

A romantic dinner scene on a beach at dusk. A man and a woman are seated at a small round table, facing each other. The table is set with a white tablecloth, a bottle of wine, and some food. Two lit candles are placed on the table, and two more are on stands behind the couple. The background shows the ocean and a cloudy sky.

***SAMUEL
MERWIN***

***HILLS OF HAN:
A ROMANTIC
INCIDENT***

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Hills of Han: A Romantic Incident

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CHAPTER I—THE SOLITARY

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ON a day in late March, 1907, Miss Betty Doane sat in the quaintly airy dining-room of the Hotel Miyaka, at Kyoto, demurely sketching a man's profile on the back of a menu card.

The man, her unconscious model, lounged comfortably alone by one of the swinging windows. He had finished his luncheon, pushed away his coffee cup, lighted a cigarette, and settled back to gaze out at the hillside where young green grasses and gay shrubs and diminutive trees bore pleasant evidence that the early Japanese springtime was at hand.

Betty could even see, looking out past the man, a row of cherry trees, all afoam with blossoms. They brought a thrill that was almost poignant. It was curious, at home—or, rather, back in the States—there was no particular thrill in cherry blossoms. They were merely pleasing. But so much more was said about them here in Japan.

The man's head was long and well modeled, with a rugged long face, reflective eyes, somewhat bony nose, and a wide mouth that was, on the whole, attractive. Both upper lip and chin were dean shaven. The eyebrows were rather heavy; the hair was thick and straight, slanting down across a broad forehead. She decided, as she sketched it in with easy sure strokes of a stubby pencil, that he must have

quite a time every morning brushing that hair down into place.

He had appeared, a few days back, at the Grand Hotel, Yokohama, coming in from somewhere north of Tokio. At the hotel he had walked and eaten alone, austere. And, not unnaturally, had been whispered about. He was, Betty knew, a journalist of some reputation. The name was Jonathan Brachey. He wore an outing suit, with knickerbockers; he was, in bearing, as in costume, severely conspicuous. You thought of him as a man of odd attainment. He had been in many interesting corners of the world; had known danger and privation. Two of his books were in the ship's library. One of these she had already taken out and secreted in her cabin. It was called *To-morrow in India*, and proved rather hard to read, with charts, diagrams and pages of figures.

The sketch was about done; all but the nose. When you studied that nose in detail it seemed a little too long and strong, and—well, knobby—to be as attractive as it actually was. There would be a trick in drawing it; a shadow or two, a suggestive touch of the pencil; not so many real knobs. In the ship's diningroom she had his profile across an aisle. There would be chances to study it.

Behind her, in the wide doorway, appeared a stout, short woman of fifty or more, in an ample and wrinkled traveling suit of black and a black straw hat ornamented only with a bow of ribbon. Her face wore an anxious expression that had settled, years back, into permanency. The mouth drooped a little. And the brows were lifted and the forehead grooved with wrinkles suggesting some long habitual straining of the

eyes that recent bifocal spectacles were powerless to correct.

"Betty!" called the older woman guardedly. "Would you mind, dear... one moment...?"

Her quick, nervous eyes had caught something of the situation. There was Betty and—within easy earshot—a man. The child was unquestionably sketching him.

Betty's eagerly alert young face fell at the sound. She stopped drawing; for a brief instant chewed the stubby pencil; then, quite meekly, rose and walked toward the door.

"Mr. Hasmer is outside. I thought you were with him. Betty."

"No... I didn't know your plans... I was waiting here."

"Well, my dear... it's all right, of course! But I think we'll go now. Mr. Hasmer thinks you ought to see at least one of the temples. Something typical. And of course you will want to visit the *cloisonné* and *satsuma* shops, and see the Damascene work. The train leaves for Kobe at four-fifteen. The ships sails at about eight, I believe. We haven't much time, you see."

A chair scraped. Jonathan Brachey had picked up his hat, his pocket camera and his unread copy of the Japan *Times*, and was striding toward her, or toward the door. He would pass directly by, of course, without so much as a mental recognition of her existence. For so he had done at Yokohama; so he had done last evening and again this morning on the ship.

But on this occasion, as he bore down on her, the eyes of the distinguished young man rested for an instant on the table, and for a brief moment he wavered in his stride. He

certainly saw the sketch. It lay where she had carelessly tossed it, face up, near the edge of the table. And he certainly recognized it for himself; for his strong facial muscles moved a very little. It couldn't have been called a smile; but those muscles distinctly moved. Then, as coolly as before, he strode on out of the room.

