

shuffling and nodding in Chinese fashion. I called McRae to stop him, and started to tether the pack train.

"He clattered away after the weazened little Chinaman. In a moment I heard a shriek and ran toward them, wondering what devilry was up now. McRae had halted Chu Fang's mule and was staring at the Chinaman with a blanched face from which the perspiration was trickling in great glistening drops. Chu Fang sat with his legs entwined in the hemp belly-band, after a peculiar practice of his, and with his arms hanging loosely at his side. His head had dropped forward on his chest as if with great weariness. McRae tried to say something, but his trembling lips couldn't frame the words.

"Chu Fang, you devil's spawn," I cried sharply, "what's the matter?"

"I put my hand on his shoulder and shook him. His body was strangely rigid. Then his head lolled toward me and his lips flared in a loose pendulous grin. His eyes were open and the whole ball was the smooth, even yellow tint of aged ivory! Chu Fang was dead.

"The front of his brown nankeen jacket was sodden with blood, and from his shoulder, projecting up past his ear, was the shaft of a carved teak dart. How long he had been dead it was difficult to determine. His loose limbed method of riding and his eccentric style of securing his seat had concealed the fact from McRae. I hadn't paid much attention. We hurled the body into a crevice and decided to travel by night.

"McRae suggested a shrieking Shu Kan, but the carved teak looked too effective for a mad ascetic. I thought of the Phantom Sedan and the graven figures on the teak poles. The genius that could frame that spectacle seemed far more likely to have devised the strange poison that had killed Chu Fang before he could cry out and that had coagulated his eyes into the even ochre of polished ivory. I thought of the ivory mummies of the dead priests of Karsang.

"We rode along in tense silence, with the darkness so intense that only the instinct of the mules kept us from the edge of the great precipice. I rode ahead crouched over my mule that I might touch the inner wall of rock now and then, while wondering when the next dart hurtling down from above would leave one of us a mounted corpse! McRae must have been similarly impressed. He hailed me now and then and I answered, and by that alone we knew that all was well.

"Then a light glowed in the trail ahead, a faint luminous blur. We held a consultation. There seemed to be nothing to do but to go on.

© © ©

KEEP a gun handy," I counseled. "You'll need it to use on yourself if we're captured. I'm not keen for the hell-boxes of a Red Face dungeon!"

"The light was soon revealed. Glowing in luminous lines on the face of the cliff was a great peacock with spreading plumage. It had no head. I understood the symbol. It signified forbidden passage. I've seen it on roadside shrines to Buddha, with a straight white bar below to indicate that it was white foreign devils who were thus interdicted. The canny precaution of having a phosphorescent symbol to glow at night struck me as being of an extra-native character. I have never seen any application of the principle elsewhere in China.

"By its uncertain light I took the measure of a man. McRae had reached a point of suppressed hysteria where he didn't weigh consequences. He pointed with a trembling finger on up the trail.

"If she's there," he said hoarsely, "if she's been captured by devils who kill men with poison and warn them with glowing images I would rather know it. And it's too late to turn back!"

"An hour later a great straggling shadow that seemed to hiss through the starlit air as it fell enmeshed us in clammy folds. It was a huge net with slippery, soapy fabric that diffused to our

senses a faint sickly odor, as of crushed rose petals. We struggled with it, and even as the white starlight blurred overhead I could hear McRae choking and strangling in its nauseating embrace. My mule bolted from under me, to go over the cliff in a cascade of rock fragments. But the meshes caught me up and swung me out—out—until my register of impressions ceased in a blinding play of light and shadow.

"My eyes opened upon a green lamp in a great curtain-hung vault. Between the silken hangings I could see the occasional roughly plastered crevices which revealed the fact that it was at some time a Gdong-mar-gyi-yul monastery of Buddhist monks. The places are never ornamental. But the splendid four-clawed dragon worked in tinted silks was not that of a Lama, who would eschew all such worldly ostentation—outwardly at least! I had heard of the Lat Dayul ruins that a Boxer expatriate had restored.

