you saved my life, you old pirate, and I want to do something for you. What shall it be?"

"Fo' me?"

"Yes, for you."

"Cash money?"

"Anything you ask."

"Would twenty-five dollars be too much?"

"Twenty-five dollars! Is that all you value my life at? What do you want of twenty-five dollars?"

"I want send him Mr. Whang fo' help China revolution."

"Chinese revolution! Have your burns gone to your brain? Since when did you join the revolution?"

"I tellee you how was, Mis' Boss," said Bung. "That night when Mr. Whang come me askee me cut pigtail fo' revolution, I say, 'Damn fool—go way!' That night one devil hop into dream, say, 'Bung, cut pigtail!' I velly muchee scared. So I pray to my joss, say, 'O Mis' Joss, I no cut pigtail fo' devils; but if you wishee me take haircut and be revolutionist, I do so. Tellee me, please, pretty quick!' I pray that way to my joss."

"And did your joss answer your prayer?"

"Ah yep! He do so heap plenty!"

"When?"

"Las' night when housee fire come. Then my joss arrange about my pigtail velly nice."

"How?"

"Look—see!" said Bung.

Removing his hat with a dramatic sweep of his hand, he revealed the charred remnants of his Eastern pride. For the fire of the night before had attacked his pigtail and reduced it to a blackened sepulcher, a charred and frizzled knob that hung forlornly to his bump of reverence.

MISAPPREHENDING A TITLE

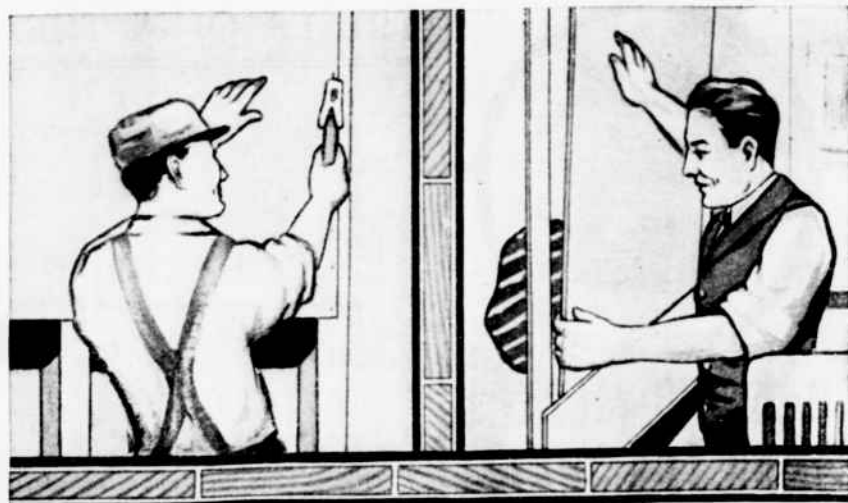
HE was barefooted, his trousers were fringed at the bottom, his face was dirty, his years eleven. He approached the librarian with a confident air:

"Got Shakespeare?"

"Yes. What volume would you like?"

At this he looked puzzled, and the librarian took him to an alcove where she showed him row upon row of Shakespeare. As he still looked puzzled at the number of volumes, the librarian took one down, "The Merchant of Venice," and gave it to him. He looked it over critically.

"Naw, that ain't the one. I want the one about Dr. Jay killin' Mr. Hyde."



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