

# The Adventure of the Vacant House.

By EARL ASHLEY WALCOTT.

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As he lay straining his ears at the door it came to his mind that this was a case for the shrewd Wong Chee, and he started to rise and go and seek him. Then he sank back, for he feared what might happen while he should be away and that Wong Chee might come too late. Whatever was to be done must be done by him alone. The heart-sickening fear that followed this thought seemed to give him strength that was not from himself. He rose, laid off the Chinese shoes that he wore, listened intently again, and then put his hand cautiously on the doorknob. No sound had come from the house while he had lain there, and he felt assured that the three brothers were elsewhere than in the hall. It was his fear that the door was locked, but to his surprise and relief it yielded as he turned the knob, and no sound followed as he pushed it open. He drew his knife from his blouse and listened again; then he slipped through the narrow opening and closed the door without sound.

The darkness of the street was as the light of day to the darkness of the hall when the door was closed, yet it gave him courage, for if he could not see neither could he be seen, unless the brothers had the gift of the devils to see in the dark. He stood for a minute, then a murmuring sound that came from overhead confirmed him in the opinion that the three brothers and their victim were up the stairs. A crepuscular glow, the very ghost of light, came to his eyes from above, and he divined that there lay the ascent.

His fears asked him if one of the brothers did not lie between him and the source of that light. But, reasoning that the grip of death would by then have been at his heart if one of the brothers had been on the watch, he staked his life on the desperate trust that the crime for which they had come had taken the attention of the three and that none was left on guard.

So he moved forward step by step and almost inch by inch, the fingers of the left hand touching the wall as his guide, his right hand gripping the knife, and eye and ear strained to catch the faintest hint that his presence was suspected. Thus noiselessly he came to the head of the stair and saw that a middle room was alight and that no one stood outside. The door was but an inch or two ajar, and Ah Kim crept to it with noiseless progress, though the murmur of the voices of which he could catch a word now and then, would have covered his steps had he proceeded boldly.

When he looked within the room, he shook with astonishment as well as terror, for not only did he see the white doctor with arms and feet bound stand between the tall brother and the stout brother, but on the floor, tied with ropes and bleeding from the head, lay a Chinese, and the face of that Chinese was the face of the shrewd Wong Chee. Between wonder that so wise a man should have been taken by the brothers, fear lest his friend was dead and the lack of a plan by which to rescue the two from the hands of the dreadful three, it was not until Wong Chee stirred and groined that the words that were spoken came to his understanding. Then he observed that the small brother with the lame leg stood before the doctor, grinning evilly and spoke in English, while the stout brother with the hatchet and the tall brother with a running noose held to the captive made silent threats of death.

"You will be hanged," he heard the doctor say.

"If they catch us," said the small brother, showing his teeth.

"That is easy," said the doctor. "The police have only to find out the man who rented this house, and they will lay hands on you at once."

"The house not rented," returned the small brother, with his evil grin more pronounced than before.

"Why, how are you here, then?" asked the doctor.

"One man he go one time, he get key," said the small brother with a silent jaw that was terrible to see. "We make key all same this key. Then same man he take key back. He not like house. That long time ago. We have key. We come here in dark tonight. No man see us same. No man see us go. You not do all same we tell you, we

and many hundreds were hurt, and all ran for their lives. Do you remember that?"

Now, as these words the face of the small brother lost something of its look of diabolic pleasure, for even the three brothers must tremble at the name of that awful night in the southern city, where the tall brother had got his scar, and the small brother had acquired his limp, and the three had barely escaped with their lives.

"We not want to kill you," said the small brother, with a smile that was meant to be conciliatory, but succeeded only in being ghastly. "You do all same we say, you go home all life."

Now, the doctor knew that his fate was sealed, for the three brothers had let him know too much and must kill him for their own safety. He saw that they but played with him to make their pleasure, yet he bore himself as though the brothers but jested with him.

"What would you have?" asked the doctor.

"I tell you before, the heart of Wong Chee," answered the small brother.

"I cannot take it. The man is still alive."

"He all same dead," replied the small brother. "White devil doctor man he like cut up dead man. Why he not like cut up live man?"

"Why do you want me to cut up a live man?" asked the doctor.

"We like see. Some time maybe we like do."

"I cannot kill him. He has done no harm."

