# AH LEE BUNG'S VACATION

By WALLACE IRWIN

**Mike Caught Him in the Act, and Was So Terrifying That Bung Fell Back in a Heap.**

AH LEE BUNG came strolling down the south road humming a good for nothing Chinese tune, which seemed to be in keeping with his mood. His attitude indicated settled hostility to work of all kinds, his pace being leisurely, aimless, like that of a snail on a half-holiday. And this was strange, because Bung, though slow at times, was nearly always industrious. But today he was drugged with spring; for were not the apricot trees beginning to burst into delicate bloom, and was not Bung's soul inclined to do the same? The old man, pausing, reached up to a lower branch and plucked a sprig of blossoms. These he twirled between his thumb and finger, holding them at full length; and had not Bung been one-eyed, gray, fat, and possessed of a comedian's profile, one might have suspected him of composing a sonnet in pure Cantonese.

Judge Oliver came pegging round the curve and caught Bung in his romantic pose. "Hey, Bung!" he called out, simulating great ferocity.

"Yep, Boss!" responded Bung, smiling amiably.

"You old faker—going to stand there all day picking posies? What d'ye think I hire you for?"

"Sometime I no can tell, Judge Olivah. Day likee now, when bud-bud come on aplicot tlee, then poor ole Bung he no can workee plenty good. He likee hop-dance, he likee sing-song; but workee-workee no can do."

"This isn't the Garden of Eden, Bung, just because the weather happens to be good. Brace up! Man born of woman must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow."

"My blow no likee sweat today," responded Bung dreamily. "He too lazy."

"Maybe you're sick."

"Yep, I heap sick. I catchee spling fevah—too bad!" Bung's self pity did not seem to sadden him to any extent.

"There's only one cure for spring fever," said the Judge. "Get a hoe and weed out all the walks around the house."

"You heap wise doctah, mebbe," said Bung with a yawn.

According to instructions, Bung set to work weeding out the walks. Several times during the morning Mrs. Oliver, looking out, saw Bung giving a Chinese version of Mr. Markham's peasant hero who "leans upon his hoe."

"What makes him so lazy today?" she asked.

"He says it's spring fever," replied her husband. "Don't know as I blame the old dog. Everybody feels a bit stretchy about the time the trees begin to blossom."

"He needs a vacation," announced Mrs. Oliver.

"Are you joking, my dear?"

"I certainly am not!" announced the lady. "Heaven only knows how many years he's been grinding away here without asking for a layoff of any kind! He's beginning to feel the need of change."

"Never thought of it," said the Judge reflectively. Then, striking his knee resoundingly, he chuckled, "By George! I wonder what Bung would do with himself?"

ABOUT noon Bung's loitering hoe had grazed the weeds close to the porch; so Judge Oliver asked him, "How long since you've had a vacation?"

"No-workee time? Oh, six, sepen, year, mebbe. I have velly nice time—then I go up San José, losee fifty-fi' dollah by play polka game. That was plenty vlacation fo' long time."

"Well, suppose I gave you another week's vacation, do you think you would come back feeling better?"

Bung gave this matter some serious reflection. "Yep," he said finally, "that would be velly good health fo' me."

"What would you do with your time,—go up to San José and lose your cash again?"

"Nope, Boss. I no play polka game no mo'. You give me vlacation, I do what I likee do most plenty today."

"And what's that?"

"Not'ing!" said Bung candidly. "I like be lazy man all time. I likee make no good walkee, all same hobo."

"Every man to his taste," said Judge Oliver, somewhat horrified. "Go ahead for a week and be just as dirty and useless as you know how. But keep your old pigtail out of mischief, and don't wander so far you can't get back here when your week's up." The master handed his slave a ten-dollar gold piece.

"Muchee 'bliged!" chuckled Bung. "By this cashee I do not'ing heap plenty."

He went to his shack and, after the usual lunch of cold rice, tea, and potatoes, he set to work packing for travel. Bung's valise consisted of a faded pink bandana which he tied cornerwise over his scant necessities. He placed therein a can of rice, some papers for cigarettes, some tea, a half-dozen punksticks and prayer wafers, a cake of soap, four large potatoes, and a package of rank tobacco. These he tied into a more or less bulky bundle and started shuffling down the orchard road leading westward.

At the confines of the Oliver ranch on the west there runs a rambling road which twists a great deal among the adjacent ranches as though never quite decided whether to proceed to Los Gatos or to strike boldly into the foothills. Bung paused in a somewhat similar state of indecision. He vaguely remembered a "cousin" named Mok who lived in Los Gatos, and there he might apply for entertainment when the scant provisions in his kit gave out. On the other hand, he might turn westward, cross the mountains, and obtain a view of the ocean, which he had not seen for years. Bung decided to go west.

Now, there is in every Chinaman the same instinctive love of place that makes a cat return to the alley where she has been starved and stoned since kittenhood. For over twenty years Bung had slept in the same bunk on the Oliver ranch. It was not easy for him to depart lightly, even for a week. Scarcely had his unwilling feet advanced a dozen steps down the road than he found himself sighing and looking back toward those dear loved acres. What if something should happen to the Olivers during his absence? Surely, they could not meet any great emergency without the guidance and counsel of the indispensable Bung! A week, in fact, was a long time. He might go a great distance, anything might occur— It was evident that Bung was feeling homesick before leaving home.

Less than a city block down the road Bung encountered a narrow fork running westward; but his feet had scarcely tested the dust of this meandering pike before he spied the laziest, most delightful little bridge spanning a dry watercourse, whose bed was shady with a tangle of thorny locust and chaparral hanging canopy-like from the low banks. This retreat looked good to him. It was a place of rest, and it was comfortingly near home. Disregarding the "No Trespassing" sign, Bung slid through the barbed wire fence that separated the ravine from the road. A moment later his feet gave way, and Bung shot meteorlike through the thorny underbrush into the soft, dry sand eight or nine feet below.

Scarcely scratched by this drop into Paradise, Bung picked himself up, smiling like a row of Buddhas. Nothing could more directly appeal to an idle mood than this warm, leafy subway. Bung deposited his bundle on the sandy bed and removed his shoes, then he