

Face

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'There is the symbol of your race,' said Huang Ming to his friend Andrew Ker, pointing to Edinburgh Castle, that rose like an angry lion above Princes Street. 'You have taken the thistle for your emblem, and the motto *Nemo me impune lacessit*. That is the secret of Scottish success: endure no insult, but avenge it at whatever price. In China we have a similar pride; we must "save face," even if we die for it; but we do not dominate the world as you do, because we refuse to injure others.

Andrew Ker received the compliment to his nation with unaffected pleasure. He was very devoted to his distinguished friend. Huang Ming was a pure Chinese of the most illustrious descent. His father was Viceroy of Szechuan Province. But he was also of individual distinction, having taken the highest medical honours in Berlin; subsequently, he had specialized in psychotherapeutics both at Nancy and the Salpêtrière. He had come to Edinburgh to complete his knowledge by an advanced course in surgery, and incidentally to learn the language. He was boarding with the widowed mother of Andrew, who was still a student of medicine, in his fifth year. Proud as the Scot was of his long line of ancestors, with their high tradition of aristocracy, he could not but envy the superior manners of the Chinese doctor.

The idea of any other relation than that of friendship had never even entered the mind of

Andrew Ker. Nor had his sister Madeline any suspicion of what transformation had been wrought by her beauty in the mind of Huang. He gave no hint of serious attention to any subject outside his profession, and contented himself with a sort of unassuming demonstration of his superior excellence in every act which he condescended to perform. He was peculiarly assiduous in his treatment of Mrs Ker, who suffered greatly from nervous headaches. By skilful treatment he had reduced their frequency very greatly, as well as their urgency. He was able to cut short even the severest attack by a few soothing words, accompanied by gentle gestures which seemed to combine the beneficent effects of mesmeric passes with those of massage.

To one of his progressive intelligence it was naturally clear that medical science could develop only through great advances in physiology, and the complete unification of that science with psychology. His constant effort was to discover means by which various organs of the body could be studied separately; he was already noted for his experiments with curare. His improvements had made it possible to carry out the now classical researches of Menzies and Moulton. It had always been simple, by the administration of curare, to paralyse the muscular system completely, while leaving all other functions normal; but unfortunately the cardiac and respiratory muscles were paralysed with the rest, and the animal had to be kept alive by artificial breathing during the whole duration of the experiment. Huang had found that by the injection of a mixture of strychnine, cocaine and digitalin into certain of these muscles, they were enabled to combat the action of the curare in an entirely local and feeble manner.

Just a flutter of life was maintained, but strong enough and long enough to enable the patient to survive. He had himself been the first human subject of his experiment, which had been successful beyond expectation. Others had been somewhat reluctant to lend themselves to Science, but Andrew Ker had been enthusiastic. About once a month, for it was not prudent to repeat the operation too frequently, he gave up an afternoon to the work.

Huang's room was fitted up as a laboratory; a narrow plank in a recess, supported on trestles, was the only bed he would use. 'Ignorance,' said he to Mrs Ker, who protested in her kindly Scottish way, 'is the hardest of all beds!'

His ardour and devotion were indeed in all ways incomparable. He had taken down the old Moorish lamp that hung from a strong hook screwed into the central rafter of the room, and installed a weighing-machine. To his precise mind a quarter of a pound too much meant idleness and fat, a quarter of a pound too little meant overwork and exhaustion; and he regulated his diet, his labour, and his exercise entirely by the daily report of the machine.

It is probable that he planned his campaign against the fortress of Madeline's heart with very much the same well-calculated ardour. At one time he would astonish the girl with stories of the viceregal court in Szechuan; at another he would overwhelm her with his lofty aspirations towards the release of humanity from the fetters of ignorance and ill-ordered desire; at another time he would kindle the longing for travel within her by showing her photographs and pictures of the Yangtze basin, and of Szechuan itself, perhaps the loveliest of all the provinces of China. In short, while guarding assiduously against any

suspicion of ulterior purpose on his part, he imbued her mind with ideals of rank, wealth, beauty, power and knowledge, identifying himself subtly with those glowing abstractions. He was at no pains to show himself the courteous and honourable cavalier, for perfect breeding was implicit in his ancestry for generations; and he was equally distinguished in athletics, whose appeal to women is so irresistible, playing cricket, golf and football with equal skill and vigour. He thus succeeded in establishing in the mind of Madeline Ker a sort of affectionate reverence, which evidently needed but the spark struck from opportunity to blaze into a soul-fulfilling love.