Betty's cheeks turned crimson. A further fact doubtless noted by this irritatingly, even arrogantly composed man.

Betty, with desperate dignity, put the sketch in her wrist bag, followed Mrs. Hasmer out of the building, and stepped into the rickshaw that awaited her.

The brown-legged coolie tucked the robe about her, stepped in between the shafts of the vehicle; a second coolie fell into place behind, and they were off down the hill. Just ahead, Mrs. Hasmer's funny little hat bobbed with the inequalities of the road. Just behind, Doctor Hasmer, a calm, patient man who taught philosophy and history in a Christian college fifteen hundred miles or more up the Yangtse River and who never could remember to have his silvery beard trimmed, smiled kindly at her when she turned.

And behind him, indifferent to all the human world, responsive in his frigid way only to the beauties of the Japanese country-side and of the quaint, gray-brown, truly ancient city extending up and down the valley by its narrow, stone-walled stream, rode Mr. Jonathan Brachey.

The coolies, it would seem, had decided to act in concert. From shop to shop among the crowded little streets went the four rickshaws. Any mere human being (so ran Betty's thoughts) would have accepted good-humoredly the

comradeship implied in this arrangement on the part of a playful fate; but Mr. Brachey was no mere human being. Side by side stood the four of them in a toy workshop looking down at toy-like artisans with shaved and tufted heads who wore quaint robes and patiently beat out designs in gold and silver wire on expertly fashioned bronze boxes and bowls. They listened as one to the thickly liquid English of a smiling merchant explaining the processes and expanding on the history of fine handiwork in this esthetic land. Yet by no sign did Mr. Brachey's face indicate that he was aware of their presence; except once—on a crooked stairway in a cloisonné shop he flattened himself against the wall to let them pass, muttering, almost fiercely, “I beg your pardon!”

The moment came, apparently, when he could endure this enforced companionship no longer. He spoke gruffly to his rickshaw coolies, and rolled off alone. When they finally reached the railway station after a half-hour spent in wandering about the spacious enclosure of the Temple of Nishi Otani, with its huge, shadowy gate house, its calm priests, its exquisite rock garden under ancient mystical trees—the tall journalist was pacing the platform, savagely smoking a pipe.

At Kobe they were united again, riding out to the ship's anchorage in the same launch. But Mr. Brachey gave no sign of recognition. He disappeared the moment of arrival at the ship, reappearing only when the bugle announced dinner, dressed, as he had been each evening at the Grand Hotel and the previous evening on the ship, rather stiffly, in dinner costume.

Then the ship moved out from her anchorage into that long, island-studded, green-bordered body of water known as the Inland Sea of Japan. Early on the second morning she would slip in between the closepressing hills that guard Nagasaki harbor. There another day ashore. Then three days more across the Yellow Sea to Shanghai. Thence, for the Hasmers and Betty, a five-day journey by steamer up the muddy but majestic Yangtze Kiang to Hankow; at which important if hardly charming city they would separate, the Hasmers to travel on by other, smaller steamer to Ichang and thence on up through the Gorges to their home among the yellow folk of Szechwan, while Hetty, from Hankow, must set out into an existence that her highly colored young mind found it impossible to face squarely. As yet, despite the long journey across the American continent and the Pacific, she hadn't begun so much as to believe the facts. Though there they stood, squarely enough, before her. It had been easier to surrender her responsive, rather easily gratified emotions to a day-by-day enjoyment of the journey itself. When the constant, worried watchfulness of Mrs. Hasmer reached the point of annoyance—not that Mrs. Hasmer wasn't an old dear; kindness itself, especially if your head ached or you needed a little mothering!—why then, with the easy adaptability and quick enthusiasm of youth, she simply busied herself sketching. The top layer of her steamer trunk was nearly full now—sketches of the American desert, of the mountains and San Francisco, of people on the ship, of the sea and of Honolulu.

But now, with Yokohama back among the yesterdays and Kobe falling rapidly, steadily astern, Betty's heart was as

rapidly and as steadily sinking. Only one more stop, and then—China. In China loomed the facts.

