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Illustration of a dictionary book.

THE PHANTOM COACH

By HESTER A. BENEDIOT. [Copyright, 1899, by Hester A. Benedict.]

We had been three years absent from America, loitering here and there, as inclination prompted and ample leisure allowed, until, with a feeling of homesickness strong within us, we turned our faces homeward, crossed over from India to Hongkong and took passage on the Mitsui Bishi steamer Hiroshima Maru for Yokohama, three weeks' sail from the Golden Gate.

Jack Erie, the poet of our party, had fallen in down below with a quiet, pale-faced New Englander whom he had met in India, and the first morning out he brought him up to become one of us, as he did straightway.

We all liked him immensely from the first. He was of fine presence, six feet high, well built and well mannered, witty and intelligent. He was, however, apparently wanting in energy and inclined to cynicism. These seeming defects we at once attributed to the enervating influence of life in the orient and thought no more about them. He interested us hours at a time with quietly told stories of his travels, for he had seen not only the places we had visited, but scores of others yet unknown to us.

But Maurice Wilson, for so I will call him, had also the pathetic smile and the appealing blue eyes that all unmeaningly make willing fools of women.

Who never can know And never can understand that the language of such is impersonal and born of blood, not heart.

Yet Wilson had a heart, and a tender one, and some way, as the days went by, the feeling grew upon one of us at least that he could tell us a story, if he so minded, of personal sacrifice and pain in some Gethsemane of which the world knew not.

While still in the Yellow sea the glass changed suddenly one morning, and in less than two hours the order "All passengers below!" was heard above the shrieking of the wind and that low, almost human, grunting of a ship's strained joints when the typhoon's breath first touches it.

For hours we were tossed helplessly about the cabin, the sharp cries of the second class passengers coming to us now and then from the prison under the hatches and mingling with the means of women whom we vainly tried to comfort.

I can see now the look in Wilson's eyes as when once again we were on deck he said solemnly:

"That was a loud call, seems to me, and down there," nodding toward the cabin—"down there in such an hour one thinks rapidly. 'Nest ce pas? And with a mighty tug at his heart and something in his throat like a knife thrust through he wishes—wishes—that he had been a better boy."

Somehow after the storm things seemed not quite the same again. Unrest was everywhere. We who were favored haunted the captain's room, listened to his yarns, drank sparingly of his wine and freely of his cheer.

Yet a cloud no larger than a man's hand perhaps, and yet large enough to cast a shadow, seemed hanging over the ship, affecting officers, passengers and crew alike, gainsay it as we might.

Every one was brightened visibly by the half day's stay at Nagasaki, and in the excitement of the trip through the inland sea the typhoon was forgotten, and we became quite our usual selves again, all except Wilson, who still seemed restless and ill at ease.

"When are we due at Kobe?" he asked after tiffin was over and we were all in the captain's room, as usual, when he was off duty.

"About dark," the captain replied absently, adding after a moment's pause, "and—well, I've slowed up a bit so we can get a look at the phantom coach, you know."

"The phantom coach?" echoed Jack. "What is that?"

"Never heard of it? No? It's a queer story, and I'm bound to find out for myself if there's any truth in it. Haven't happened along here at the right time since the ghost first put in an appearance. It shows up only at dusk, they say."

"Tell us the story, captain, do!"

"All right," he said, and, lighting a fresh cigar and swinging himself around in his chair so that he faced the low hills covered with frosty tea plants, he began the tale of the phantom coach.

"You all remember, no doubt," he said, "how the British ship Bombay ran into the United States corvet Onelda in the harbor of Yokohama Jan. 24, 1870, causing the loss of the Onelda and of the lives of 112 of her men. Years later, the story goes, a son of one of the officers who went down with the ship came over from your country just to see the place where his father died, he said, and the land of which he had heard such fairy tales. I shall call him Brown, but that wasn't his name. You may be his cousins for aught I know, with a certain prejudice against gelsins."

"He was a splendid fellow, everybody affirmed, of the finest New England stock. Rich, handsome, affable and 'a very dear,' the ladies said."

I thought I heard a moan from over where Wilson sat, but no doubt it was a delusion, for when I glanced at him he was sitting quietly, his cheroot between his fingers and his eyes upon the shore line, half a mile away.

"He spent a few months traveling over Japan," the captain resumed, "and then—then the usual thing hap-

pened. He fell in love with a geisha whom he met in a chaya, or teahouse, up by the famous waterfall in Kobe and made her his wife, in the usual way, of course, but she had faith in it, poor soul, as most of the gelsins have. He found a home for her, or made it,

rather, of what had once been a yadaya, or inn, a place hidden away in a hollow among the pines and so exquisite, so beautiful within and without, as to seem the abode of fairies. He gave her a score of servants, dozens of the finest crepe kimonos, everything luxurious, in fact, that a woman loves the world over, no matter what her race.

