

THE MYSTERIOUS WAYS OF WANG FOO

THIRD SERIES

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II.—THE ENCHANTED BASKET

RATTLE, rattle, rattle down the beautiful Shanghai water-front near the jin-rickshaws, over the Hong Kow bridge and along the Bund toward the long row of foreign banks near the Nan King road. "Ho Lan Yin Hone! Ho Lan Yin Hone! Aw Saw dik! Aw Saw dik!" cried the hotel-boy who was acting as guide to the party of three Americans—"To the Dutch-Asiatic Bank! To the Dutch-Asiatic Bank! Hurry up! Hurry up!" The coolies increased their already rapid pace and in a very few moments more deposited their burdens at the gateway of a pretentious looking building, from the flag-staff of which floated the tri-colored flag of the Netherlands. "All three piece man can waite this side little time," said Dr. Williams of the China Navigation Company's medical staff, quite ready to exhibit his knowledge of pidgin-English to the later arrivals, and turning to the lady and gentleman who accompanied him, added: "Here we are, now we will all go in and divide the spoils."

They passed up the steps and entered the bank, where the assistant comptroller (or native cashier) received them at the counter and took their cards into the manager's office. "That looks all right, doesn't it?" said the surgeon as he pointed significantly to a handsomely framed notice on the inner desk—

TICKETS of the Royal Dutch Lottery of Batavia cashed here.

"Now the only question is: shall we take it in sovereigns or bank-notes or silver? Let me see—ten thousand dollars divided among three, that makes about three thousand, three hundred and thirty-three apiece, with a little extra change thrown in, doesn't it?" "Certainly does," answered Miss Olivia Spencer, who, with her brother Jack, formed the remainder of the trio, and I congratulate you on the excellence of your mathematics. I think I will take mine half in bank-notes and half in gold—you know I just love the sight and feel of gold; I can't help it, I caught it in California—but none of those awful "chop dollars" for me, if you please. Why, it would take an extra jin-rickshaw to carry the load, and then, the very thought of all the people that have been handling them is enough to give you the creeps, anyway."

"And you, Jack? What shall we say for you?" "Notes, old man, and notes only; I want to have that old-fashioned American feeling of a 'fat roll' in my pocket, you know."

Harry Wagenpool, the genial Dutch manager, appeared at this moment and greeted his customers with real East Indian courtesy. "First of all, ladies and gentlemen," he said, knocking the ashes from his Sumatra cigar, "I want to extend to you my hearty congratulations on winning the third prize, and to assure you that the directors of the Royal Lottery will be especially pleased to know that it has gone to a group of Americans. We are anxious to have our institution better known in your part of the world where"—he smiled broadly as he spoke the words—"I believe there still lingers a little of the old-fashioned prejudice against raising a government's income by these means. Please step into the inner office and we will call the head comptroller at once." When all were seated he touched a bell, and the long-gowned Celestial immediately responded. "Talks Comptroller come this side just now!" The vision bowed and vanished as silently as he came.

"You have the ticket with you, of course?" "Oh, yes," answered Miss Spencer promptly, "it's right here in my little bag."

"And the number is—?" "Thirty-six-thousand-and-one. And here is the special telegram from Batavia, which reached us before the papers announced the lucky numbers this morning."

"Quite right, quite right, and the third grand prize is yours." Then, addressing the native cashier who had just entered in answer to the summons: "Comptroller, please cash this order for ten thousand dollars for the visitors."

"Velly good," bowed the corpulent Ching Pow, "wanteeh all notee? Some foides, some silliber, how fashon?" "Oh, only about a hundred dollars in silver," spoke up Dr. Williams, "the rest in notes and then"—pointing significantly toward the vault behind the glass partition—"you might give us three of those nice little bags of new sovereigns you always keep in there for your special friends."

Ching Pow withdrew to the inner office where his brother Celestials

were thinking the coin. He was gone but an instant when he rushed back with a look of surprise and anxiety on his usual placid countenance, and startled the manager and his guests with the exclamation: "Dis ticket him no good, my have pay dis money one piecee Chiny-man dis morning. S'pouse some man he hab makee steeale!"

