

# A NOSE FOR THE KING A KOREAN TALE BY JACK LONDON

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IN THE morning calm of Korea, when its peace and tranquillity truly merited its ancient name, "Chosen," there lived a politician by name Yi Chin Ho. He was a man of parts, and who shall say?—perhaps in no wise worse than politicians the world over. But, unlike his brethren in other lands, Yi Chin Ho was in jail. Not that he had inadvertently diverted to himself public money, but that he had inadvertently diverted too much. Excess is to be deplored in all things, even in grafting, and Yi Chin Ho's excess had brought him to most deplorable straits. Ten thousand strings of cash he owed the government, and he lay in prison under sentence of death. There was one advantage to the situation—he had plenty of time in which to think. And he thought well. Then called he the jailer to him.

"Most worthy man, you see before you one most wretched," he began. "Yet all will be well with me if you will but let me go free for one short hour this night. And all will be well with you, for I shall see to your advancement through the years, and you shall come at length to the directorship of all the prisons of Chosen."

"How, now?" demanded the jailer. "That foolishness is this? One short hour, and you but waiting for your head to be chopped off? And I, with an aged and much-to-be-respected mother, not to say anything of a wife and several children of tender years? Out upon you for the scoundrel that you are!"

"From the Sacred City to the ends of all the Eight Provinces there is no place for me to hide," Yi Chin Ho made reply. "I am a man of wisdom, but of what worth my wisdom here in prison? Were I free, well I know I could seek out and obtain the money wherewith to repay the government. I know of a nose that will save me from all my difficulties."

"A nose?" cried the jailer.

"A nose," said Yi Chin Ho. "A remarkable nose, if I may say so, a most remarkable nose."

The jailer threw up his hands despairingly. "Ah, what a fear you are, what a wag," he laughed. "To think that that very admirable wit of yours must go the way of the chopping block!"

And so saying, he turned and went away. But in the end, being a man soft of head and heart, when the night was well ahead he permitted Yi Chin Ho to go.

Straight he went to the Governor, catching him alone and arousing him from his sleep.

"Yi Chin Ho, or I'm no Governor!" cried the Governor. "What do you here who should be in prison waiting on the chopping block?"

"I pray your excellency to listen to me," said Yi Chin Ho, squatting on his haunchs by the bedside and lighting his pipe from the firebox. "A dead man is without value. It is true, I am as a dead man, without value to the government, to your excellency, or to myself. But if, so to say, your excellency were to give me my freedom—"

"Impossible!" cried the Governor. "Besides, you are condemned to death."

"Your excellency well knows that if I can repay the ten thousand strings of cash the government will pardon me," Yi Chin Ho went on. "So, as I say, if your excellency were to give me my freedom for a few days, being a man of understanding, I should then repay the government and be in a position to be of service to your excellency. I should be in position to be

of very great service to your excellency."

"Have you a plan whereby you hope to obtain this money?" asked the Governor.

"I have," said Yi Chin Ho.

"Then come with it to me tomorrow night; I would now sleep," said the Governor, taking up his snore where it had been interrupted.

On the following night, having again obtained leave of absence from the jailer, Yi Chin Ho presented himself at the Governor's bedside.

"Is it you, Yi Chin Ho?" asked the Governor. "And have you the plan?"

"It is I, your excellency," answered Yi Chin Ho. "And the plan is here."

"Speak," commanded the Governor.

"The plan is here," repeated Yi Chin Ho, "here in my hand."

The Governor sat up and opened his eyes. Yi Chin Ho proffered in his hand a sheet of paper. The Governor held it to the light.

"Nothing but a nose," said he.

"A bit pinched, so, and so, your excellency," said Yi Chin Ho.

"Yes, a bit pinched here and there, as you say," said the Governor. "Wish it it is an exceedingly corpulent nose, thus, and so, all in one place, at the end," proceeded Yi Chin Ho. "Your excellency would seek far and wide and many a day for that nose and find it not."

"An unusual nose," admitted the Governor.

"There is a wart upon it," said Yi Chin Ho.

"A most unusual nose," said the Governor. "Never have I seen the like. But what do you with this nose, Yi Chin Ho?"

