

THE OLD HOUSE.

And a scene of desolation
Stands a house of somber gray.
And beneath its roof, for shelter
From the storm, I stood one day.

My Strangest Case
BY GUY BOOTHBY.

Author of "Dr. Nikola," "The Beautiful White Devil," "Pharos, The Egyptian," etc.

CHAPTER II.—CONTINUED.

"Our case is as follows," he began. "As I have told you, we have been in China for several years, and during that time we have had the good fortune to enroll not a few well-known names among our converts. To make a long story short, we were so successful as to be able to persuade even the mandarin of the province to listen to our message. He was an enormously rich man, one of the richest, perhaps, in China, and was so impressed by the good news we brought to him that, on his death-bed, he left to us for the benefit of the mission all his wealth, in gold, silver and precious stones. It was a princely legacy, and one that would have enabled us to carry on our mission with such success as we had never dreamed of."

"But if you were so lucky and so much in love with your profession, how does it come about that you are in England now?" I inquired.

"I will tell you why," he answered, leaning toward me and tapping with his fingers upon the edge of the writing-table. "It is a sad story, and the mere telling of it causes me more pain than you would believe. You must understand that at the time of the mandarin's death an English traveler, who had been passing through the western provinces, reached our city and took up his abode with us. Needless to say, we were overwhelmed with grief at the loss of our patron. The treasure he had presented us with we took to the mission and deposited it in a safe place. We had no suspicion of any sort of treachery. I fear my companion and I are not men of the world, that is to say we do not go about suspecting evil of our neighbors."

"I think I understand," I said. "You brought the treasure home, put it in what you considered a safe place, and one day awoke to find your estimable guest missing and the treasure gone with him. Have I guessed correctly?"

"You have hit the mark exactly," Kitwater replied. "We woke one day not only to find the treasure gone, but also ourselves and our mission seriously compromised. The relations of the dead man not only accused us of having alienated him from the faith of his forefathers, but also of having robbed him of his ancestral treasure. We could not but admit that we had been presented with the wealth in question, and when it was demanded of us we could only explain that we had lost it in our turn. You can imagine the position for yourself. At the best of times the foreigner is not popular in China, and our situation was particularly unpleasant. Situated as we were in one of the wildest portions of the empire, and accused of the basest sacrilege, that is to say of violating the home of a dead man, we could hope for but small mercy. The man who had robbed us had entirely disappeared, and no trace of him could be discovered. To attempt to offer any explanation, or to incriminate him, was out of the question. We could only suffer in silence."

form. We are not overburdened with riches, in fact, we are dependent upon the bounty of another, but if you can help us to recover the sum that was stolen from us, we will gladly pay whatever you may ask! We cannot say more than that."

"But this is a most unheard-of request," I said. "How do you know where the man may be at this moment?"

"We do not know, or we should scarcely have asked your assistance," Kitwater replied, with some show of reason. "It is because we have heard of your wonderful powers in tracing people that we have come to you. Our only cause for attending the trial at which you saw us was to hear the evidence you gave and to draw our own conclusions from it. That those conclusions were complimentary to you, our presence here is evidence of. We know that we could not put our case in better hands, and we will leave it with you to say whether or not you will help us. As I said just now, my companion is dumb, while I am blind; we cannot do much ourselves. Will you not take pity upon us and help us to find the man who betrayed and ruined us?"

"But he may be at the other end of the world at this moment?" I said. "That does not matter," he returned. "We know that, wherever he may be, you will find him. All we ask you to do is to bring us face to face with him. We will manage the rest. It will be strange then if we are not able to get him to a proper way of thinking."

"This was the most unusual case I had had to do with, and for the moment I scarcely knew what to say. I turned to the blind man once more. "Have you any idea where the man went after he robbed you?"

"He crossed the province of Yunnan into Burmah," he replied. "After that he made his way through Rangoon, and shipped on board the steamer Jemadar for London."

"When did the Jemadar reach London?"