"Oh, you think him good man?" exclaimed the small brother, contemptuously. "You think him all life? He all same come tonight to say we get one thousand dolla kill Wing Lee. You think him good man, eh? He no sabby one long say we get two thousand 'n' hund dolla all same kill him." And at this humorous situation the small brother went off into diabolic laughter.

"Then did 'one long' tell you to kill me?" asked the doctor. "I do not know the tones and never harmed them."

The small brother's face took on a look of preternatural cunning, and he appeared to consider what excuse to give.

"Never one time kill white devil?" he said at last. And his eyes snapped eagerly, as though this had been the long desire of his life; and the bodies of the tall brother and the stout brother bent toward the doctor as though they were eager to have his blood. "We will white devil doctor now if he not do what we say. Give us the heart of Wong Chee."

"I cannot take it with bound hands," the doctor said.

The three brothers consulted in Chinese, for they were unwilling to lose the hands of the doctor. It was true that he could not cut the heart from Wong Chee if his hands were tied, yet if his hands were free and the surgeon's knife was put in them, they had to fear the rashness of despair. Then the small brother advised that the doctor be made to kneel before his hands were loosed. And thereupon Ah Kim saw him forced to his knees by the body of Wong Chee, and the tall brother flung the noose about the neck of the kneeling man, and the stout brother lifted the hatchet, while the small brother slipped the cords that bound his arms.

Now Ah Kim breathed hard and gripped his knife fast, for he feared that the life of the shrewd Wong Chee was lost. He had a wild wish to cry out to the doctor that there was a friend at hand and that he should make an effort for life and freedom. Yet he knew that to cry out was folly and would be death to him along with the shrewd Wong Chee and the good doctor, and he had to use all his strength to keep his teeth from chattering.

"What was that?" suddenly asked the small brother, pricking up his ears.

"I hear nothing," said the stout brother.

"A step on the stair, I thought," said the small brother.

"I looked at the door," said the tall brother with an evil smile. "It is Wong Chee's devil come for his soul!"

Now, at this Ah Kim could scarce keep himself from sinking, for it is evil indeed to be between the three brothers of the hatchet and the devils that come for the dying. And the three brothers themselves lost a little of their confident air, for even the brothers, who feared not the Joss, liked not to think of the devils. But Ah Kim smiled in the midst of his fears at the mistake of the tall brother in thinking that he had locked the door.

"Well, let us make haste," said the small brother, "that the devils may finish their work." And with a move he shook the bonds from the doctor's arms and put in the doctor's right hand the surgeon's knife.

"Now cut," he said.

At this word the doctor flung his arms about the small brother and dashed him to the floor and at the same time made a mighty effort to rise.

"Strike, brother," cried the small brother to the one with the hatchet.

The hatchet was in the air, and the doctor's brains would have scattered over the floor, but that Ah Kim, moved by the danger of the men before him and by the noise of devils on the stairs behind him, had flung open the door and with one leap buried his knife in the throat of the stout brother with the hatchet.

The stout brother flung up his arms with a scream, his blood spurting over the bald head of the doctor, his hatchet fell to the floor, and his knees giving way he fell heavily against the tall brother, and they went down together. The noose tightened in the hands of the tall brother, the doctor was brought over with a jerk, and assassins and victims lay in a heap, Ah Kim alone standing, with bloody knife and shaking knees, crying out in the extremity of terror, for the brothers struggled before him, and the noise of devils was behind him, and he stood still for way of way to fly.

Then the devils burst into the room, seized upon Ah Kim with an oath, and in the maze of confused impressions he thought he saw them strike the small brother and the tall brother with clubs till they lay still, bring the doctor to his feet and wipe the blood from his head, and his ears told him that they all talked at once. And at last he saw that the devils were not of the air, but of the white devils' police, and he learned that he and the tall brother and the small brother were under arrest and that the stout brother had gone where the Joss and the devils dealt with his kind. And dimly came to

his mind the words of one of the policemen.

"I was that uneasy about you that I got these men and came back, for I found that the house was vacant up to sundown. We was afraid of mischief afoot, and bedad we've found it."

Then the terror-stricken Ah Kim, when he found that he was arrested as one of the three brothers, fell upon the floor and howled and called out his name to the doctor. And the doctor, having now recovered his shaken wits, knew Ah Kim.

