ON THE CHINAMAN

By Jerome K. Jerome.

"'E AD SECURED THE ONLY LAMPPOST AND WAS LEANING AGEN IT."

WHAT is all this talk I 'ear about the Chinese?" said Mrs. Wilkins to me the other morning. We generally indulge in a little chat while Mrs. Wilkins is laying the breakfast table. Letters and newspapers do not arrive in my part of the temple much before 9. From half past 8 to 9 I am rather glad of Mrs. Wilkins. "They 'a've been up to some of their tricks again, 'aven't they?" "The foreigner, Mrs. Wilkins," I replied, "whether he be Chinee or any other, he is always up to tricks. Was not England specially prepared by an all wise Providence to frustrate these knavish tricks? Which of such particular tricks may you be referring to at the moment, Mrs. Wilkins?" "Well, 'e's comin' over 'ere, isn't he, sir, to take the work out of our mouths, as it were." "Well, not exactly over here, to England, Mrs. Wilkins," I explained; "there's talk of his being introduced into Africa to work in the mines there." "It's a funny thing," said Mrs. Wilkins, "but to 'ear the way some of them talk in our block you might run away with the notion—that is, if you didn't know 'em—that work was their only joy. I said to one of 'em the other evening—a man as calls 'isself a brass finisher, though, Lord knows, the only brass 'e ever finishes is what his poor wife earns, and isn't quick enough to hide away from 'im—well whatever 'appens, I says, it will be clever of 'em if they take away much work from you. It made them all laugh, that did," added Mrs. Wilkins, with a touch of pardonable pride. "Ah," continued the good lady, "it's surprising 'ow contented they can be with a little, some of 'em. Give 'em a 'ard working woman to look after them, and a day out once a week with a procession of the unemployed, they don't ask for nothing more. There's that beauty my poor sister Jane was fool enough to marry. Serves 'er right, as I used to tell her at first, till there didn't seem any more need to rub it into her. She'd 'ad one good 'usband. It wouldn't 'ave been fair for her to have had another, even if there'd been a chance of it, seeing the few of 'em there is to go round among so many. But it's always the same with us widows; if we happen to 'ave been lucky the first time, we put it down to our own judgment—think we can't ever make a mistake again; and if we draw a wrong 'un, as the saying is, we argue as if it was the duty of providence to make it up to us the second time. Why, I'd 'a been making a fool of myself three years ago if 'e 'adn't been good-natured enough to call one afternoon when I was out and hook it off with two-pound eight in the best teapot that I 'ad been soft enough to talk to 'im about; and never let me set eyes on 'im again; God bless 'im! 'E's one of the born-tireds, 'e is," continued Mrs. Wilkins, "as poor Jane might 'ave seen for 'erself, if she 'ad only looked at 'im. But that's courtship all the world over—old and young alike, so far as I've been able to see it; the man's all eyes and the woman's all ears. They don't seem to 'ave any other senses left 'em. I ran against 'im the other night, on my way 'ome, at the corner of Gray's Inn road. There was the usual crowd watching a pack of them Italians laying down the asphalte in 'Olborn, and 'e was among 'em. 'E 'ad secured the only lamppost and was leaning agen it. 'Hullo,' I ses, 'glad to see you 'aven't lost yer job. Nothin' like stickin' to it, when you've dropped into somethin' that really suits you.' 'What do you mean, Martha?' 'e ses. 'E's not one of what I call your smart sort. It takes a bit of sarcasm to get through 'is 'ed. 'Well,' I ses, 'you're still on the old track, I see, looking for work. Take care you don't 'ave an accident one of these days and run up agen it, before you've got time to get out of its way.' 'It's these miserable foreigners,' 'e ses, 'look at 'em,' 'e ses. 'There's enough of you doing that,' I ses. 'I've got my room to put straight and three hours' needlework to do before I can get to bed. But don't let me 'inder you. You might forget what work was like, if you didn't take an opportunity of watchin' it now and then.' 'They come over 'ere,' 'e ses, 'and take the work away from us chaps.' 'Ah,' I ses, 'poor things, perhaps they ain't married.' 'Lazy devils!' 'e says, 'look at 'em, smoking cigarettes. I could do that sort of work. There's nothing in it. It don't take 'eathen foreigners to dab a bit of tar about a road.' 'Yes,' I ses, 'you always could do everybody else's work but your own.' 'I can't find it, Martha,' 'e ses. 'No,' I ses, 'and you never will in the sort of places you go looking for it. They don't 'ang it out on lampposts, and they don't leave it about at the street corners. One of these days,' I ses, 'when you're walking about 'appy and careless, not thinking about it, you'll run up agen it, as I tell you, and then you'll get the biggest shock you've ever 'ad in all your life. Go 'ome,' I ses, 'and turn the mangle for your poor wife. That's big enough for you to find, even in the dark.' 'Looking for work!" snorted Mrs. Wilkins with contempt. "we women never 'ave much difficulty in finding it, I've noticed. There are times when I feel I could do with losing it for a day."