That night, lying in her berth, Betty, forgot the cherry blossoms of Kioto and the irritating Mr. Brachey. Her thoughts dwelt among the young friends, the boy-and-girl “crowd,” she had left behind, far off, at the other edge of those United States that by a queerly unreal theory were her home-land. And, very softly, she cried herself to sleep.

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Betty Doane was just nineteen. She was small, quick to feel and think, dark rather than light (though not an out-and-out brunette). She was distinctly pretty. Her small head with its fine and abundant hair, round face with its ever-ready smile, alert brown eyes and curiously strong little chin expressed, as did her slim quick body, a personality of considerable sprightly vigor and of a charm that could act on certain other sorts of personalities, particularly of the opposite sex, with positive, telling effect.

Mrs. Hasmer, who had undertaken, with misgivings, to bring her from suburban New Jersey to Hankow, found her a heavy responsibility. It wasn't that the child was insubordinate, forward, or, in anyway that you could blame her for, difficult. On the contrary, she was a dear little thing, kind, always amusing, eager to please. But none the less there was something, a touch of vital quality, perhaps of the rare gift of expressiveness, that gave her, at times, a rather alarming aspect. Her clothes were simple enough—Griggsby

Doane, goodness knew, couldn't afford anything else—but in some way that Mrs. Hasmer would never fully understand, the child always managed to make them look better than they were. She had something of the gift of smartness. She had, Mrs. Hasmer once came out with, “too much imagination.” The incessant sketching, for instance. And she did it just a shade too well. Then, too, evening after evening during the three weeks on the Pacific, she had danced. Which was, from the only daughter of Griggsby Doane—well, confusing. And though Mrs. Hasmer, balked by the delicacy of her position, had gone to lengths in concealing her disapproval, she had been unable to feign surprise at the resulting difficulties. Betty had certainly not been deliberate in leading on any of the men on the ship; young men, by the way that you had no means of looking up, even so far as the certainty that they were unmarried. But the young mining engineer on his way to Korea had left quite heart-broken. From all outer indications he had proposed marriage and met with a refusal. But not a word, not a hint, not so much as a telltale look, came from Betty.

Mrs. Hasmer sighed over it. She would have liked to know. She came to the conclusion that Betty had been left just a year or so too long in the States. They weren't serious over there, in the matter of training girls for the sober work of life. Prosperity, luxury, were telling on the younger generations. No longer were they guarded from dangerously free thinking. They read, heard, saw everything; apparently knew everything. They read openly, of a Sunday, books which, a generation earlier, would not have reached their eyes even on a week-day. The church seemed to have lost

its hold (though she never spoke aloud of this fact). Respect for tradition and authority had crumbled away. They questioned, weighed everything, these modern children.... Mrs. Hasmer worried a good deal, out in China, about young people in the States.

But under these surface worries, lurked, in the good woman's mind, a deeper, more real worry. Betty was just stepping over the line between girlhood and young womanhood. She was growing more attractive daily. She was anything but fitted to step into the life that lay ahead. Wherever she turned, even now—as witness the Pacific ship—life took on fresh complications. Indeed, Mrs. Hasmer, pondering the problem, came down on the rather strong word, peril. A young girl—positive in attractiveness, gifted, spirited, motherless (as it happened), trained only to be happy in living—was in something near peril.

One fact which Mrs. Hasmer's mind had been forced to accept was that most of the complications came from sources or causes with which the girl herself had little consciously to do. She was flatly the sort of person to whom things happened. Even when her eager interest in life and things and men (young and old) was not busy.

In the matter of the rather rude young man in knickerbockers, at Kioto, Betty was to blame, of course. She had set to work to sketch him. Evidently. The most you could say for her on that point was that she would have set just as intently at sketching an old man, or a woman, or a child—or a corner of the room. Mrs. Hasmer had felt, while on the train to Kobe, that she must speak of the matter. After all, she had that deathly responsibility on her shoulders. Betty's

only explanation, rather gravely given, had been that she found his nose interesting.

The disturbing point was that something in the way of a situation was sure to develop from the incident. Something. Six weeks of Betty made that a reasonable assumption. And the first complication would arise in some quite unforeseen way. Betty wouldn't bring it about. Indeed, she had quickly promised not to sketch him any more.

This is the way it did arise. At eleven on the following morning Mr. and Mrs. Hasmer and Betty were stretched out side by side in their steamer chairs, sipping their morning beef tea and looking out at the rugged north shore of the Inland Sea. Beyond Betty were three vacant chairs, then this Mr. Brachey—his long person wrapped in a gay plaid rug. He too was sipping beef tea and enjoying the landscape; if so dry, so solitary a person could be said to enjoy anything. A note-book lay across his knees.

