

# The Flaming Heart

Quest For a Hidden Ruby in the Hills of China

By JAMES A. RELICK

The little woman in black had kept to herself during the long voyage from San Francisco to Shanghai, and now with the China coast lying straight ahead, a long, flat line of yellow merging into the muddy, yellow waters of the broad mouth of the Yangtsiang, she eyed her fellow passengers with a close scrutiny.

Archer Clarkson had noticed her from the very beginning, perhaps because of her evident though self-imposed loneliness, as well as the serene beauty of her face. To her fellow passenger she was Mrs. Pearce, a widow. To Clarkson she was an object of interest.

He was surprised on this last day of the voyage when she approached him where he stood near the ship's rail and spoke.

"Mr. Clarkson," she said, rather timidly, while a faint color flushed her clear skin, "the captain tells me that you are a resident of Shanghai and may be of assistance to me. I am a perfect stranger here and—I need help."

"It will give me the greatest pleasure to be of assistance," assured Clarkson courteously. "Pray command me; I am entirely at your service."

"You are more than kind," she said, with a little tremor in her voice. "I need a friend, oh, so badly! I have a most delicate and dangerous mission to perform, and I need the advice and help of a friend. May I call you that, Mr. Clarkson?"

"I shall be honored, Mrs. Pearce," he said sincerely.

"Thank you. Now, let me say that, although my mission is a dangerous one, if it is successfully accomplished it will make me a very rich woman—and you a rich man, although, pardon me, you may be rich beyond the dreams of avarice already!" She smiled charmingly.

"I am anything but rich," laughed Clarkson.

Mrs. Pearce put out an eager little hand.

"Then you are just the man to help me out!" she cried enthusiastically.

Again Clarkson laughed.

"I begin to see that poverty has its advantages," he said, clasping her hand in his for an instant.

"Thank you," she said simply. "I felt that I could before I approached you. Let me state the case briefly: I am the widow of Henry Pearce, who commanded the big steamer Catalpa, plying between Vancouver and the far eastern ports. My husband had lived in China many years and had good friends among the Chinese as well as the foreigners.

"Four years ago Captain Pearce had a vacation and when he reached Shanghai turned the Catalpa over to a com-

"It seems that on a previous voyage to the east my husband befriended a mandarin who was returning home to die. This Chinese, who was very rich, told my husband of a certain jewel, a very valuable ruby, called the Flaming Heart. This ruby was secreted in one of the niches of a rock temple along the upper gorges of the Yangtze river, and there was a bitter rivalry between Lin Wah, our mandarin, and Fuh Klenso, who ruled another province, for the discovery and possession of the jewel.

"Lin Wah had the advantage over his enemy because he alone possessed the directions how to find the ruby, but it became necessary for Lin Wah to go to the United States, where he had relatives, and during his absence he left trusted men to guard the rock temple until he could return and complete his search for the Flaming Heart.

"But the mandarin was taken ill and died before the Catalpa reached Shanghai, and he gave the precious paper to my husband and with his dying breath wished him the Flaming Heart. That is why Captain Pearce took a vacation the following year and went up the Yangtze river.

"When he reached the rock temple he discovered by careful inquiry that Lin Wah's guards had been killed at their posts and that the rock temple and its vicinity were swarming with the men of Fuh Klenso, who were making a frantic search for the gem. They evidently suspected my husband's interest in the matter, and one day they stabbed him, and after searching his clothing and finding nothing (for he had taken the precaution to commit the directions to memory) they left him for dead and ran away, abandoning for the time the search for the ruby.

"Captain Pearce was an invalid for four years, and before he died he learned that the mandarin, Fuh Klenso, was also dead and therefore the way to the safe discovery of the Flaming Heart must be open. If you will go with me and discover the gem half of it will be yours," finished Mrs. Pearce.

"That part may be settled afterward," said Clarkson gravely.

A week later Archer Clarkson and Mrs. Pearce were sailing up the Yangtze river in one of the steamers that ply the great stream as far up as Hankow. There they hired a boat and boatmen, and, always accompanied by Clarkson's trusted Chinese "boy," Van Ping, they proceeded up the river.

At last they reached a point where they bade their "trackers" make camp by the boat, and Mrs. Pearce and Clarkson went on with Van Ping, who had been born in that province and knew the country well.

Another day's journey by a devious path that sometimes skirted the river or again wound around through the pine clad hills and at last they emerged on the top of a mighty rock that frowned above the river. Standing at the edge of the precipice, Archer Clarkson looked down at the river, boiling down through the rocky gorge below.

Mrs. Pearce uttered a little cry of alarm, the first symptom of weakness she had indulged since they began the journey.

"What a dreadful place!" she shuddered. "Captain Pearce said the opening to the rock temple was just below the summit of the rock, but how can one reach it?"

"We must rig a sling and lower ourselves down in front of the entrance. Either Van Ping or I must go first."