"I seek it whereby to repay the money to the government," said Yi Chin Ho. "I seek it to be of service to your excellency, and I seek it to save my own worthless head. Further, I seek your excellency's seal upon this picture of the nose."

And the Governor laughed and affixed the seal of state, and Yi Chin Ho departed. For a month and a day he traveled the King's Road, which leads to the shore of the Eastern Sea, and there, one night, at the gate of the biggest mansion of a wealthy city, he knocked loudly for admittance.

"None other than the master of the house will I see," said he fiercely to the frightened servant. "I travel upon the King's business."

Straightaway was he led to an inner room, where the master of the house was roused from his sleep and brought blinking before him.

"You are Pak Chung Chang, head man of this city," said Yi Chin Ho, in tones that were all accusing. "I am upon the King's business."

Pak Chung Chang trembled. Well he knew the King's business was ever a terrible business. His knees smote together and he nearly fell to the floor.

"The hour is late," he quavered. "Were it not well to—"

"The King's business never wait!" thundered Yi Chin Ho. "Come apart with me, and swiftly, I have an affair of moment to discuss with you."

"It is the King's affair," he added, with even greater fearfulness, so that Pak Chung Chang's silver pipe dropped from his nerveless fingers and clattered on the floor.

"Know then," said Yi Chin Ho, when they had gone apart, "that the King is troubled with an affliction, a very terrible affliction. In that he failed to cure, the court physician has had nothing else than his head chopped off.



*"You know it is Your Father's Nose, Bring Him Before Me that I May Strike It Off."*

From all the Eight Provinces have the physicians come to wait upon the King. Wise consultations have they held and they have decided that for a remedy required than a nose, a certain kind of nose, a very peculiar kind of nose, the court physician has had nothing else than his excellency the prime minister himself. He put a paper into my hand. Upon this paper was the very peculiar kind of nose drawn by the physicians of the Eight Provinces, with the seal of state upon it.

"Go!" said his excellency the prime minister. "Seek out this nose, for the King's affliction is sore. And where-soever you find this nose upon the face

of a man, strike it off forthwith and bring it in all haste to the Court, for the King must be cured. Go, and come not back until your search is rewarded."

"And so I departed upon my quest," said Yi Chin Ho. "I have sought out the remotest corners of the Kingdom; I have traveled the Eight Highways, searched the Eight Provinces, and sailed the seas of the Eight Coasts. And here I am."

With a great flourish he drew a paper from his girdle, unrolled it with many snappings and cracklings, and thrust it before the face of Pak Chung Chang. Upon the paper was the picture of the nose.

Pak Chung Chang stared upon it with bulging eyes.

"Never have I beheld such a nose," he began.

"There is a wart upon it," said Yi Chin Ho.

"Never have I beheld—" Pak Chung Chang began again.

"Bring your father before me," Yi Chin Ho interrupted sternly. "My ancient and very-much-to-be-respected ancestor sleeps," said Pak Chung Chang.

"Why dissemble?" demanded Yi Chin Ho. "You know it is your father's nose. Bring him before me that I may strike it off and be gone. Hurry, lest I make bad report of you."

"Mercy!" cried Pak Chung Chang, falling on his knees. "It is impossible! It is impossible! You cannot strike off my father's nose. He cannot go down without his nose to the grave. He will become a laughing and a byword, and to my days and nights will be filled with woe. O reflect! Report that you have seen no such nose in your travels, You, too, have a father."

Pak Chung Chang clasped Yi Chin Ho's knees and fell to weeping on his sandals.

"My heart softens strangely at your tears," said Yi Chin Ho. "I know filled pity and regard. But—" He hesitated, then added, as though thinking aloud, "It is as much as my head is worth."

"How much is your head worth?" asked Pak Chung Chang in a thin, small voice.

"A not remarkable head," said Yi Chin Ho. "An absurdly unremarkable head; but, such is my great foolishness, I value it at nothing less than one hundred thousand strings of cash."

"So be it," said Pak Chung Chang, rising to his feet.

"I shall need horses to carry the treasure," said Yi Chin Ho. "And men to guard it, such as I journey through the mountains. There are robbers abroad in the land."

"There are robbers abroad in the land," said Pak Chung Chang sadly. "But it shall be as you wish, so long as my ancient and very-much-to-be-respected ancestor's nose abide in its appointed place."