"What on earth do you mean?" cried Mr. Wagenpool, rising from his seat and snatching the ticket and order from the comptroller's hand. "You say you've already paid this number? Go back there and get me the other ticket at once!" Then, calming himself, he turned to the party: "There may have been some serious mistake here on the part of the native staff—although they are always over-particular with their customers—but we will have it corrected at once."

"Why, what can it possibly be?" exclaimed the lady, "there certainly are no duplicate tickets and these people, with all their cunning ingenuity are surely not able to forge one?"

Ching Pow reappeared with a book and two pieces of paper which he laid on the astonished manager's desk. Sure enough! There was the unmistakable evidence before them: ticket number thirty-six-thousand-and-one had been presented at the native counter fully three hours before; the cash had been duly paid to the holder Ting Sang and the bird and the prey had vanished together!

"My friends," said Harr Wagenpool, after he and his customers had examined the papers, "I am bound to confess that we are the victims of a very clever forgery—the very first in all my experience here—we will summon the Police Department at once."

"A pretty serious affair, this," remarked Dr. Williams as the party rose to take their departure. "And who, may I ask, has to bear the loss in the case, we or the Royal Dutch Lottery? That's the all-important question for us."

"Ah, that will have to be determined by the Consul when the police make their report. The bank can pay only one ticket and the evidence must determine which is the genuine one and which is the forgery."

"And are we to leave our ticket with you now?"

"Yes, the police must have possession of them both."

"Well," remarked the surgeon, "in order to make sure of future identification I will just put my private mark on ours," and drawing a little vial of iodine from his pocket, before the manager could stop him, he painted with the little brush in the cork the initials "A. R. W." right across the face of the ticket.

Right across the wide Nan King Road with its twinkling lights, and up toward the north where the Tea House of the Ancient Sages entertains its hundreds of nightly guests, there passed that same evening a solitary figure clad in the long blue gown of the scholar and followed by a coolie bearing on his bamboo two commonplace bundles of matting. They turned at the corner by the Tea House and elbowed their way through the narrow Alley of the Genii until they came to the rear entrance of one of those handsomely-gilded shops which front on the Ho Nan Road, and which are known all over China as places where lottery-tickets are bought and sold. There were no lamp-posts in the alley and they had almost to feel their way along. There were no distinguishing signs or numbers on the doors and each house looked exactly like its neighbor. When they stopped, the leader felt with his hand across the stone lintel and muttered to himself: "No, not here, it must be next door." He went a few paces further and felt the stone again. This time his fingers went into a crack and out of it he drew a long brass key.

"Ah, it is here!" "Put the bundles down and I will carry them in," he said to the panting coolie, who was mopping his brow with a very ragged piece of white cloth.

"The venerable master speaketh well," was the reply, "and, now as the night is dark and the way is long and the burden is heavy, I know the master will not begrudge his servant a few extra cash."

"We bargained for a hundred and fifty, did we not?" "The master's words are truth itself, but the extra pipe and-bowl of tea are not amiss."

"Hold out thy hand! Behold the extra ten—and now begone!" He waited until the coolie had disappeared, and then placing the brass key in the ancient lock he opened the door and dragged the two bundles into the courtyard. Leaving them there in safety, he ascended three small wooden steps and knocked upon a closed

wooden shutter: first, three knocks, then two, then one. He waited a moment and then he heard the bolt drawn from within. The shutter was opened cautiously. "Have you brought it?" asked a mysterious voice. "It is all here," he replied, "come out and help me carry it in." A small door opened and a figure emerged (bowed over with the apparent weight of years, he was really physically afflicted—none other than "Cripple Ching," the well-known vendor of chances) he attempted to lift one of the bundles, but it was too much for him, so he untied it and took out carefully twenty rolls of rough brown paper and carried them, five at a time, into the house. They closed the door and the shutter and both sat down at a table. A small and very smoky kerosene lamp shed a dim light from a shelf above them. Cripple Ching began: "All went well as I directed? You took three thousand in gold, three thousand in notes and the rest in silver?"

"Exactly so," replied the faithful confederate Lang Shin ("Twin Stars," so called from two star-like frost-bites that adorned his cheeks). "Here is the gold and the notes," placing the bags and rolls upon the table; "and here are the forty packets of a hundred dollars each."

"And the compradores suspected nothing?"