"And so, lulled by the faint music of a hundred temple bells and happy with her teishiu (husband), little Orookson lived her year of wedded life. They say it was beautiful, the light in her lovely face when she met him in the dawn when he came, and that wonderful to listen to was the music of her voice when she hung upon his arm, saying, softly, 'Teishiu, teishiu!' he smiling down upon her as only he knew how to smile.

"Everybody in Kobe knew them well by sight, and she was the envy of every woman because of her coach and ponies, which had been brought over from the States for her especial use. Ponies were scarce in Japan, you know, and, as for coaches—well, jin rikshas served often for even the nobility.

"Their favorite drive was to the spot where for years since, in the dusk of warm evenings, has been seen the phantom coach—ghost, it is said, of that which was Orookson's pride."

"Did he love her?" I ventured to ask.

"The captain took a few long whiffs of his cigar, and the stillness grew oppressive.

"Yes," he said musingly, "in a way, you understand. She loved him, at any rate, and—"

"And he her! I swear it by the Eternal!"

We all turned to look at Wilson. He had risen suddenly and crossed to the window, where he stood with his back toward us for fully a long minute, while no one spoke or moved. Then he turned upon us a face that was drawn and white and saying, in a voice so low that we bent our heads to listen, "One should not judge where he cannot know," resumed his seat quietly and relighted his cheroot.

"You are right," replied the captain. "But this man, if he loved at all, loved and rode away or sailed away, which is one and the same thing, and he never came back, though he left in its cradle the boy that came to them but a month before he went away. He left plenty of money for them, however, with the United States consul at Kobe, so she staid home with the boy and growing paler day by day and often praying behind the shoji of her tokonoma, waited for the 'music feet' of her teishiu. Sometimes, though rarely, she drove with her boy and his ahma to the old place on the beach, but the zen made her sad, she said. Oh, it's an old, old story in Japan!"

"Yes, but the phantom coach, captain?"

"Oh, well, from one of those drives little Orookson never returned to the house among the pines. No one knows how it happened, but coach, coachman, geisha and child went into the sea together. The nurse, who alone escaped, said the ponies were frightened and that her mistress held her baby high over her head as the coach went down and cried with an awful cry, 'Teishiu, teishiu!' Her heart was broken, the ahma said. It was well she was not to suffer any more."

A loud thud startled us, and we all rushed to the rescue of Wilson. He lay in a tumbled heap where he had fallen, and for awhile we thought him dead. The captain's brantly brought him round, however, and we helped him to his stateroom, laughing at his quaint remarks about "that infernal climate" that had made a woman of him. He

plained to us the story of the phantom coach, and we all listened with interest.

"Come here, young man. I'd like to speak to you."

The proud bowler approached. "You are the only man who ever bowled me out," he said. "Here's \$5 for you, and if you hadn't made such a blank fool of yourself I'd given you \$50."—Detroit Free Press.

Costly Fare For Ostriches. There was a happening at the ostrich farm recently which disproves the theory that the ostrich is satisfied with eating nails, barbed wire and the like. A man who had visited the farm the day before discovered that his gold watch was missing. Thinking that he might have lost it at the farm, he returned to look for it. When he arrived, he enlisted the services of a youth and started in quest without entertaining much hope of finding the watch. About the first thing noticed by the youth was an ostrich tossing something in the air. It was the watch and would have been swallowed if it had been a glass faced watch. It happened that both sides were opened and lodged in the beak. The next day the valuation of one of the birds was enhanced \$50. It swallowed a diamond from the setting of a woman visitor who inadvertently sought to console the bird by caressing its forehead.—Arizona Republican.

Inquisitive people are the funnels of conversation. They do not take in anything for their own use, but merely to pass it to another.

Passions weaken, but habits strengthen with age.—W. E. H. Lecky.

Illustration of a woman looking out a window.

Plaintly seen against the evening sky stood ponies, mother and babe.

wished to be left alone, he said. He needed nothing and would take a siesta. Guessed "the typhoon had shook him up too much," and so on.

The afternoon waned, and the dusk crept down from the hills and out upon the sea. The ship stowed up under orders until as we reached Phantom point she was barely creeping. We were all on deck, watching the shore line eagerly, though none of us expected to see anything unusual. Oh, no! Wilson, still pale and trembling a little, I fancied, stood leaning over the rail, his eyes strained out through the half dusk and that wonderful smile of