"Say nothing to any man of this occurrence," said Yi Chin Ho, "else will other and more loyal servants than I be sent to strike off your father's nose." And so Yi Chin Ho departed on his way through the mountains, blithe of heart and gay of song as he listened to the jingling bells of his treasure-laden pommel.

There is little more to tell. Yi Chin Ho prospered through the years. By his efforts the jailer attained at length to the directorship of all the prisons of Chosen; the Governor ultimately be took himself to the Sacred City to be a prime minister to the King; while Yi Chin Ho became the King's boon companion and sat at table with him to the end of a round, fat life. But Pak Chung Chang fell into a melancholy, and ever after he shook his head sadly, with tears in his eyes, whenever he regarded the expensive nose of his ancient and very-much-to-be-respected ancestor.

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## Ten Minutes With The Funny Men. SOME OF THE QUIPS AND JESTS FROM PENS OF THE NEWSPAPER HUMORISTS.

### Terse Tales From Humorous Pens

**HIS START IN LIFE.**

In that time which was even before the past, in those ages which preceded the Great Wall and the ever-glorious dynasty of Pan Shi, lived two wise men, Yen and Yun, said the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

So wise were they, so close to nature and the soul of existence, that they were like to have gods, having powers that were supernatural.

They were old men and their favorite employment was the fame of life. It was played upon by himself stage by characters of their own devising and the wonderful thing about it was that the breath of the half-gods gave life to these puppets of the play. Last thing should come from this, however, they had solemnly agreed that when the game was ended the actors should be returned to soulless wood and senseless clay.

But, one day, Yen fashioned a puppet of such unusual cleverness that it fascinated him, and when it came time to destroy the players he hastily took away this thing that he loved and hid it behind him.

"Wait," said Yun, "where is the fiend, the red thing thou callest Sin, he of the pointed ears and the split hoofs and the swirling tail? I see him not. Where is he?"

And Yen, holding fast to that squirming thing of evil, lied to his brother.

"I know not," he said.

At that the fiend thrust its sharp teeth into his hands and he screamed and dropped it. Then it leaped into the jungle and disappeared.

So through selfishness and deceit and treachery, the evil one was turned loose upon the world.

Which was, perhaps, as reasonable a way as any for him to make his debut.

**FAME.**

At a recent dinner of the Hungry Club, Chauncey Depew was the guest of honor, says the Washington Post, and in her witty introduction of the ex-Senator Mattie Sheridan took occasion to inform him there were two gentlemen present who had never heard of Chauncey Depew until that evening. Chauncey had a story ready for the emergency, and prefaced his remarks with the statement that his birthday coincided with that of William Shakespeare.

"I am willing to stand with Shakespeare," he said, "and the same 'Shake' has happened to him—man named Taber, who had acquired considerably more of worldly goods than erudition, decided to build an opera house in Denver. He spared no expense in fitting

### Quips and Flings

"Oh, I know him tabbable well." "What is his reputation for truth and veracity in the neighborhood in which he lives?" The old man looked thoughtfully for a minute. "You know what I mean," continued the lawyer. "Does he tell the truth? Can he tell the truth? Do his neighbors believe what he says?" "That niggah tell the truth? Does anybody believe him? Why, Mistah Lawyah, when that niggah wants to call his haws at feedin' time he says—" "That niggah tell the truth?" "No, I ain't hurt. But I got out stunt in time, eh?"—Exchange.

**TIMELY ESCAPE.**

A German shoemaker left the gas turned on in his shop one night, and, upon arriving in the morning struck a match to light it. There was a terrific explosion and the shoemaker was blown out through the door almost to the middle of the street.

A passerby rushed to his assistance, and, after helping him to rise, inquired if he were injured.

The little German gazed in at his place of business, which was now burning quite briskly, and said: "No, I ain't hurt. But I got out stunt in time, eh?"—Exchange.

**A PARABLE ON LABOR.**

Two men stood watching a steam shovel at work. With a clatter and a roar the shovel bit into a steep bank, caved on a carload of earth and dumped it onto a waiting freight train.