Mrs. Hasmer had thought, with a momentary flutter of concern, of moving Betty to the other side of Doctor Hasmer. But that had seemed foolish. Making too much of it. Betty hadn't placed the chairs; the deck steward had done that. Besides she hadn't once looked at the man; probably hadn't thought of him; had been quite absorbed in her sketching—bits of the hilly shore, an island mirrored in glass, a becalmed junk.

A youngish man, hatless, with blond curls and a slightly professional smile, came up from the after hatch and advanced along the deck, eagerly searching the row of rug-wrapped, recumbent figures in deck chairs. Before the Hasmers he stopped with delighted greetings. It came out

that he was a Mr. Harting, a Y. M. C. A. worker in Bttrmah, traveling second-class.

"I hadn't seen the passenger list, Mrs. Hasmer, and didn't know you were aboard. But there's a Chinese boy sitting next to me at table. He has put in a year or so at Tokio University, and speaks a little English. He comes from your city, Miss Doane. Or so he seems to think. T'ainan-fu."

Betty inclined her head.

"It was he who showed me the passenger list. At one time, he says, he lived in your father's household."

"What is his name?" asked Betty politely.

"Li Hsien—something or other." Mr. Harting was searching his pockets for a copy of the list.

"I knew Li Hsien very well," said Betty. "We used to play together."

"So I gathered. May I bring him up here to see you?"

Betty would have replied at once in the affirmative, but six weeks of companionship with Mrs. Hasmer had taught her that such decisions were not expected of her. So now with a vague smile of acquiescence, she directed the inquiry to the older woman.

"Certainly," cried Mrs. Hasmer, "do bring him!"

As he moved away, Betty, before settling back in her chair, glanced, once, very demurely, to her left, where Jonathan Brachey lay in what might have been described, from outer appearances, supercilious comfort.

He hadn't so much as lifted an eyelid. He wasn't listening. He didn't care. It was nothing to him that Betty Doane was no idle, spoiled girl tourist, nothing that she could draw with a gifted pencil, nothing that she knew

Chinese students at Tokio University, and herself lived at T'ainan-fu!... It wasn't that Betty consciously formulated any such thoughts. But the man had an effect on her; made her uncomfortable; she wished he'd move his chair around to the other side of the ship.

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Li Hsien proved to be quite a young man, all of twenty or twenty-one. He had spectacles now, and gold in his teeth. He wore the conventional blue robe, Liack skull-cap with red button, and queue. More than four years were yet to elapse before the great revolution of 1911, with its wholesale queue-cutting and its rather frantic adoption, on the part of the better-to-do, of Western clothing—or, rather, of what they supposed was Western clothing.... He was tall, slim, smiling. He shook hands with Betty, Western fashion; and bowed with courtly dignity to Doctor and Mrs. Hasmer.

His manner had an odd effect on Betty. For six years now she had lived in Orange. She had passed through the seventh and eighth grades of the public school and followed that with a complete course of four years in high school. She had fallen naturally and whole-heartedly into the life of a nice girl in an American suburb. She had gone to parties, joined societies, mildly entangled herself with a series of boy admirers. Despite moderate but frank poverty she had been popular. And in this healthy, active young life she had very nearly forgotten the profoundly different nature of her earlier existence. But now that earlier feeling for life was

coming over her like a wave. After all, her first thirteen years had been lived out in a Chinese city. And they were the most impressionable years.

It was by no means a pleasant sensation. She had never loved China; had simply endured it, knowing little else. America she loved. It was of her blood, of her instinct. But now it was abruptly slipping out of her grasp—school, home, the girls, the boys, long evenings of chatter and song on a “front porch,” picnics on that ridge known locally as “the mountain,” matinées in New York, glorious sunset visions of high buildings from a ferry-boat, a thrilling, ice-caked river in winter-time, the misty beauties of the Newark meadows—all this was curiously losing its vividness in her mind, and drab old China was slipping stealthily but swiftly into its place.

She knit her brows. She was suddenly helpless, in a poignantly disconcerting way. A word came—rootless. That was it; she was rootless. For an instant she had to fight back the tears that seldom came in the daytime.

But then she looked again at Li Hsien.