"But what did he reply, Mrs. Wilkins?" I asked: "your brass-finishing friend, who was holding forth on the subject of Chinese cheap labor." Mrs. Wilkins as a conversationalist is not easily kept to the point. I was curious to know what the working classes were thinking on the subject. "Oh, that," replied Mrs. Wilkins; "'e didn't say nothing. 'E ain't the sort that's got much to say in an argument. 'E belongs to the crowd that hangs about 'at the back, and does the shouting. But there was another of 'em, a young fellow as I feels sorry for, with a wife and three small children, who 'asn't 'ad much luck for the last six months; and that through no fault of 'is own, I should say, from the look of 'im. 'I was a fool,' ses 'e, 'when I chucked a good situation and went out to the war. They told me I was going to fight for equal rights for all white men. I thought they meant that all of us were going to have a better chance, and it seemed worth making a bit of a sacrifice for, that did. I should be glad if they would give me a job in their mines that would enable me to feed my wife and children. That's all I'd ask them for.'" "It is a difficult problem, Mrs. Wilkins," I said. "According to the mine owners—'" "Ah," said Mrs. Wilkins, "they don't seem to be exactly what you'd call popular, them mine owners, do they? Daresay they're not as bad as they're painted." "Some people, Mrs. Wilkins," I said, "paint them very black. There are those who hold that the South African mine owner is not a man at all, but a kind of pantomime demon. You take Goliath, the whale that swallowed Jonah, a selection from the least respectable citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah at their worst, Bluebeard, Queen Mary, Guy Fawkes, and the sea serpent—or rather, you take the most objectionable attributes of these various personages, and mix them up together. The result is the South African mine owner, a monster who would willingly promote a company for the putting on the market a new meat extract, prepared exclusively from newborn infants, provided the scheme promised a fair and reasonable opportunity of fleecing the widow and the orphan." "I've 'eard they're a bad lot," said Mrs. Wilkins, "but we're most of us that, if we listen to what other folks say about us." "Quite so, Mrs. Wilkins," I agreed. "One never arrives at the truth by listening to one side only. On the other hand, for example, there are those who stoutly maintain that the South African mine owner is a kind of spiritual creature, all heart, and sentiment, who, against his own will, has been, so to speak, dumped down upon this earth as the result of over production up above the higher class of archangel. The stock of archangels of superior finish exceeds the heavenly demands: the surplus has been dropped down into South Africa and has taken to mine owning. It is not that these celestial visitors of German-sounding nomenclature care themselves about gold. Their only desire is, during this earthly pilgrimage of theirs, to benefit the human race. Nothing can be obtained in this world without money—" "That's true," said Mrs. Wilkins, with a sigh—"for gold, everything can be obtained. The aim of the mine-owning archangel is to provide the world with gold. Why should the world trouble to grow things and make things? "Let us," say these archangels temporarily dwelling in South Africa, "dig up and distribute to the world plenty of gold, then the world can buy whatever it wants, and be happy."

"There may be a flaw in the argument, Mrs. Wilkins," I allowed; "I am not presenting it to you as the last word upon the subject. I am merely quoting the view of the South African mine owner, feeling himself a much misunderstood benefactor of mankind."

"I expect," said Mrs. Wilkins, shrewdly, "they are just the ordinary sort of Christian, like the rest of us, anxious to do the best they can for themselves and not too particular as to doing other people in the process."

"I am inclined to think, Mrs. Wilkins, that you are not very far from the truth. A friend of mine a couple of months ago was very bitter on the subject of Chinese cheap labor. With his strong denunciation of the proposal one was bound to concur. It was founded throughout upon the highest ideals. A little later there died a distant relative of his, who left him 20,000 South African mining shares. He thinks now that to object to the importation of Chinese is narrow minded, illiberal and against all religious teaching. He has bought an abridged edition of Confucius, and tells me that there is much that is ennobling in Chinese morality. Indeed, I gather from him that the introduction of the Chinese into South Africa will be the saving of that country. The noble Chinee will afford an object lesson to the poor white man, displaying to him the virtues of sobriety, thrift and humility. I also gather that it will be of inestimable benefit to the noble Chinee himself. The Christian missionary will get hold of him in bulk, so to speak, and imbue him with the higher theology. It appears to be one of those rare cases where everybody is benefited at the expense of nobody. It is always a pity to let these rare opportunities slip by."