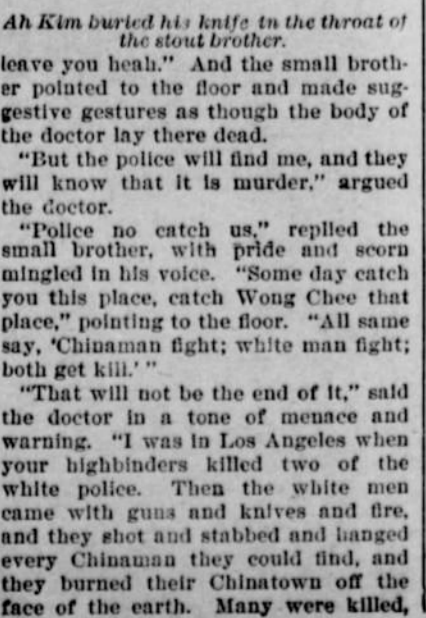
"See here, officer," he said. "You've made a mistake. This fellow is my cook, and if it hadn't been for him I'm afraid you would have been a minute late."

And the doctor explained as much as he knew of the affair in which he had played so great a part, and Ah Kim pleaded out the tale of the three brothers with a sad disarray of the English language. So Ah Kim was released on the doctor's promise to bring him before the court, and Wong Chee was brought to consciousness, and the surviving brothers were taken to the prison and loaded with many crimes on the book of the police. And the policemen praised the courage of Ah Kim, and marveled at it as the strangest thing they had known.

"Oh," said Ah Kim nonchalantly, as in explanation, "Wong Chee, he my friend, doctor, he help good man. No war 'em kill."

"I think," said Wong Chee, as he nursed his broken head, "that it was just as well that you did not stop in the house of the Joss to pray. You are not so much of a fool as you look."

And Ah Kim took this for much praise, for he had never known him as the shrewd Wong Chee.



Ah Kim buried his knife in the throat of the stout brother.

# NAPOLEON'S WISDOM.

THE GREAT GENERAL UNDERSTOOD THE VALUE OF DISCUSSION.

It Does For the Brain What Exercise Does For the Muscles—The Mighty Corsican's Ideas on Religion and the First Great Cause.

Man exercises his muscles to improve them. He competes muscularly with his fellows, and rivalry of muscle ends in muscular improvement all around.

What exercise does for the muscles discussion does for the brain.

The importance of discussion Napoleon appreciated thoroughly.

And when he discussed, he discussed like a big man, selecting questions to exhaust the mind and lead far away into fields of conjecture and widest speculation.

His was no dreamer's brain, giving to speculation the time needed for doing. First came the real work of the day, or the planning and finishing of details, from the disposing of army corps to the smallest final arrangements.

Then, free from actual work, seeking relief from concentrated application, his brain sought rest in talk worth while.

On his voyage to Egypt, determined to waste no time, he organized serious discussion as methodically as he ever organized a fighting plan.

The discussions were regularly arranged. Needless to say, Napoleon appointed everything and controlled everything.

He selected the subject for discussion, he chose the three or four on each side to support and oppose any given proposition.

These were his favorite topics: First, the art of war; second, the art of government; third, religion.

From his point of view his chief subjects for discussion were admirably chosen. They represented the only two things he cared for here below and the final question affecting his fate hereafter.

But his field of thought, like the scope of his ambition, was unlimited.

Once he asked his chosen debaters to decide whether the planets are inhabited.

Again, he discussed this earth's probable ending, by fire or water.

He discussed also the meaning of dreams and the value of "presentiments."

In practical life he discarded everything save realities, but in discussion all abstract questions interested him.

It may interest you to know that in general he denied positively the existence of hell—perhaps that was caution on his part—and maintained that no man should die without confessing his sins.

"Only a fool says that he will die without a confessor. There is so much we do not know and that we cannot explain."

It is deeply characteristic of Napoleon's thought that he should have declared for Mohammedanism in preference to Christianity.

He admired the religion of Mohammed "because it conquered one-half the world in ten years, whereas it took 300 years for Christianity to establish itself."

The old French king became converted because he thought the Christian God beat his pagan god in battle. Napoleon had not traveled far beyond that old king.

The man who seeks for all sorts of wisdom in Napoleon will be deeply disappointed when he comes to analyze the great fighter's religious thought.

But for the hero worshiper there is comfort in this:

Napoleon trifled with everything except the first great cause.

On the deck of his ship on a fling-night there was much irreverent, slipshod material chattered. The revolution had made stupid atheism fashionable.