"Let Van Ping go—there might be danger!" she cried quickly, and tears filled her eyes.

Clarkson felt a queer throbbing in the region of his watch pocket. A great tenderness for the plucky little woman filled his heart.

Van Ping, who had not fallen in love with any one, had been studying the situation from a practical viewpoint. Now he approached his master and, apologizing profusely for the intrusion, begged to offer advice.

"Fire ahead!" was Clarkson's suggestion.

Van Ping declared that as a little lad he had played about this great rock, and he remembered that there was a legend concerning a heart that was buried in the rock. "But," said Van Ping earnestly, "the way to the hiding place is from the top of the rock and not by the entrance that overhangs the gorge."

"The top of the rock?" Clarkson was asking when from behind them there came a shrill cry of triumph, and they turned to see a dozen rascally looking Chinese approaching them through the pine woods.

In an instant Clarkson realized the great danger that faced them. It would be an easy matter for the bandits to rush them and crowd them over the edge of the precipice into the river, where all traces of them would be forever lost.

He caught Nita Pearce by the hand, and, calling to Van Ping to follow, Clarkson pulled out his revolver and ran to meet the Chinese. This unexpected move so startled the latter that they paused in confusion, thus giving the fugitives an opportunity to get down from the rock and out of the danger that threatened them.

Van Ping went forward to interview the attacking party.

Presently he returned to his master.

"These scoundrels velly wicked men want Flaming Heart—say so lang ago—way back, their mandarin he promise Flaming Heart if they help—but no can find, and he die. Now they search some more and find you. They say you die."

"Well," mused Clarkson, "suppose you tell them to go ahead and search. We won't interfere with them if they will let us alone."

After half an hour of parleying Van Ping returned to say that the Chinese would search on their own account,

only they stipulated that the Americans should not follow them to the rock cave. To this Clarkson agreed after talking to Van Ping.

And presently the ragged, filthy crew were crowded on the rock, chattering vociferously while they arranged a sling, and one by one were lowered to the opening in the face of the rock which gave entrance to the rock temple.

When there remained only one man on the rock, he who worked the swinging seat, Clarkson and Van Ping conferred together, and finally, leaving Mrs. Pearce to watch the Chinaman from a safe position with a revolver held menacingly in her hand, they made a careful search around the base of the rock for the spot which Van Ping said he had visited once when a lad. It was here that he had learned of the hidden Flaming Heart. Many years had passed since then, but as the other searchers had been on a false trail it remained for Van Ping to find at last the little mound

of moss beneath the crooked pine. Digging the mound away revealed a little flat stone, and the removal of the stone showed a round hole faced with cement that apparently led down into the rear of the rock temple. It looked very dark down there, and Clarkson thrust his long arm down and clutched something hard and round like a metal box. He brought it up and was looking down into the cavity when part of the wall near the bottom fell away and a yellow hand was thrust in from the rock temple in a futile search for the treasure.

"We must get out of this," said Clarkson quickly, and he related the incident to Van Ping. In a very short time the searchers below would discover that the treasure had been found by the Americans and there would be murder and bloodshed at once.

Van Ping, bled the undying gratitude of his master that afternoon.

The Chinese on guard was an optimum smoker, and his senses were dulled by the drug. Now he sat drowsily at the edge of the precipice, the rope hanging loosely in his hand. The end of the rope had been twisted around the sturdy limb of a tree, affording a purchase for the manipulation of the sling.

Van Ping reached up and cut the rope wound around the tree. It slipped hissing through the weak grasp of the guard, and before the man realized what had happened the rope had dropped from his fingers and the sling chair dangling below fell hurtling into the river.

The guard screamed shrilly, but his cries were instantly stifled by Van Ping's big blue handkerchief tied about his mouth.

Then, hand in hand, Clarkson and Nita Pearce went back along the way they had come, and Van Ping led the way.

At last they came up to the camp of the trackers, and Clarkson offered them double pay to put off in the boat at once.

Nita Pearce sat in the stern of the boat, her hand in Archer Clarkson's. There was an unspoken understanding between these two, who had met so casually and who had taken this hazardous journey after the Flaming Heart.

They spoke of the Chinese bandits imprisoned in the rock temple, and they spoke of the moment when they might safely open the little bronze box that was hidden in Clarkson's pocket. They talked about rewarding Van Ping. They did not talk of themselves.

At last came the moment when, back in Shanghai at Mrs. Pearce's hotel, they opened the bronze box and looked upon the beautiful ruby which had cost many lives and the possession of which meant the beginning of a new life for Clarkson.

"Isn't it wonderful?" whispered Nita Pearce as she looked down at the glowing ruby.

"Beautiful," agreed Clarkson, but he was looking at Nita's face.

"The loveliest thing I ever saw," murmured Nita, lifting her gray eyes to smile at him.

"I have seen lovelier," said Clarkson, looking deep into her eyes.