2

Doctor Huang Ming had been with the Kers for nearly two years before he reaped his reward. It was spring; Madeline had suffered from nervous perturbations of an obscure sort for a month or more; the Chinese had treated her by suggestion, and restored her to the perfection of health and good spirits. It was then that the girl began to wonder whether her feeling for him was limited to gratitude and admiration.

An accident determined her to consult the experience of her mother. It fell thus. During the experiments on curare of which her brother was the subject, he was unable to speak or move, although in full possession of all his other faculties, for about an hour after the experiment proper was concluded. This being a period of great tedium, it had been determined to enliven it by the introduction of Madeline, and occasionally of Mrs Ker. Sometime they would engage in lively conversation; sometimes Madeline would read aloud. On the occasion of which we are

about to speak she had been reading, came to the end of the story, jumped up, crying 'Now let's talk!' and as was her frequent custom, threw herself into the seat of the doctor's weighing machine.

As chance would have it, the spring broke, and she was thrown to the ground. Huang picked her up immediately with the polite regret and the swift-skilled scrutiny which his qualities as a man and a physician enabled him so admirably to command. But Madeline, finding herself lifted in his arms, suddenly fainted. When she came to herself, she understood that a crisis had occurred in her emotional nature, and, excusing herself, ran to seek her mother, that she might gain counsel from experience, and formulate as a conscious thought that which was but a disturbance nameless and inchoate in the subliminal sphere of her intelligence. Mrs Ker was not unskilled in the emotions of the heart; she divined instantly the nature of the psychosis which troubled her daughter. 'Child!' she exclaimed, 'I have long feared this moment. You are in love with Dr Huang.

The words came to Madeline as a surprise and a shock, but only served to reinforce her. The identification of the obscure catastrophe in her being with all she had read of love and of romance came as a revelation. In a moment, so to speak, she had become one with the heroines of history and of song.

'You understand, of course,' continued Mrs Ker, 'that it is your duty to combat the feeling which instinct has aroused within you. In the Pentateuch we are repeatedly warned against mixed marriages; the later history of Israel, and the experience of our own times, bears out the full the righteousness and wisdom of God in es-

tablishing this commandment. In the circumstances, I will not speak at once to Dr Huang, who, I doubt not, is insensible to the foolish passions which he has inspired. I will allow you a period of three weeks in which to make yourself mistress of those inclinations which, unless conquered (by the Grace, and with the aid, of God), are capable of destroying the soul, and, by consequence, the body.'

To so just, reasonable, and moderate an adjuration Madeline could only reply by golden looks and respectful assent.

But the conquest of herself proved a more difficult matter than she had supposed. The crystallisation in words of her long latent emotions seemed to intensify them to the utmost. Night after night she lay awake, clutching the sheets and gnawing the pillow, saying over and over to herself, 'I am in love with Dr Huang.'

The physician gave no sign of any perception of the cause of the trouble; his demeanor was as studiously correct as ever; but as the girl was patently in a highly nervous condition, he exerted all his hypnotic skill to restore her equilibrium. Mrs Ker herself suffered acutely to watch her daughter's struggles; and the ministrations of the doctor were frequently required for her also.

When the appointed period had elapsed, Madeline, although decidedly relieved by the care and skill of Huang, was yet obliged to confess to her mother that she was still in love. Mrs Ker resolved to acquaint the doctor with the situation, and suggest to him the propriety of a change of residence. In the absence of the beloved object, she argued, time may be trusted to expunge its traces.

She approached the doctor that same afternoon. 'I fear,' she began, 'that your kindness to

my daughter, much as we all appreciate it, is equally the cause as the cure of her affection. Dr Huang, we all like you, and we all respect you; but my unfortunate Madeline, imprudent as are too often the young, has permitted that liking and that respect to deepen into a feeling at once more tender and more fatal.'