But Napoleon was impressed by the calm night, the blue, dark water and the silent, beautiful stars shining down in cosmic rebuke of the tiny blasphemers below.

He stopped very abruptly the prattle of atheism.

Toward the stars he pointed the short, thick arm so soon to rule this little planet.

"You may talk as long as you please, gentlemen, but who made all that?"

There was no answer, and there was no more atheism that night.

The man who was to build up the code Napoleon could appreciate the force and necessity of law. His mind realized the feebleness of man, coping even with little problems of earth.

He felt that great laws and a Great Lawgiver must swing and direct those millions of silent worlds above.

When Napoleon was still a Corsican patriot, the great French said to him: "Napoleon, you are not a modern. You talk like the heroes of Plutarch."

Earnestness of the old king was indeed Napoleon's characteristic—as emperor, planning to rule Asia from the back of an ornamented elephant, or as a poor, half-starved lad, taking off his muddy shoes to enter the presence of the matronly Mme. Permon and listening to her stories of descent from the emperors of Constantinople.

Napoleon in his hours of work was a doer, and in his hours of leisure he was a discussor.

He exercised constantly the two sides of his brain, the practical and speculative.

Do the same and succeed.—New York Journal.

To Spell Shakespeare's Name. It has been shown that Shakespeare's name has been spelled by responsible writers in 1,000 different ways. In his own time his contemporaries spelled his name in 32 different ways.—Chicago Times-Herald.

The net earnings of the water department at Cleveland last year were \$518,477. The volume of water pumped and distributed was 22,525,239,000 gallons.

Altogener Different. Sultors have come to ask you for your daughter's hand.

Father—Well, the fact is we are pretty crowded here as it is, and I—

Sultor—Oh, I intend to take her away from home if I marry her!

Father—Oh, well, in that case— But you did give me an awful start, my boy.—Boston Transcript.

# HOW QUAILS HIDE.

Although the Man Could Not See the Bird the Pup Was Right.

We are all more or less inclined to dispute the unusual incidents reported by observant brother sportsmen and if persuaded will excuse the bigotry shown by saying, "I never saw any such thing." The claim has been made that a quail will lay a dead leaf over its back when "laying close" in the woods, and this I have always thought an appropriate extract from a pretty fairy tale and pitied any one who could be galled by such a very transparent fallacy.

One day while hunting quail a covey flushed wild and scattered in the woods, and this I have always thought an appropriate extract from a pretty fairy tale and pitied any one who could be galled by such a very transparent fallacy.

My companion took the old dog and I the pup, and we proceeded to beat up the cover. The first point the pup made was at the foot of a small tree, where the trees stood thick, but where the ground was stony and was covered only with thin patches of dead leaves.

Taking the direction of the dog's eyes, I passed close by his head and, brushing by the tree at the foot of which he stood, walked on 10 or 15 feet, but flushed nothing.

Going back to the dog, I carefully took the direction of his eyes and looking closely discovered sitting between the roots of the tree within a span of my foot the bird, and lying well over its back was a large dead oak leaf placed in such a manner as to convince me beyond all shadow of a doubt that the bird had placed it there.

My reputation for veracity is fairly good, but I will not say that I can make a statement in this case, for he and I were the only witnesses of this, to me, strange and interesting incident.

P. S.—We got the bird.—Lewis Hopkins in Forest and Stream.

"THE MAN WITH THE ADZE." How the Butcher's Chopping Block Is Kept Smooth and Neat.

A constructive rather than a destructive force implied by the name is "the man with the adze," what is sometimes seen by early comers to the meat markets.

Most persons have doubtless observed the large blocks upon which butchers trim their steaks and chops. The top of the block is usually as smooth as glass, but the constant chopping of meat thereon roughens the surface eventually. The general idea seems to be that the butcher keeps his block smooth by merely sawing off the rough section. Such, however, is not the case. Specialism has even entered here.

The man who makes a business of smoothing the butchers' blocks appears at the meat markets early in the morning before the customers arrive. He rolls the big block to the sidewalk, then mounts to the top of it, adze in hand. Bringing it down swiftly from a vertical position above his head, the blade is made to pass between his legs, skinning the surface of the block with great dexterity.

At each stroke a thin layer of the rough wood is removed. The operation is continued sufficiently to satisfy the butcher's requirements. Some three blocks are ordinarily consumed in the operation, and at the end of that time "the man with the adze" finds himself richer by \$1.—New York Times.