"Nothing at all—they simply over-

der the great golden sign of the establishment—

"MIAO LAN TZE" (The Enchanted Basket)

Inspector Joseph McArthur of the Shanghai Police looked across the table at his deputy, Captain O'Keefe, as they sat in secret conference in the private room at Headquarters, and pointing his finger significantly at two lottery tickets that lay before him, said: "Well, Cap, it's a mighty clever piece of work and no mistake. Now the first question is: Were they made here or abroad?"

"Oh, sir, you can take my word for it, they were made right here in the Settlement, and what's more, they were made by their own people. You see they're so sly and secretive and suspicious that they wouldn't let the tickets go out of their own country for fear they'd never get them back."

"I believe you're right—and now the very first thing is to search every printing house in Shanghai and find out whether they have any press that will do this kind of work. Put Ah Sam and his brother at it; they're our best native officers, and they'll ferret it out quicker than ever we could."

"Beg pardon, Chief, I put them at it yesterday morning and they report that there's only one possible place where it could be done, and that's up

pointing to a group of workmen in the courtyard—that is the printer! There are only two men in our whole outfit who are really what you would call skilled lithographers, and I know them so well that I wouldn't suspect them for a moment. Besides this, I superintend all this kind of work in person and it would be impossible for them to put any matter on a stone without my knowing it at once. No, gentlemen, the Baptist Mission Press is not responsible for this fraud; you will have to look elsewhere."

Inspector McArthur, however, was far from being satisfied with this statement of the manager and insisted on accompanying him to the pressroom and in putting him through a regular third degree, and, evidently to his great annoyance, included his two native assistants in the process. "Where did they spend their nights? Who kept the keys to the pressroom? Was it not possible for them to duplicate the stone?" etc., etc., until his little note-book was quite filled to overflowing with memoranda; then he and the deputy respectfully took their leave.

"Well, Captain, what do you make out of it?" he asked when the two officers once more returned to the seclusion of the Chief's private room.

"Believe me, sir, that 'Charles' and 'James' as he calls them—the missionaries being accustomed to give English names to their employees, especially if they are converts—are a sly and tricky couple. I think it would pay us to inquire a little more deeply into their whereabouts and various doings. You see the old gentlemen will believe anything those fellows tell him, and how does he know but that they have false keys and get into the press-room at night and work this sort of game while he is asleep?" So for the next two weeks a careful watch was kept over Charles and James, but their comings and goings were as innocent as those of any Chinese lambs, and at the end of that time the police were reluctantly obliged to confess to Harr Wagenpool that they were as much in the dark as at the beginning. "Well, gentlemen," he said, "you have evidently come to the end of your rope. Have you nothing else whatever to offer?"

"Nothing except Wang Foo," was the Inspector's reply.

"Wang Foo? And who is he, pray?"



"Happy dreams over our new-found wealth!"

at old Dr. Donaldson's. He's just fitted out his place with a lot of new machinery from home."

"You mean the Baptist Mission Press up by the French Bridge?"

"The same, sir."

"Well, I think you and I had better just go up there quietly this afternoon and have a private interview with the old gentleman before the natives begin to get suspicious and hide things. Come around at two o'clock and we'll hire a couple of public jin-rickshaws on the Bund, and mind—no uniforms, just citizens' clothes."

"Right you are, sir."

Early that afternoon the two officers called at the Mission Press and were courteously received by Dr. Donaldson in his study. They explained the object of their visit and ended by asking if it was possible that the tickets could have been printed of course without his knowledge—at his establishment.

He looked the papers over very carefully by a strong light and finally said: "Well, gentlemen, it is an excellent piece of lithographic work, and we have, I believe, the only new press in Shanghai that is capable of it, but you must remember that there is something even more necessary than a press for doing this kind of tating, and that—

it? Perhaps you are drinking too much China tea; they say, you know, that it is apt to make new comers a trifle shaky at first."

"Miss Olivia," answered the blushing young man, as he promptly steadied his arm and so avoided the threatened crash of the porcelain, "do you really notice that I am a little nervous today?"

"You most certainly are."

"And do you really, in your heart of hearts, think that it is nothing more than the Batavia Lottery and the China tea that causes it?"

"Why," she added, with that sweetly innocent but very deep look that has played over the countenances of the daughters of Eve since the very first day of a mortal man's proposal, "why what else can it be?"