The Chinese interrupted. 'Before you speak further, madam, let me ask whether you blame me for the circumstance.'

'If I blame you, I blame only your excellences and your virtues.'

'I may then say what I have hitherto concealed, from motives of delicacy. I have never loved hitherto; my work has absorbed my heart and soul; but I love your daughter. My father is one of the greatest men in China, and I can make Miss Ker one of the highest ladies in the Kingdom of Flowers. Her influence as my wife must be as a very beacon to my countrymen. Not only personal but political and even loftier considerations urge your consent to that proposal which I now formally proffer. Madam, I solicit the honour of your daughter's hand in marriage.'

'Dr Huang,' replied the widow, 'no one can be more sensible than myself of the honour which you do us by your offer; no one will more willingly testify to the propriety of your conduct and to the nobility of your disposition. But the primary fact of race remains as an inexorable bar. It is with the sincerest regret, believe me, that I feel obliged to return an unfavorable answer.'

'Madam,' replied the Chinese, impassive as ever, 'I had anticipated no less from the fine qualities of your heart and mind. Wounded as I must be by your refusal, allow me to say that its manner stirs in me a reverence for your inflexibility itself. I bow to your decision. I have left my

ancestors too long unhonoured. In four days I make the last of our series of experiments with my good friend your son, for whose preferment in his profession I shall labour while I live. I will then make immediate arrangements to remove to the palace of my father. And I ask your pardon that, although inadvertently, I have brought misfortune on your house. In the meanwhile, let us not speak again of this.'

'You are a thousand times right,' answered Mrs Ker. 'I shall rejoice to say that, although barred by the hand of Nature, or rather, by the command of God, from the formation of those ties of family affection which seal respect and friendship, I shall rejoice (let me repeat) to say that the truest gentleman I ever knew was a Chinese physician.'

Huang could not answer but by placing the hand of the widow respectfully, almost reverently, to his lips.

3

The room of Dr Huang Ming was tidier than its wont. Only on the bureau remained a few papers which he could throw into a bag at the last moment. He was sitting at the bureau, making notes of the final experiment.

'Well,' said he, brightly, to Andrew, who lay upon the operating table with a faint fixed smile upon his lips, and his eyes alight with intelligence, 'that concludes everything. So we have made one more step toward the eternal city of wisdom, piety and peace.'

The young Scot, unable to move or to speak, showed, in the purely physical aspect of him, that these words failed to engage his full interest. Huang watched him closely. Andrew's eyes were

fixed upon the door; for it seemed to him, it opened. Mrs Ker advanced into the room, followed closely by Madeline. Both were poised on tiptoe, as if they feared to be discovered. Neither spoke, yet each moved with the utmost rapidity and precision, as if they were going through a well-rehearsed performance on the stage. Yet the procedure was extraordinary beyond dream. Andrew watching every movement, concluded that a new action of curare had been developed; he was acutely conscious of hallucination, and burningly eager for the passing away of the action of the poison, so that he might report it to his friend.

He saw Mrs Ker go to a drawer, and take out a coil of rope used by him and the doctor on some of their climbing expeditions with the Scottish Mountaineering Club. Madeline, drawing a chair and table to the centre of the room, took part of this rope, and, climbing upon the table and then upon the chair which she had placed upon it, passed it over the hook from which the weighing machine had been removed by Dr Huang in the course of his packing. Meanwhile Mrs Ker made a running noose in the rope. Madeline then removed the chair and table to their original positions in the room. Of all this the Chinese doctor took not the smallest notice. It confirmed Andrew in his belief that he was hallucinated. He watched the scene with skepticism.

The girl approached Dr Huang Ming, and drew him to the middle of the room. Mrs Ker slipped the noose over his head, and pulled on the rope; while her daughter supported his weight by clutching his legs. When his feet were a yard from the ground, Mrs Ker fastened the rope to the head of the bedstead, and Madeline released him. Huang made not the smallest resistance;

and the women, having thus deliberately hanged him, went quietly from the room.