"Lat Dayul was sacked in the seventeenth century by Gurkha pillagers, and where blood has been spilled on the sacred shrine the altar veil cannot be restored. It explained a good many things. It accounted in large measure for the magnificence of the Phantom Sedan and the stampeded gold caravans and men who went to sleep by the campfires and never awakened. The mysterious rumors of the Ninghia gold marts and the Khotan opium stalls suddenly seemed less fantastic and became readily plausible.

© © ©

THE way of the Tartar prince is not the method of the Red Faces. What the Thibetan muleteers couldn't explain, a coolie from Peking's second walled city might have readily answered.

"I hadn't long to wait. My head was splitting with the lingering fumes of the bleeding cedar bark, and I knew that the source of raw karsheesh is powerfully sedative. I wondered what had become of McRae. While I tried to concentrate my thoughts a tall Mongol entered.

"This way, spying dog," he said amiably. "You come that they may pull your scalp over your eyes with your queue?"

"Where is the white man?" I asked. I was as tall as he was, but spoke in the Chien-Fuu dialect, which he found surprising. I think he had mistaken me for a Tartar.

"The river rats grow tall," he sneered. "Perhaps some day they will claim the blood of the men of Gobi."

"The Mongol trembles," I responded, thinking that a timid mien would avail me little. "Even now his big-footed women are probably preparing the black tents for the time he must scuttle back to the sand burrows of his ancestors! You are fortunate that you serve one who has already fled from the sight of the Son of Heaven."

"He regarded me with a greater respect, I thought, and led through the passageways without further taunts. We seemed to be going through a tunnel, because there were no curtains visible in the twisting passage, and the walls jagged with jutting ledges. After a brief time we came again to silken curtains through which light shone. He thrust me roughly before him.

"Across from me in a tiny rose colored room reclined a woman in rose colored silks. On her yellow hair was a turban of coiled pearls, and on her arms were great rough gold circlets set with rubies. There was no mistaking the dark eyes and curling lips. I saw before me in the flesh the girl of the Phantom Sedan.

"The nose was delicately aquiline and the deep fringed eyes were lengthened by penciling. The face was beautiful, with the set, chilly repose of a sculptured lioness. She was not as young as she had appeared through the silken folds of the sedan curtains. She must have been 35. Abruptly came the idea that I had a clew to her identity.

"She lay upon her side, her face propped on a jeweled hand. The single

searching scrutiny evidently revealed nothing wrong with my disguise.

"Speak, hovel-born rat," she said languidly in a slurring intonation of the Tartar tongue. "I wait with little patience!"

"I shall do as directed, my dear countess," I answered in English, "but trust that you will find the haunting familiarity of the tongue sufficient excuse for its use. I don't speak Tartar convincingly."

"She sat up with an exclamation of astonishment. I think there was less vivid color in her cheeks, but the light and the cosmetics made that uncertain. Her eyes widened and into them crept the stark fear of one who has reached the end of a subterfuge.

"Who are you," she asked. "Why do you come here shaven and stained and queued?"

"The long arm of the United States," I responded, "reaches out for an American scientist and his daughter. I came with the man who seeks her. Is she here?"

"Why must you come with the stealth of a spy?" she asked, "and why should I fear the American government. They have no effective forces in the East."

"They are effective enough at Peking. The late and esteemed Count Kaladimir himself assured me of that fact!"

"The fool talked too much. It was the Soochow plans that—caused his death!"

"And caused his charming wife to flee to the distant hills with a handsome Oxford-educated Tartar Mandarin?"

"I came because I—I loved him," she hissed defiantly. "And because the loss of the secrets to the Japanese foreign office had caused declaration of war. Russian representations at court impelled the Son of Heaven to order the exile. Prince Li Chu Fu had traveled in Thibet. We reconstructed this castle. Various artifices have kept the Red Faces in awed aloofness. The prince is dead. I can't go back. The years of seclusion had even created within me a horror of the noisy clamoring outside world. And as—a Mongol prince's—favorite—I— You'll understand!"

"I bowed assent.

"And the girl—Edith McAllister?"