He was smiling. It came to her, fantastically, that he, too, was rootless. And yet he smiled. She knew, instantly, that his feelings were quite as fine as hers. He was sensitive, strung high. He had been that sort of boy. For that matter the Chinese had been a cultured people when the whites were crude barbarians. She knew that. She couldn't have put it into words, but she knew it. And so she, too, smiled. And when she spoke, asking him to sit in the vacant chair next to her, she spoke without a thought, in Chinese, the middle Hansi dialect.

And then Mr. Jonathan Brachey looked up, turned squarely around and stared at her for one brief instant. After which he recollected himself and turned abruptly back.

Mr. Harting dropped down on the farther side of Doctor Hasmer. Which left his good wife between the two couples, each now deep in talk.

Mrs. Hasmer's Chinese vocabulary was confined to a limited number of personal and household terms; and even these were in the dialect of eastern Szechwan. Just as a matter of taste, of almost elementary taste, it seemed to her that Betty should keep the conversation, or most of it, in English. She went so far as to lean over the arm of her chair and smile in a perturbed manner at the oddly contrasting couple who chatted so easily and pleasantly in the heathen tongue. She almost reached the point of speaking to Betty; gently, of course. But the girl clearly had no thought of possible impropriety. She was laughing now—apparently at some gap in her vocabulary—and the bland young man with the spectacles and the pigtail was humorously supplying the proper word.

Mrs. Hasmer decided not to speak. She lay back in her chair. The wrinkles in her forehead deepened a little. On the other side Mr. Halting was describing enthusiastically a new and complicated table that was equipped with every imaginable device for the demonstrating of experiments in physics to Burmese youth. It could be packed, he insisted, for transport from village to village, in a crate no larger than the table itself.

And now, again, she caught the musical intonation of the young Chinaman. Betty, surprisingly direct and practical in

manner if unintelligible in speech, was asking questions, which Li Hsien answered in turn, easily, almost languidly, but with unfailing good nature. Though there were a few moments during which he spoke rapidly and rather earnestly.

Mrs. Hasmer next became aware of the odd effect the little scene was plainly having on Jonathan Brachey. He fidgeted in his chair; got up and stood at the rail; paced the deck, twice passing close to the comfortably extended feet of the Hasmer party and so ostentatiously *not* looking at them as to distract momentarily the attention even of the deeply engrossed Betty. Mr. Harting, even, looked up. After all of which the man, looking curiously stern, or irritated, or (Betty decided) something unpleasant, sat again in his chair.

Then, a little later, Mr. Harting and Li Hsien took their leave and returned to the second-class quarters, astern.

Mrs. Hasmer thought, for a moment, that perhaps now was the time to suggest that English be made the common tongue in the future. But Betty's eager countenance disarmed her. She sighed. And sighed again; for the girl, stirred by what she was saying, had unconsciously raised her voice. And that tall man was listening.

"It's queer how fast things are changing out here," thus Betty. "Li Hsien is—you'd never guess!—a Socialist! I asked him why he isn't staying out the year at Tokio University, and he said he was called home to help the Province. Think of it—that boy! They've got into some trouble over a foreign mining syndicate—"

"The Ho Shan Company," explained Doctor Hasmer.

Betty nodded.

“They've been operating rather extensively in Plonan and southern Chihli,” the educator continued, “and I heard last year that they've made a fresh agreement with the Imperial Government giving them practically a monopoly of the coal and iron mining up there in the Hansi Hills.”

“Yes, Doctor Hasmer, and he says that there's a good deal of feeling in the province. They've had one or two mass meetings of the gentry and people. He thinks they'll send a protest to Peking. He believes that the company got the agreement through bribery.”

“Not at all unlikely,” remarked Doctor Hasmer mildly. “I don't know that any other way has yet been discovered of obtaining commercial privileges from the Imperial Government. The Ho Shan Company is... let me see... as I recall, it was organized by that Italian promoter, Count Logatti. I believe he went to Germany, Belgium and France for the capital.”

“Li has become an astonishing young man,” said Betty more gravely. “He talks about revolutions and republics. He doesn't think the Manchus can last much longer. The southern provinces are ready for the revolution now, he says —”

“That,” remarked Doctor Hasmer, “is a little sweeping.”