"It drives me wild," said the first onlooker, "to see that monster taking the bread out of good men's mouths. Look at it. Why, it's filling up those fat cars faster than a hundred men with pick and shovels could do it."

But the other onlooker shook his head and answered:

"See here, mister, if it would be better to employ a hundred men with picks and shovels on this job, wouldn't it be better still, by your way of thinking, to employ a thousand men with forks and table-spoons?"

**THE REAR GUARD.**

There is a lot of humor—real humor—to be found on battlefields," said General Nelson A. Miles at a dinner one evening, according to the Popular Magazine. "I remember the case of a retreat, who was really a non-combatant, as he galloped along like the wind, turned to an aid, who was urging his horse to the limit, and asked: "Who are our rear guard?" "The aid, without the slightest hesitation, replied: "Those who have the worst horses, sir."

**VERACITY.**

An old negro in Mississippi was on trial for stealing chickens. He had denied his guilt, and one of the deacons of his church was called to testify to his reputation for truth and veracity. "Now, deacon," said the prosecutor, "do you know this defendant?" "Yes, sir," "How well do you know

### Among the Poets of the Daily Press

**IN MEMORIAM.**

Once I had a merrscham yellow; Nevermore I'll know its fellow; How one whiff of it would banish every care! And his loss I still deplore, For my wife has got it put away somewhere.

And my pair of slippers oldest That I loved when nights were coldest, When close to the cheery hearth I drew my chair— Now from mortal eye are hid, Like the gold of Captain Kidd, For my wife has got them put away somewhere.

'Tis a rule that's never unheeded That what's sure to be most needed She must hide away with skill beyond compare. To the things that once we knew We can find not even a clew When my wife has got them put away somewhere.

Ort I've told her, "Burn it, break it, Or to some poor family take it; Let me know it's gone, and save me from despair; But do not, I beg and pray, Let me hunt till I am gray For the thing I know you've put away somewhere."

When the sea gives up its dead, When the Judgment-Book is read, When the last cold-storage chicken is laid bare; Then perhaps we'll find some trace Of the secret hiding place Of things my wife has put away somewhere.

—Walter G. Doty in Puck.

**CRUEL WORDS.**

This talk about the leeman, now I greatly wearies me; I must admit I can't see how Believed such tales can be. They say the leeman is a bold, Bad pirate—yes, they do! I've more of wrath than I can hold At this charge most untrue.

The leeman is an honest chap, With not his share of sin; He would not stoop to lay a trap To lure the dollars in. His character I now will paint To all within this land— This man is almost like a saint; Him few can understand.

Perhaps it seems a trifle queer He stands with virtue bright

### Among the Poets of the Daily Press

Who is so blamed from year to year, Yet I am sure I'm right, His bosom feels the kindly glow Of thoughts unstained and nice; And as one who ought to know, Because I'm selling ice! —Chicago News.

**MIRTH UNENDING.**

Oh, wherefore should a mortal sigh And row that life is full of care? Each moment that goes swiftly by Is sure to bring a laugh somewhere; And the supply is ever new. And louder grows the note of cheer; The clothes that fashion brings to view Are getting funnier every year.

These hats and shoes and all the rest Of the attire that meets our gaze We'll greet with wild hilarious zest As now we jest of other days; The present price tag may exert A certain influence severe, But look ahead for laughs alert; Our clothes get funnier every year. —Washington Star.

**A BASEBALL RAVEN.**

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, sad and weary, Over many a measly error by a team That made me sore, While I grunted, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping, As of some foot loudly rapping, rapping at my own front door, "Just got in, old pal," he muttered, "and I'm mad to know the score." Only that and nothing more! —Judge's Library.

**THE NEW DISPENSATION.**

Being certified as germless, By the parson they were tied— The antiseptic bridegroom, And the prophylactic bride, If their pictures do not flatter 'em The camera may have lied— Hey the prophylactic bridegroom, And the antiseptic bride. —Chicago Tribune.

**BUT COULDN'T FILL THE DICHIGAN.**

There was a man in Michigan Who used to wish, and wishigan, That Spring would come So he could home, And go away and fichtigan. —Chicago Chronicle.

**THE HOOK WORM.**

Behold the lowly hookworm, Who labors up and down, With patient, awkward fingers On wifey's latest gown. —Satire.