An hour later Andrew Ker found that he could move his fingers. Power over the wrists and elbows followed; then the facial muscles were released from their paralysis, and he began to speak. 'Huang, dear man,' he cried, 'I've had a most extraordinary hallucination; I saw mother and Madeline come in and hang you—and I still see your body hanging—and I can't see you!'

There was no answer. Ker turned his head; the room was certainly vacant. A few moments later he regained control of his legs. He got off the couch, and went to the body. It answered his touch; it was a real body—and it was already cold.

The student now understood that the curare had definitely paralysed his brain. He was not merely insane visually, but totally. His one thought was to seek Huang; the man who had brought about this state was surely the one to relieve it. He went downstairs. In the parlour Mrs Ker was sitting at tea with Madeline.

'You're late, Andrew!' cried his mother, 'and where's the doctor?'

'He must have gone back to the hospital,' said the lad, mastering himself with a tremendous effort. 'I'll go and look for him. No; I don't want tea, thanks, mother dear!'

At the hospital there was no news of Huang; Andrew determined to consult an alienist at once. He caught Dr Simmons, the Visiting Medical Officer, just as he was leaving.

'You are an excellently sane young man' pronounced the specialist after an examination, 'except on the one point of this hallucination. That was evidently the result of your experiment with curare; don't do it again! Meanwhile, take me

home with you; we will put an end to the bogle. When you find Dr Huang alive and well, you will soon forget that you thought you saw him hanged!

A quarter of an hour's brisk walk brought them to the house. On the steps stood a wizened little old man, a shrewd rat of a lawyer named Watt who, as luck would have it, was well known to both of them.

'Hullo!' cried the alienist, 'what brings you to this gate, man?'

The lawyer stayed his hand upon the knocker. 'I represent the executors of the late Dr Huang Ming,' he said solemnly as the others joined him, 'who, as I understand, is lying dead in this house.'

Simmons and Ker gazed at each other in the extreme of consternation. 'For God's sake, the key!' cried Simmons, recovering himself. Ker opened the door with trembling hand; the three men ran up the stairs. There, sure enough, was the corpse of the Chinese as Ker had left it.

'But it's impossible in nature,' stammered Ker. 'My mother! my sister! the gentlest creatures on God's earth, to have deliberately hanged our dearest friend.'

'Tut, lad, you're dreaming still,' said Simmons, sharply. 'It's a clear case of suicide. He had only to stand on a chair and kick it over. There must be an inquest, of course; but I'll certify the cause of death.'

'But where's the chair?' broke out the little lawyer.

'Here!' replied the alienist, sternly, picking one from the wall side and throwing it over, about a yard from the feet of the corpse.

'Man!' said Watt, 'this is a sespeccious business.'

'It is that,' replied Simmons, 'and I don't know all of it. But, in God's name, the less said the better!'

'The deed maun ha' been planned.'

'Surely so,' answered the physician, 'and if you wish to make a full enquiry, let us begin. How was it that you were at the door to take possession of the body within two hours of the death?'

'O that's a' right; I had wurrd fower days bye!'

Simmons looked at his old friend, as much to say: 'Does that really make it all so simple and straightforward?'

Watt rubbed his jaw. 'I doot ye're I' the richt, Jock; the least said the soonest mended.'

During this dialogue Andrew stood dazed. The alienist, however was not idle. He examined the corpse with the most minute scrutiny, and, to his unutterable horror, Andrew saw him detach a number of long hairs from the trousers of the Chinese. His mind was so utterly paralysed by the impossibilities of the case, where the evidence of sense, reinforced at every step, was at grips with the psychological experience of a lifetime, that he literally ceased to think. As the conversation terminated, he heard himself, as one far-off, echoing in a hollow voice: 'The least said the soonest mended.'

So nothing transpired at the inquest. 'Suicide while of unsound mind' was quite long enough epitaph for any Chinaman in the minds of a Scottish jury; and the body of Huang, who had honoured his ancestors, went to join them in the sacred soil of China.