"On the 23d of June," he answered. "We have made inquiries upon that point."

"I made a note of this, and then continued my inquiries. "One other question," I said. "While we are on the subject, what do you suppose would be the total value of the treasure of which he robbed you?"

suffered. Can you wonder that we are anxious to find him?"

"I do not wonder at that at all," I said. "My only feeling is that I must regard it as an entirely business matter."

"We cannot blame you," Kitwater replied. "Yet you must surely understand our anxiety for a definite and immediate answer. The man has had a considerable start of us already, and he has doubtless disposed of the jewels ere this. At whatever price he sold them, he must now be in possession of a considerable fortune, which rightly belongs to us. We are not vindictive men; all we ask is for our own."

"I quite agree with you there," I replied. "The only question in my mind is, who shall get it for you? Let me explain matters a little more clearly. In the first place I have no desire to offend you, but how am I to know that the story you tell me is a true one?"

"I have already told you that you will have to take our word for that," he said. "It will be a great disappointment to us if you cannot take the matter up, but we must bear it as we have borne our other misfortunes. When we realized the way you managed those bank people we said to each other: 'That's the man for us! If anyone can catch Hayle he's that person.' It naturally comes to us as a disappointment to find that you are not willing to take up the case."

"I have not said that I am not willing," I answered; "I only said that I am not going to commit myself until I have given the matter due consideration. If you will call here at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon, I shall be able to give you a definite answer."

"I suppose we must be content with that," said Kitwater, lugubriously. They thereupon thanked me and rose to go.

"By the way," I said, "does this man Hayle know that you are in England?"

"The blind man shook his head. "He thinks we are lying dead in the jungle," he said, "and it is not his fault that we are not. Did he suspect for a moment that we were alive and in the same country as himself, he'd be out of it like a rat driven by a ferret from his hole. But if you will give us your assistance, sir, we will make him aware of our presence before very long."

upon me yesterday, and who has the misfortune to be blind, is your uncle?" I said.

"Yes! He was my father's younger and only brother," she answered. "I have often heard my father speak of him, but I had never seen him myself until he arrived in England a month ago with his companion, Mr. Codd. Mr. Fairfax, they have suffered terribly. I have never heard anything so awful as their experiences."

"I can quite believe that," I answered. "Your uncle told me something of their great trouble yesterday. It seems wonderful to me that they should have survived to tell the tale."

"Then he must have told you of Hayle, their supposed friend" (she spoke with superb scorn), "the man who betrayed them and robbed them of what was given them?"

"It was for that purpose that they called upon me," I answered. "They were anxious that I should undertake the search for this man."

[To Be Continued.]

WANTED MONEY, NOT MORALS

Story of the Cynicism of the Late Li Hung Chang Told by a Well-Known Promoter.

The late Eugene Stanislas Kostzka de Mitkiewicz used to tell a story of the cynicism of Li Hung Chang, says the New York Times. Mitkiewicz, a professional "promoter," spent some of the best years of his life in an unsuccessful attempt to engineer the establishment of a great Chino-American bank. Millions were involved, and it was necessary to secure the favor of Earl Li. Mitkiewicz obtained an interview with him, and explained his scheme. The Chinaman listened gravely.

"It is a philanthropic plan, is it not?" he said at length. "You desire by means of this bank to bring about moral and social reforms in my country, I suppose. You wish to civilize us, to save our souls."

"We wish to do nothing of the kind," answered the adventurer. "This is simply and solely a commercial enterprise. We don't care a rap for your morals, and I may say for myself, personally, that it is a matter of supreme indifference to me whether any of your souls are saved or not."

Li's almond eyes twinkled. "Ah," he said, "you are not like other Europeans who come to China. They are all interested in our moral well being. You say you want merely to make money. It is strange. I have heard of such men before, but till now I have never met a European who had not the spiritual good of China at heart."

Her Promised Doll.