“Li is very sweeping,” replied Betty. “And he's going back now to T'ainan-fu for some definite reason. I couldn't make out what. I asked if he would be coming in to see father, and he said, probably not; that there wouldn't be any use in it. Then I asked him if he was still a Christian, and I think he laughed at me. He wouldn't say.”

The conversation was broken by the appearance of a pleasant Englishman, an importer of silks, by the name of Obie. He had been thrown with the Hasmers and Betty in one of their sight-seeing jaunts about Tokio. Mr. Obie wore spats, and a scarf pin and cuff links of human bone from Borneo set in circlets of beaded gold. His light, usually amusing talk was liberally sprinkled with crisp phrases in pidgin-English.

He spoke now of the beauties of the Inland Sea, and resumed his stroll about the deck. After a few turns, he went into the smoking-room.

Jonathan Brachey, still with that irritably nervous manner, watched him intently; finally got up and followed him, passing the Hasmers and Betty with nose held high.

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It was early afternoon, when Mrs. Hasmer and Betty were dozing in their chairs, that Mr. Obie, looking slightly puzzled, came again to them. He held a card between thumb and forefinger.

"Miss Doane," he said, "this gentleman asks permission to be presented."

Mrs. Hasmer's hand went out a little way to receive the card; but Betty innocently took it.

"Mr. Jonathan Brachey," she read aloud. Then added, with a pretty touch of color—"But how funny! He was with us yesterday, and *wouldn't* talk. And now...."

"My go catchee?" asked Mr. Obie.

To which little pleasantry Betty responded, looking very bright and pretty, with—"Can do!"

"She gives out too much," thought Mrs. Hasmer; deciding then and there that the meeting should be brief and the conversation triangular.

Mr. Obie brought him, formally, from the smoking-room.

He bowed stiffly. Betty checked her natural impulse toward a hearty hard-grip.

Mrs. Hasmer, feeling hurried, a thought breathless, meant to offer him her husband's chair; but all in the moment Betty had him down beside her.

Then came stark silence. The man stared out at the islands.

Betty, finding her portfolio on her lap, fingered it. Then this:

"I must begin, Miss Doane, with an apology...."

Betty's responsive face blanched. "What a dreadful man!" she thought. His voice was rather strong, dry, hard, with, even, a slight rasp in it.

But he drove heavily on:

"This morning, while not wishing to appear as an eavesdropper... that is to say... the fact is, Miss Doane, I am a journalist, and am at present on my way to China to make an investigation of the political—one might even term it the social—unrest that appears to be cropping out rather extensively in the southern provinces and even, a little here and there, in the North."

He was dreadful! Stilted, clumsy, slow! He hunted painstakingly for words; and at each long pause Betty's

quick young nerves tightened and tightened, mentally groping with him until the hunted word was run to earth.

He was pounding on:

"This morning I overheard you talking with that young Chinaman. It is evident that you speak the language."

"Oh, yes," Betty found herself saying, "I do."

Not a word about the drawing.

"This young man, I gather, is in sympathy with the revolutionary spirit."

"He—he seems to be," said Betty.

"Now... Miss Doane... this is of course an imposition..."

"Oh, no," breathed Betty weakly.

"... it is, of course, an imposition... it would be a service I could perhaps never repay..." This pause lasted so long that she heard herself murmuring, "No, really, not at all!"—and then felt the color creeping to her face... but if I might ask you to... but let me put it in this way—the young man is precisely the type I have come out here to study. You speak in the vernacular, and evidently understand him almost as a native might. It is unlikely I shall find in China many such natural interpreters as yourself. And of course... if it is thinkable that you would be so extremely kind as to... why, of course, I..."

"Heavens!" thought Betty, in a panic, "he's going to offer to pay me. I mustn't be rude."

The man plodded on: "... why, of course, it would be a real pleasure to mention your assistance in the preface of my book."

It was partly luck, luck and innate courtesy, that she didn't laugh aloud. She broke, as it was, into words, saving

herself and the situation.

"You want me to act as interpreter? Of course Li knows a little English."

"Would he—er—know enough English for serious conversation?"

"No," mused Betty aloud, "I don't think he would."

"Of course, Miss Doane, I quite realize that to take up your time in this way...."

There he stopped. He was frowning now, and apparently studying out the structural details of a huge junk that lay only a few hundred yards away, reflected minutely, exquisitely—curving hull and deck cargo, timbered stern, bat-wing sails—in the glass-like water.