"What else? What else?" he repeated as he drew his chair nearer to her side—and inwardly thanked the gods that her brother would be gone at least another ten minutes—"why nothing else, of course, except just my own foolish self and, a-n-d you?"

"And me? Oh, yes, I see. Of course, it was all my fault. If I hadn't said half-jokingly to you and Jack that night, when the hotel-clerk offered us the ticket, 'Let us all three take a share in it! why we shouldn't have gotten into all this entanglement, should we? And you wouldn't have been obliged to run over here every afternoon to tell me how the case was going on, would you?'"

"Oh, I really didn't mind that at all. In fact, I've actually enjoyed it, so much so that I've mustered up courage to come over here today and ask you to share."

"Another lottery-ticket with you?" (Did he notice that she very deftly, as she said these words, slipped a "little doily" over a paper novel that lay on the table beside her, and just in time to prevent his reading the title if he had looked that way?) "Another lottery? Why, that would just even-up the account, wouldn't it. I inveigle you and Jack into the Royal Dutch game and then you turn around and suggest a similar risk to me. First Eve tempts Adam and then Adam returns the compliment by a similar temptation on his part—isn't that it?"

"Well, yes, it does look a little that way, but this isn't that kind of a lottery. I mean, it isn't that kind of a risk, don't you see?"

"And where does poor Jack come in on the risk? We couldn't leave him out, you know."

"Oh, he won't be left out, but he won't have exactly the same kind of a share in the game that you and I have. He will come in all right—and he actually did so that very instant as he burst into his room and called out to the verandah to save him a hot cup of tea."

"Miss Olivia," said the young surgeon, making a desperate effort to save the last few moments before the brother's appearance from his room, "you really didn't give me time to finish my sentence. What I tried to say to you—in fact, what I have been trying to say to you ever since we first met, is simply this: I want you to share my life and my home and my future with me, and to take me for whatever risk I am. Are you not willing to venture it?"

She did not answer at once, but reaching over to the table she gently withdrew the white doily that covered the novel and pointing to the illuminated title on the cover said, after a moment: "Perhaps it would be well to settle the lesser before attempting the greater." He picked up the book and read the words carefully. They were startlingly clear and distinct: "Marriage, the Great Lottery of Life."

Jack's appearance on the verandah at this moment turned the conversation into the commonplace of the day, and after a few moments the surgeon rose to depart, more determined than ever to secure the two great prizes of his life, viz: Miss Olivia and the Batavia gold.

When the China Merchants' Packet "King Loom" (or Golden Dragon) discharged her passengers at the Hong Kow wharf, among them was a dignified native gentleman who created somewhat of a sensation by the fact that both the English Captain and the First Officer came down from the bridge and shook him cordially by the hand as they bade him good-bye. "Here's hoping to have you with us on the next trip, Mr. Wang."

"Thank you, gentlemen; it is always a genuine pleasure to travel with you." He hailed a jin-rickshaw and also a wharf-coolie. "Nan King Loo, Pak Yuhn Kai, Tien Loo Miao, Hong Kong Lan Tze Poo!" (Up the Nan King Road and the White Cloud Alley to the Shrine of the Heavenly Gong and the shop of the Hong Kong basket-maker.)

After a cordial greeting from his old fellow-townsmen and a quiet night's rest under their hospitable roof, he started out early the next morning to find his friend, Inspector McArthur, and from him and the deputy he heard the full story of the double ticket and the consequent loss of the third grand prize of ten thousand dollars. He also had lengthy interviews with Harr Wagenpool and with Miss Spencer and Jack and the surgeon, and then he and the Department went out with a dragnet to try to find the criminal.

By the end of the week their mutual investigations seemed to point more and more directly to the combination of Charles and James at the Mission Press. There was no doubt that they were skilled workmen and perfectly capable of lithographing a duplicate ticket, but the difficulty was to establish the proofs of this particular crime. Nor had any trace whatever been found of the mysterious person by the name of Ting Sang who had actually taken

the money away from the bank. Scores of wheelbarrow coolies had been arrested and questioned, but none could give any account of the disappearance of the treasure. At last the missing link in the chain was discovered, and this is how it happened: Late one night Wang Foo was returning from Headquarters, and being worn out with the work of the day, he fell asleep on the seat of his jin-rickshaw and only awoke when the coolie deposited him at the door of "The Enchanted Basket" in the Ho Nan Road. "I told you to take me to 'The Temple Basket,'" he said to the runner, that being the sign of the shop of his friend, "Miao Lan Tze, Miao Lan Tze!" Then it suddenly dawned on him that the words for "temple" and "enchanted" being almost identical in sound, his runner had quite naturally mistaken the one for the other. Recognizing the shop as one where lottery-tickets were offered for sale, he decided to enter and interview the proprietor. The door-keeper ushered him to a seat and in a moment the form of Cripple Ching appeared.