"Well," said Mrs. Wilkins, "I've nothin' to say agen the Chinaman, as a Chinaman. As to 'is being a 'eathen, well, throwin' stones at a church, as the sayin' is, don't make a Christian of you. There's Christians I've met as couldn't do themselves much 'arm by changing their religion; and as to cleanliness, well, I've never met but one and 'e was a washerwoman, and I'd rather 've sat next to 'im in a third-class carriage on a bank 'oliday than next to some of 'em. Seems, to me," continued Mrs. Wilkins, "we've got into the 'abit of talkin' a bit too much about other people's dirt. The London atmosphere ain't nat'rally a dry-cleanin' process in itself; but there's a goodish few as seem to think it is. One comes across free-born Britons 'ere and there as I'd be sorry to scrub clean for a shillin' and find my own soap." "It is a universal failing, Mrs. Wilkins," I explained. "If you talk to a traveled Frenchman, he contrasts, to his own satisfaction, the Paris 'ouvrier' in his blue blouse with the appearance of the London laborer." "I daresay they're all right according to their lights," said Mrs. Wilkins, "but it does seem a bit wrong that if our own chaps are willin' and anxious to work, after all they've done, too, in the way of getting the mines for us, that they shouldn't be allowed the job." "Again, Mrs. Wilkins, it is difficult to arrive at a just conclusion," I said. "The mine owner, according to his enemies, hates the British workman with the natural instinct that evil creatures feel toward the noble and virtuous. He will go to trouble and expense merely to spite the British workman, to keep him out of South Africa. According to his friends the mine owner sets his face against the idea of white labor for two reasons. First and foremost, it's not nice work; the mine owner hates the thought of his beloved white brother toiling in the mines. It is not right that the noble white man should demean himself by such work. Secondly, white labor is too expensive. If, for digging gold, men had to be paid anything like the same price they are paid for digging coal, the mines could not be worked. The world would lose the gold that the mine owner is anxious to bestow upon it. The mine owner, following his own inclination, would take a little farm, grow potatoes and live a beautiful life—perhaps with a little poetry. A slave to a sense of duty, he is chained to the philanthropic work of gold-mining. If we hamper him and worry him the danger is that he will get angry with us—possibly he will order his fiery chariot and return to where he came from." "Well, 'e can't take the gold with him, wherever 'e goes to," argued Mrs. Wilkins. "You talk, Mrs. Wilkins," I said, "as if gold were of more value to the world than is the mine owner." "Well, isn't it?" demanded Mrs. Wilkins. "It's a new idea," Mrs. Wilkins," I answered, "it wants thinking out."

PUT NOT YOUR TRUST IN MAXIMS---Fable for the Foolish

FAR back in the dark ages when trust was a word still in good standing among the respectable members of the community and when all men were brave and all women were beautiful, some enemy of his kind, if there were any more of his particular kind, sat up late one night to formulate the theory and thrust it forth on a misguided world that genius is the infinite capacity for taking pains and that inspiration is composed principally of perspiration. It would be hard to estimate the amount of pure, unadulterated trouble that that man has caused the universe; but it would undoubtedly entitle him to take rank along with the man who propounded the fifteen puzzle and the unmentionable individual who attempted to make impertinent inquiry into the exact length of time that Ann has been an inhabitant of this mundane sphere.

It is with the humble desire of setting the world right as to the true character of genius that we set ourselves to tell the tale of James Henry, the would-be financier. If by telling this simple narrative we can enable every man to recognize genius at sight, especially in other people, we shall consider that we have done our duty by our day and generation and will be ready to die happy, if we can't help it. James Henry had been brought up on Webster's old blue backed spelling book and a Spencerian copy-book, the kind that contains a system of moral philosophy combined with full instruction in graceful and elegant penmanship, all in twenty-four pages and for the moderate price of fifteen cents. In those inspired ages James Henry learned that experientia docet, that labor omnia vincit, and that it is better to be right than President, especially when there is small chance of the average individual being either to any great extent.

Armed with these sublime maxims he ventured forth into the cold, cold world one bright morning. Of course, he was going to be rich. That was a mere bagatelle; any native born American can be rich if he wants to. The trouble is that most of us are so busy making a living that we haven't time to make money. By way of starting fair James Henry connected himself with a job sticking stamps on circulars in a patent medicine factory, working twelve hours a day for the munificent wage of $3 50 a week. It was a humble beginning, but James Henry was assured by his copybook that great oaks from little acorns grow and he decided to wait a few weeks to discover whether his job was an acorn or a horse chestnut. At the end of two years his salary had been raised to $4 a week and half the time he was let out at 6 o'clock instead of 7.