"She stared at me sharply and then looked away, drumming with her slender fingers upon the arm of the teak Buddha at her elbow. 'McAllister is dead,' she said abruptly. 'The Red Faces had gotten him. But the girl—is here. A fiery, rebellious little minx. We had to subdue her after—after the Russian fashion. She paid with something of her beauty. Lee Fong is a blunderer. I intrusted the task to him. A careless stroke caused the lash to cut her cheek. But if he loved her enough—'

"To dare the treachery of a traitor to the czar and the poisoner of her husband no doubt he will love her maimed," I concluded. "But we leave at once."

"There was no mistaking the rage that smoldered in her long eyes. 'Has it occurred to you, you grotesque clown,' she cried, 'that you may never leave? What is there to tell the indifferent, skeptical world if your bones bleach beside those now in the tombs!'

© © ©

THEY wouldn't bleach," I replied. "The count's didn't. They tell me he turned smooth and hard as aged ivory. It's the secret of the priests of the Karsang Temple!"

"Yes," she agreed languidly. "And he was the discoverer of the remaining casks himself!"

"I bowed. The greater tribute to your genius. And the Prince?"

"The Prince's horse stumbled. He was a fool not to employ mules. Beauty is not always security. But the girl may go. I hate the sight of white flesh. When stained with senna it is more objectionable. But it is agreed that you reveal no secrets to the czar, the Red Faces or your kin?"

"It is agreed," I said. "I have no curiosity concerning a place where white

girls are tortured by those of their own race and where teak darts fall like rain from the sky! Nor would I expect the world to credit these things. For first the world must see!"

© © ©

THEY were already mounted when I left the spiral stairway in the court of the Lat Dayul. Edith McAllister looked strangely small and childish with her bobbed hair and boy's costume. Across one pale cheek, just below the wide eyes that had lost their imperious fire, was the long red welt that spelled the clumsiness of Lee Fong. But the look in his eyes and hers was worth—just for one glimpse—all the hardships of the dark trails and the bitter sting of the endlessly-whispering wind.

"I knew then that despite his Puritanism and fear of the wilds Scott McRae was a man!"

"I was back last year. The mad hermits still scream from the purple peaks of the moonlit cliffs, but no carved teak arrows carry death to the passers in the narrow trails below. The silken banners of Lat Dayul are torn to shreds by the whipping wind, and their gilt tassels have gone to make nests for rats in the catacomb of ivory mummies below.

"On the teak throne, as white as the snows of the Dalai peaks and as still as the ruined towers, sits the Countess Kaladimir. Into her veins has flowed the ancient subtle poison that is the secret of the Karsang priests. The potent mystic drug has made her exquisite limbs as rigid as the crouching form of Chu Fang, assassin unparalleled, and the slanting red sunset plays upon her sightless eyes, as evenly yellow as aged ivory! Only the golden hair is as it was, and it crawls and coils about her beautiful countenance, slave to the ceaseless lashing of the wailing winds.

"The turban of pearls is gone. So are the glories of the halls and chambers. For it is a tradition of the Red Faces that the sand rats of the Gobi desert are as treacherous as the mountain catacombs. And like them they lose their trails in sand."

[Copyright, 1917, by J. Keeley]

Down the Avenue

THE measles were making their annual round of the juvenile population of the community. And Flossie was very much vexed because she didn't catch them. She felt that a nice little vacation was being denied her. One day she came rushing into the schoolroom, clapping her hands with delight.

"Oh, Miss Nichols! They're coming down the avenue."

"Who?" asked her teacher, hurrying to the window and looking for—she knew not what.

"The measles! Bessie Tubbs, right on the corner, has just got them, and now it'll be my turn next."

He Proved It

DURING the recitation of a college class in natural philosophy the professor observed a tall, lanky youth in a rear seat, his head drooping, his body relaxed, his eyes half closed, and his legs encumbering an adjacent aisle.

"Mr. Frazer," said the professor. The freshman opened his eyes slowly, but did not change his pose.

"Mr. Frazer, what is work?"

"Everything is work," was the drawing reply.

"Sir," exclaimed the professor, "do you mean to tell me that is a reasonable answer to my question?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I take it that you would like me and the class to believe that this desk is work?"

"Yes, sir," replied the youth wearily; "it is woodwork."

According to a Paris doctor, yeast, diluted with lukewarm boiled water, is a remarkably effective remedy for burns.