"I'll be glad to do what I can," said Betty, helplessly. Then, for the first time, she became aware that Mrs. Hasmer was stirring uncomfortably on her other hand, and added, quickly, as much out of nervousness as anything else—"We could arrange to have Li come up here in the morning."

"We shall be coaling at Nagasaki in the morning," said he, abruptly, as if that settled *that*.

"Well, of course,... this afternoon...."

"My dear," began Mrs. Hasmer.

"This afternoon would be better." Thus Mr. Brachey. "Though I can not tell you what hesitation..."

"I suppose we could find a quiet corner somewhere," said Betty. "In the social hall, perhaps."

It was then, stirred to positive act, that Mrs. Hasmer spoke out.

"I think you'd better stay out here with us, my dear."

To which the hopelessly self-absorbed Mr. Brachey replied:

"I really must have quiet for this work. We will sit inside, if you don't mind."

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At half past four Mrs. Hasmer sent her husband to look into the situation. He reported that they were hard at it. Betty looked a little tired, but was laboriously repeating Li Hsien's words, in English, in order that Mr. Brachcy might take them down in what appeared to be a sort of shorthand. Doctor Hasmer didn't see how he could say anything. Not very well. They hadn't so much as noticed him, though he stood near by for a few moments.

Which report Mrs. Hasmer found masculine and unsatisfactory. At five she went herself; took her Battenberg hoop and sat near by. Betty saw her, and smiled. She looked distinctly a little wan.

The journalist ignored Mrs. Hasmer. He was a merciless driver. Whenever Betty's attention wandered, as it had begun doing, he put his questions brusquely, even sharply, to call her back to the task.

Four bells sounded, up forward. Mrs. Hasmer started; and, as always when she heard the ship's bell, consulted her watch. Six o'clock!... She put down her hoop; fidgetted; got up; sat down again; told herself she must consider the situation calmly. It must be taken in hand, of course. The man was a mannerless brute. He had distinctly encroached.

He would encroach further. He must be met firmly, at once. She tried to think precisely how he could be met.

She got up again; stood over them. She didn't know that her face was a lens through which any and all might read her perturbed spirit.

Betty glanced up; smiled faintly; drew a long breath.

Li Hsien rose and bowed, clasping his hands before his breast.

Mr. Bradley was writing.

Mrs. Hasmer had tried to construct a little speech that, however final, would meet the forms of courtesy. It left her now. She said with blank firmness:

"Come, Betty!"

"One moment!" protested Mr. Brachey. "Will you please ask him, Miss Duane, whether he believes that the general use of opium has appreciably lowered the vitality of the Chinese people? That is, to put it conversely, whether the curtailment of production is going to leave a people too weakened to act strongly in a military or even political way? Surveying the empire as a whole, of course."

Betty's thoughts, which had wandered hopelessly afield, came struggling back.

"I—I'm sorry," she said. "I'm afraid I didn't quite hear."

"I must ask you to come with me, Betty," said Mrs. Hasmer.

At this, looking heavily disappointed, Mr. Brachey rose; ran a long bony hand through his thick hair.

"We could take it up in the morning," he said, turning from the bland young Chinaman to the plainly confused girl.

“That is, if Miss Doane wouldn't mind staying on the ship. I presume she has seen Nagasaki.”

His perturbed eyes moved at last to the little elderly lady who had seemed so colorless and mild; met hers, which were, of a sudden, snapping coals.

“You will not take it up again, sir!” cried Mrs. Hasmer; and left with the girl.

The Chinaman smiled, clasped his hands, bowed with impenetrable courtesy, and withdrew to his quarters.

Mr. Brachey, alone, looked over his notes with a frown; shook his head; went down to dress for dinner.

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Late that night Betty sat in her tiny stateroom, indulging rebellious thoughts. It was time, after an awkwardly silent evening, to go to bed. But instead she now slipped into her heavy traveling coat, pulled on her tam-o'-shanter, tiptoed past the Hasmers' door and went out on deck.

It was dim and peaceful there. The throb of the engines and the wash of water along the hull were the only sounds. They were in the strait now, heading out to sea.

She walked around the deck, and around. It was her first free moment since they left the Pacific ship at Yokohama. After that very quietly—sweetly, even—the chaperonage of Mrs. Hasmer had tightened. For Betty the experience was new and difficult. She felt that she ought to submit. But the rebellion in her breast, if wrong, was real. She would walk it off.