This is the story they tell of a cunning little five-year-old girl whose nurse had been promising her all summer a little coon doll when the family reached the city, if she would be very good and obedient. This was a delightful promise, and the little girl was as good as a little five-year-old could be. Then the family came back to the city a little earlier than usual, and something interesting happened—a brand-new baby came to the house. It was a funny, red-faced little creature, which only a loving mother and experienced nurse could possibly consider beautiful, but it was a great thing for the little girl, who had never before in her short life seen a real live baby.

"There is a great surprise for you," said the nurse, taking the five-year-old upstairs, where the little new sister was lying snuggled up under a canopy of muslin and ribbons. "What do you think of that?" she continued, lifting the little girl so that she could see the funny little face on the white pillow. And the little girl was as much pleased as everyone had expected she would be. She gave the nurse a big hug as she cried: "O, nurse, is that my coon doll?"—N. Y. Times.

"Get Married"
By HENRY CLEWS,
Head of the Banking House of Henry Clews & Co.



HIS is about marriage. Much of it is based upon my own experience, for the sole purpose of making my words as effective as possible. Generally speaking, young man, if you want to be really successful in the development of your character, in the attainment of culture, in the broadening of your sympathies, in becoming a better man and therefore a happier man, MARRY.

DO IT AS SOON AS YOU CAN SUPPORT A WIFE.

Then five years later you will be thanking me and everyone else who told you to be sensible. Here is my own case—merely to prove my interest in the subject: I married twenty-seven years ago, so you will note that I have had experience. When I married I assuredly was not the man I am to-day. I was in Wall street fighting for a living, and I had to bear all the losses and privations incident to the beginning of a career downtown.

My wife had been accustomed to wealth and a fine establishment. Yet she did not disdain to share my comparatively poor lot. Because I had a fairly good income I was compelled to keep up a certain appearance, and no one but a man in that position can realize the shifts to which he may be reduced in order to keep his end up.

Now here is the point I want to emphasize, because the chances are it will be your experience: My wife aided me in my career to success as only a good wife can. Children came to us. I HOLD THAT A CHILD IS ALWAYS A SPUR TO A MAN. I know that the birth of each little one urged me to renewed efforts in work. That is the case with every man who is worth anything in the world. Just think about your married acquaintances and you'll realize that such is the fact.

For illustration—Mr. Horton, afterward president of the Western Union, often told me that he began married life on \$250 a year, and that it took his wife six months to save the money for their first carpet.

Now there is an example for all girls and men to follow. It is unhappily true, I apprehend, THAT A GREAT MANY WOMEN IN THESE DAYS LOOK OUT FOR WEALTH AND DEMAND WHAT IT PRODUCES ALL THE TIME. They must have expensive dresses, they also want excessive luxuries. Such women not infrequently lack real love of home life. They simply look upon a husband as a convenience.

Please note here that I do not advise a young man just starting out in life with only moderate means to marry that kind of a woman. Yet I do not altogether blame the woman of this kind, for she is the fault of our modern existence. Women that are good wives and mothers are naturally unselfish, and an unselfish woman is usually a good wife.

My advice to young men is to MARRY THE RIGHT WOMAN AS SOON AS YOU CAN AFFORD TO TAKE FAIRLY GOOD CARE OF HER, and only increase your expenses in living as your means from time to time admit of doing so.

DROVE HIS RIVAL OUT.

How a Milwaukee Drummer Came It Over a Chicago Competitor in His Line.

A traveling salesman for a local wholesale house lately returned from the south with a good story, showing how he routed a Chicago competitor from a profitable town of his territory.

This particular town is in Texas, and in it are a lot of jolly good fellows, whose chief joy in life is gying the newcomers and initiating them into the alleged customs of the wild and woolly west.

Their method is to take the victim to a certain saloon, and after a couple of rounds of whiskies, to engage in a hot argument, eventually leading to a fierce climax, in which revolvers are drawn. They keep one long six-shooter behind the bar for just such emergencies, relates a Milwaukee exchange.