There was an unmistakable something in his face that immediately aroused the detective's suspicions and he decided to take the chance of an evil conscience and boldly accuse him of the theft. After the formalities of the tea and pipes he turned suddenly upon him and, seizing his arms with both hands, he lifted him bodily to the feet, and looking him through and through with his piercing eyes, said: "Cripple Ching! Lead me instantly to the place where you concealed the money!"

"What money?" asked the astonished proprietor of The Enchanted Basket struggling to free himself from the iron grasp.

"What money? What money?" repeated Wang Foo, feeling the power of his threat beginning to work, "why the ten thousand dollars that you cashed on ticket No. 36001 of the Dutch Lottery. Give it to me instantly or we will summon the police and tear up every board in your floor."

"I didn't forge the ticket! I didn't forge the ticket!" cried the terrified "Cripple," "it was genuine and I bought it and paid for it!"

"Never mind that; we will prove all that later—show me the money or I will come the police, and straight to jail you go!"

He led the way into the inner room, lifted up the torn piece of matting, uncovered the "Well of Heavenly Blessings" and there lay the notes and the gold and the silver just as he and Twin Stars had hidden them! The latter individual entered the room just at this moment, climbing down the ladder from the loft above. Wang Foo ventured one more chance. "Ting Sang!" he cried, and the luckless Twin Stars, looking into the barrel of the detective's revolver and seeing that escape was impossible, surrendered himself as his prisoner.

"It looks very much as if The Enchanted Basket was like a magician's hat," remarked Inspector McArthur to Wang Foo, as they compared their final notes in the office. "It contains all the goods we are looking for, and more besides. We've got both the villain and the money, and now all we want is the man who forged the ticket; perhaps he's hiding down somewhere in the basket, too. You can guarantee Ting Sang belongs all same Twin Stars?" he asked of the native officers whom he had summoned into the room.

"My can secure all jloper," was the answer; "dat bank comptroller hab come dis side two three times talked he."

"Then," he added, turning once more to Wang Foo, "let us summon all our friends and proceed to Mr. Wagenpool's at once."

When all the party were assembled in the manager's office, including Dr. Donaldson, as well as Dr. Williams and the Spencers, our Man of Mystery arose, and tightly grasping a piece of yellow paper in his hand, thus addressed them: "Ladies and gentlemen, it has been a pleasure and a privilege to me to work in connection with Inspector McArthur and his splendid Department in unravelling this most interesting case; and I now present to you my report, which takes the form of three rather startling surprises, viz: First, and perhaps most important to you who were losers, we have recovered every dollar of the ten thousand! Second, our suspected villains are entirely innocent! Cripple Ching bought his ticket honestly from the regular agency and Ting Sang cashed it honestly for him! Third, we have not found any trace of the forger—for the simple reason that there has not been any forgery—and Charles and James must be freed from all suspicion at the Mission Press! This telegram from Batavia will give you the needed information as well as the closing surprise."

He unfolded it and read as follows: "To Harr Wagenpool, Manager."

"Dutch Asiatic Bank, Shanghai. 'Just discovered that by curious accident the numbering machine printed duplicate of ticket No. thirty-six-thousand-and-one. If too late to call them in, the Royal Dutch Lottery will have, in honor, to pay them both.'"

Government Agent."

It of course goes without saying that Dr. Williams did not allow any delay in the matter of interesting Miss Spencer in the larger "Lottery in Life"—as an actual fact, the exchange of the tickets, if and such we may call the proposal and acceptance, took place on the steps of the bank and, as Wang Foo smilingly remarked, "they both drew prizes!"

And when, a few days after the wedding, the bride wished to select a name for their little bungalow on the Peak, to whom should she more naturally turn than to our famous detective, and what could he—or you or I or anyone—say, but to tell her to christen it "The Enchanted Basket."