He seemed to see some flaws in his original scheme about this time and was forced to the conclusion that the acorn had been frost bitten. Then he turned himself loose and rounded up another position painting addresses on packing cases for a manufacturer of overalls. This was a distinct improvement, as his salary was advanced 50 cents at one fell swoop and he was enabled to minister to the wants of the legitimate business world. It is difficult and heartrending to consider what would become of the industrial fabric if the common jeans overalls of commerce were suddenly to pass from our ken. James Henry still believed firmly that all that was necessary to rise to the top round of the ladder of fame was constant application and unfailing industry and honesty, but he had some doubts about the speed with which the act could be accomplished. There were so many other men scaling the same ladder that some one was always walking over him and standing on his head to reach the next round.

About this time a young man with the unassuming name of Snooks from James Henry's home town appeared on the scene and anpounced that he was going to be a captain of industry himself. He was of the opinion that it was an open game and that he was just as free to chip in as the next man if he had enough to make the ante. In contradistinction from James Henry he didn't have any illusions about the value of hard work as a stepping stone to fame and fortune. He knew that it was right and proper to be honest and fairly industrious, because otherwise he was likely to land in the Institution for the Suppression of Undue Activity with Other People's Money and his period of apprenticeship to the captain of industry business would come to an untimely end. But his idea was that the good old-fashioned virtues were not enough of themselves to carry a man more than a thousand miles away from his native heath. For this reason, when he broke loose from the home ties he petitioned his father to let him make a deal with the village butcher for the fatted calf instead of saving that animal until his triumphant return. He wasn't making any bets on the exact date of that return.

When he landed in the markets of trade with the product of his transaction with the butcher in his inside pocket he at once proceeded to look up some place where they were willing to pay a fancy price for a superior article of gray matter, with a small bank account to back it. He had read his copybook, but he had also read the newspapers and he thought he knew a game that was worth at least two of James Henry's. His first engagement was with a railroad office, where he was paid a modest, retiring sum for checking up bills of lading and explaining to indignant shippers why it was utterly impossible to deliver their shingle nails and canned tomatoes until at least three weeks had elapsed after the date of shipment. He was so successful in this line that he was soon advanced to the office of the general manager, where he sat at the outer door and told men with a grim, determined look in their eyes that the G. M. had left for Florida that very morning and would be gone at least three weeks. Meanwhile he was learning how a railroad can pay dividends and yet keep out of sight of the Interstate Commerce Commission. This faculty alone should entitle a man to a place in the diplomatic service.

In the course of his researches he constructed a plan for cutting down the payroll one-third and getting twice as much work out of the slaves that were left. As a reward for this evidence of unusual business sagacity the company doubled his salary and cut his hours in two. Mr. Snooks had learned by this time that the most important work in the world is the discovery of ways for making other people do your work for you. As a result of this he was advanced to the post of general manager when the late incumbent of that position was called up higher—to the president's chair and a country place in Jersey. The first thing that Snooks did after he had become thoroughly adjusted to the cushions in his new office chair was to show the board of directors how they could double the stock of the company and leave the outsiders kicking their heels at the post when it came to voting. In consequence of this Napoleonic maneuver Snooks was able to gather until himself a large quantity of the stock at an absurdly low rate and buy a house for his wife with the first installment of dividends.

All this time James Henry was struggling along with one eye on his battered old copybook and the other on the monthly remembrances from the butcher and the baker. There were a Mrs. James Henry and several little James Henrys now, and between the cares of this world and his anxieties for the next James Henry had acquired a large bald spot and a stoop in his shoulders. He was now first bill clerk in the overall house and his salary was almost as much as Snooks spent on cab fare and violets in a week.

This sad story of real life is not unfolded with a view to shaking the faith of the young men of this land in the validity of the maxims on which they have been reared. The maxims are all right in their place, but they won't support a family without assistance. The trouble with James Henry, as he was forced to confess on his deathbed, was that he had not discovered until it was too late that while early to bed and early to rise may make a man healthy, wealthy and wise, it is usually some other man.

(Copyright, 1903, by Albert Britt.)

"BY A HAIR'S BREADTH"

Powerful Russian novel by Headon Hills which gives a new insight into the maze of intrigue and plot and counterplot through which the Czar carries out his precarious existence

BEGINS IN NEXT SUNDAY CALL