Andrew Ker made the discovery that hell is in the heart. The life of the family was broken up entirely; he, who (as he thought) knew all, said nothing to his mother and sister of the frightful scene that he had witnessed.

Out of sheer need of distraction, he forced himself to redouble his studies; and he passed his final examinations with distinction. The effort ended, he sank into apathy. Mrs Ker did not seem to have suffered beyond the natural shock incidental to a suicide in the house; but Madeline was utterly broken. She became pale and listless, sat hour after hour at the piano, beginning one piece after another, and dropping her hands each time after the first few bars.

The moment came when Andrew could not bear the situation. He resolved to have the matter out with Madeline. He could only suspect one thing; imagine some hideous wrong that might demand (in the sight of the stern Scottish puritan) such vengeance as he had seen. But in that case, why had not Huang resisted? Or was his vision, as Simmons pretended to believe, partial hallucination? That hypothesis did not touch the question: what was killing Madeline before his very eyes?

'Girl!' he said, one day after breakfast, 'come up to Arthur's Seat; it's a glorious day.' She pleaded weariness; Andrew insisted.

On the summit they sat down to take breath. The lad put his arm about his sister. 'You're ailing,' he said, softly; 'and it's the mind, not the body. You'd better tell me the whole story. I know what happened; tell me why it happened.'

Madeline broke down in a flood of tears. Presently: 'I loved him. Mother refused our mar-

riage because of the difference of race. He killed himself for love of me.'

'I was awake,' replied her brother, 'I watched every movement in the room. Is that your last word?'

The girl still sobbed: 'He killed himself for love of me. I loved him.'

Was she lying: Could she have assisted unconsciously in this ghastly ritual? Could Huang have hypnotised the women? Absurd. Had he such power, what easier than to force a consent to the marriage? The darkness was deeper than before.

Acting under the impulse of an uncontrollable emotion, Ker sprang to his feet, and walked he knew not whither. When his mind cleared, he found himself in Leith, among the ships.

'Ahoy there! What's the game?' was the word that wakened him. He looked up to see a bearded skipper scowling over the bulwark of a big steamer.

'Take me somewhere!' said Andrew, 'I'll work my passage!'

'Not much!' said the sailor, 'got no use for anybody but a doctor. Ours fell overboard, drunk, in last night's fog. Dirty swab!'

'That's funny,' said Andrew, 'you're my man. It's just Providence! I've got one of the best and freshest diplomas in this University. If you'll only ship me somewhere where the wind will blow my mind clear of memories!'

'Come aboard and sign on! The North Sea's the place you need!'

The next morning found Andrew still pacing the ship's deck. But stormy weather, and the cares of his work, which chanced to be onerous, including a broken leg, a couple of smashed ribs,

and a severe case of scalding, took his mind to more wholesome channels.

At Petrograd they picked up a British Consul who was returning from Odessa to take up a new post. With this man Ker struck up a warm friendship. In the course of talk, it appeared that the Consul had spent ten years in China. The old agony seized Andrew; he seized the opportunity to pour out the vials of his woe.

'I don't see much mystery,' said the Consul. 'The man had got hypnotic control over the women; they obeyed; and they have no memory of what they did.'

'But why in Heaven's name not use the power to gain his end? My mother could have been brought to consent just as easily as to hang him!'

'You don't understand the Chinese mind. An insult had been put upon him. He would no more have married your sister after that than I would marry a dog! He had to avenge himself. He had only to kill himself in your house to cause his spirit to haunt you.

'But he was a man of science.'

'He was a Chinaman. My ten years taught me to think that their wisdom may not be altogether the folly our cocksureness calls it. Look how effectively he has done his work! His bringing them in as agents, and you as witness, was a master-stroke. What hell you have all suffered! Indeed he has avenged himself—and his spirit has haunted you—in a sense quite real enough for his purpose. Also—as we say in China—he has "saved his face." "

'Thank God!' burst out the young surgeon, 'I shall clear up the whole thing the minute I get home. Thank God! The fiend shall yet be conquered.'

But when Andrew Ker reached home, he found that—two days earlier—his sister had thrown herself from Salisbury Crags.