Photos That Would Pay. Everybody is trying to make money quickly nowadays, and photographers, amateur and expert, form a goodly percentage of the total included in "everybody." Here are a few subjects that would fetch very high prices.

A house being struck by lightning. We have photos of lightning flashes, but no picture of the kind which shows a flash actually striking a house.

Two trains in collision. Photos of wrecked trains are common enough, but a snap shot at the very occurrence of the smash remains unrecorded.

The crew of a lifeboat in the act of rescuing the sailors of a sinking ship in a fierce storm.

A negative of an Atlantic liner battling with an ocean tempest. If you could take a snap shot of this subject from the deck of another liner it would be worth a good sum.

A photograph of a sprightly earthquake in Japan or some other country which is troubled in this way. It would be well to hang up your camera and make it work automatically, as earthquakes are not to be played with. Such a picture would be jumped at.

A Lay Suggestion. On the last night of a series of "protracted meetings" in the Methodist church of a little southern California village the visiting evangelist was making a special effort to obtain a showing of anxious souls. He had preached his best sermon and reached an emotional fervor that he had seldom equaled. But nobody responded to his invitation. They sang a hymn, and then the evangelist rose again and called upon the congregation to "enlist for the service of the Lord."

Then response came from the back seat, "Draft 'em, parson; hang it, draft 'em!"

Nature's Crowning Work. As for the woman, she found the chief wonders of creation not in the culminating vertebrate, but in the lowest orders of life.

"The jellyfish, for instance!" exclaimed the woman. "How was it ever got to jelly so beautifully?"

Now, the others thought they could understand her awe, although none of them, as it transpired, had ever put up any preserves.—Detroit Journal.

There have been rapid strides in the iron and steel industry in south Russia during the past five years. No fewer than 14 iron works have been started, while the quartet of pre-existing works have doubled the number of their blast furnaces.

Every thief causes a lot of honest men to be suspected unjustly.—Acheson Globe.

The oldest known artesian well was sunk at Lillers, France, in the twelfth century.

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## Café Bland

Pronounced en-fay—accent on last syllable

Dionysius' Ear. In Syracuse is a cave said to have been constructed by the tyrant Dionysius, probably used as a prison. It is made in the shape of an immense human ear, and its acoustic properties are most remarkable. Maxwell Sommerville, the author of "Sands of Sahara," visited it and had its properties exhibited to him by the guide stationed there.

The man took a sheet of letter paper and, standing within the portal of the ear, struck the edge of the paper with the forefinger of his right hand once, twice, thrice. Each light tap was repeated through the deep orifices of that stone ear as if it had been a blow with a heavy sledge hammer on the roof of an iron house. He then rattled the paper slightly, and that feeble sound was augmented a millionfold, reverberating through the vaults above and beyond like the crash and roll of thunder. He whistled, spoke and called. Thousands of stentorian voices repeated every sound. Turning to my companion, I said: "We must not longer tarry. Let us embark. Now we shall go to Kabylia, on our way to the desert of Sahara."

Myriad lungs of stone caught up the last word of each phrase and answered aloud, "Tarry—arry—embark—ark—Kabylia—bylia—Sahara—hara—ara—a—a"

A Gentle Hint. Little Bobby had been forbidden to ask for dessert. The other day they forgot to serve him, and as Bobby is very obedient he remained silent, although much affected.

"Josephine," said the father, "pass me a plate."

"You've got mine!" cried little Bobby. "It is very clean."—London Tit-Bits.

## Not Given to Squandering.

Justice—You say that you doubt the statement of the previous witness that the defendant squandered his inheritance. Please give the reason for your doubt.

Witness—I tried three or four times to get him to visit a church fair, but it was useless. He always smiled and informed me that he was not born yesterday.—Boston Transcript.

## The Chinese are not entirely clothed in cotton.

The ordinary annual crop of silk in China is estimated at about 21,000,000 pounds, of which over 60 per cent is consumed in the country where it is produced.

The key to the Bastille is now hanging on the wall in the hall at the old home of Washington at Mount Vernon. It was given to Washington by Lafayette.

## Teeth Put to Many Uses.

All Eskimos have good teeth, but they are subjected to severe usage, being used for pliers, vises and fluting machines.

The teeth are employed in drawing bolts, untying knots, holding the mouthpiece of a dipping shoe, stretching a tanning skin. When they become uneven from hard usage they are levelled off with a file or whetstone.

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