Our traveling man fell in with a Chicago salesman carrying the same line and bound among other places for Texas. When the Milwaukee man discovered that it was his first trip south he scented some rosy sport. He immediately wired ahead to the boys to prepare for a fresh victim. Then he proceeded to enlighten that tenderfoot on the character of the town and its citizens. He drew a graphic picture of their lawless lives, their many feuds, and he dwelt particularly on their settling all disputes, great or small, with a bullet.

"Two, you mean," said the Texan, quickly sweeping them up. "I tell you I threw three. I'm not a blooming fool."

At this the contestant waxed furiously, and, pulling his gun, put it on the bar, saying: "Anybody that disputes my word settles with that!"

Then the others mixed in with various deadly weapons and language, the latter as appalling as the weapons.

In the midst of the riot the long six-shooter was produced, at sight of which the tenderfoot, who had been purposely wedged in behind a table, gave one leap upon it, a second more and with just one sweeping glance at his friend he bolted through the door and down the street like greased lightning.

When he reached the hotel he told them to send the police, his late companion was being murdered. In the meantime the jolly good fellows gave way to uproarious mirth, and after another drink all round to the success of their sport they suggested doing it all over. The Milwaukee man was dispatched after the victim, to whom he was instructed to say that everything had been adjusted amicably. They waited for him to join them in order to apologize. They felt that he had left them under a misapprehension, and in order to show there was no ill-will they insisted that he return.



"GOOD MORNING, MISS KITWATER," I SAID. "THIS IS AN UNEXPECTED VISIT. WON'T YOU SIT DOWN?"

will try to find the man, I think we are giving you very good proof of our bona fides," he remarked. "I am afraid we cannot give you any other, seeing, as I have said, that we are both poor men. If you are prepared to take up our case, we shall be under a lifelong gratitude to you, but if you cannot, we must endeavor to find some one else who will undertake the task."

"It is impossible for me to decide now whether I can take it up or not," I said, leaning back in my chair and looking at them both as I spoke. "I must have time to think it over; there are a hundred and one things to be considered before I can give you a direct reply."

There was silence for a few moments, and then Kitwater, who had been holding his usual mysterious communications with his friend, said: "When do you think you will be able to let us have an answer?"

CHAPTER III.

Towards the middle of the morning I was sitting in my office, awaiting the coming of a prominent New York detective, with whom I had an appointment, when my clerk entered to inform me that a lady was in the outer office, and desired to see me if I could spare her a few minutes.

"Who is she?" I inquired. "Find out that, and also her business."

"Her name is Kitwater," the man replied, when he returned after a moment's absence, "but she declines to state her business to anyone but yourself, sir."

Volunteers in South America.

There is a gentleman in Boston who spent a number of years among the various little South American republics, who gives an interesting account of the methods of one of these small states when it comes to a question of making war. The "navy" of the particular power referred to consists of a single old-fashioned, sidewheel steamer, armed with one gun. In time of peace she is engaged in hauling freight up and down the river which runs close to the capital. At the outbreak of one of the periodical wars, not so very long ago, the president of the republic took charge of the steamer and started up stream on a recruiting expedition, leaving his senior general in charge of the military preparations at the capital. A couple of days later the steamer returned, and some 70 miserable-looking natives, each firmly bound with a strong rope, were marched off and turned over to the general with a note from the president, which read: "Dear General: I send you herewith 70 volunteers. Please return the ropes at once."—Boston Herald.

How He Feels.

A certain chief justice of the supreme court in one of the western states was noted for his disinclination to admit that he was ill, as well as for his roundabout method of expression. One day he was approached by the state librarian, who courteously asked after his health.

Against All Precedent. Percy Vere—I still think there is hope for me; although she said "no," she was very sympathetic.

Don't Be Too Anxious. Nothing ever comes that we really want when we watch the mails too closely.—Washington (Ia.) Democrat.