Now she understood, and presently when they stood, their faces close together, looking down at the Flaming Heart they saw reflected in its glowing heart a beautiful future back home in the States.

Editha turned her pale little face to the worn and haggard countenance of her husband.

"Mark, what shall we do?" she whispered tensely.

Mark's lips tightened. "I've got exactly \$3.45," he said grimly. "One dollar of that I will spend on railroad tickets to take us out of this merciless city. The rest we will need when we get there."

"Get where, Mark?"

"Get to Rosedale. You remember that my Uncle Phineas lives there."

"But, Mark, dear! Your Uncle Phineas treated you cruelly when you were a boy. You said you would never appeal to him!"

"Dear," said Mark gravely, "there are situations before which pride and resentment melt like snow under a scorching sun."

Once in the train the Thurston looked drearily out of the windows at the bare brown earth overhung by lowering gray clouds from which the snow was drifting in scattering flakes. It was growing colder, and the passengers in the coach talked about the delights of a cold and snowy Christmas, while the children chattered about the gifts they expected from Santa Claus or the meeting with cousins or grandparents. Every one was anticipating a joyous Yuletide.

"Rosedale!" shouted the brakeman.

The Thurston left the train and watched the long string of cars as it wound out of sight around a distant bend. Then they turned their faces to the bleak little station, the empty platform and the pine clad hills that surrounded the little village.

"The place is not far from here," said Mark as he picked up the bags. "Can you walk a little way, Teddy, boy?"

"Course I can," assured Teddy importantly as he gripped his mother's hand.

The three stepped along the road, now covered with a thin veil of white. Woods stretched on either side of them until suddenly they came upon a great open space where there was set a long, low, old fashioned house. The gates were closed, the wooden shutters covered the windows, and an air of desolation pervaded the place.

"Wait here," said Mark to his wife, and he went through the gateway and around the house to the back door. After awhile he came back.

"The house is empty," he said slowly. "A card on the back door says that my uncle is spending the winter in the city with his daughter. Come, let us move on."

They dragged their way wearily through the snow until they came to another house. This was a large, square, comfortable looking habitation, and the red rays of the declining sun turned the windowpanes into glowing flames that gave the place an air of fictitious warmth and welcome.

"What a pleasant house," said Editha involuntarily.

"Yes," murmured Mark indifferently. "It's the old Patton place."

Editha lingered by the gate. She glanced at the four great chimneys and saw that there was no smoke coming from them. The shades in some of the rooms were drawn closely, and the house appeared to be untenanted.

"Wait a moment, Mark," she cried suddenly, and before he could question her intention she had sped up the path and disappeared around the corner of the house.

Presently she appeared with rosy cheeks and shining eyes.

"Come, Mark," she said, with decision; "this is where we are going to spend Christmas."

Mark stared. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean that the people have gone away, the house is closed, and—oh, Mark, there is no place for us to spend Christmas, and our baby is cold and needs rest. Can't you understand? Let us stay here over Christmas. Surely the people who live here cannot be so stony hearted that they would deny us warmth and shelter. We can buy our own food, surely, surely!" Her voice broke suddenly.

# The Christmas House

The Story of How It Received Its Name

By CLARISSA MACKIE

In the sixth year of their happy married life evil days fell upon the Thurston. Mark's long illness, the consequent loss of his position and his inability to secure work of any sort finally resulted in the sale of their household effects and in giving up the few rooms they called home.

The day before Christmas actual want stared them in the face. Mark had placed the trunks that contained their few effects in a storage warehouse, and now, hampered only by a couple of traveling bags, they faced each other in the waiting room of the railroad station. It was warm in there, and they had no place to call home. Little four-year-old Teddy sat down on the leather suit case and swung his fat legs with careless indifference to the fact that his unhappy young parents had sold his crib and that it was very uncertain where he would lay his sunny head that night—that night of all nights, when little children hasten to bed so that they may awake betimes to discover the gifts of Santa Claus.

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A new look came into Mark's eyes, the fierce look of a wild animal when the safety of its family is threatened.

"Come," he said sharply; "it is an opportunity we must not miss."

The desolate little family went up the path and around to a door set in the high basement.

All around the house the snow fell softly like a friendly covering to hide their telltale footprints.

Four hours later a motorcar glided noiselessly up to the gate of the mansion, and a tall man alighted and spoke to the chauffeur.

"That will do, Roberts. I shall not need your assistance tonight. I will telephone you in the morning if I require your services. A merry Christmas to you."

"Thank you, Mr. Brainard. I wish you many of them," returned the man eagerly. "But can't I make you a fire or something?"

"Nothing at all, my man. I shall go directly to bed, and Wakeman will be here at 9 o'clock." He passed a large gold piece into the gloved hand of the chauffeur, and, avoiding the man's grateful acknowledgment, Mr. Brainard went up the front steps and quietly let himself into the dark hall.

For a moment he closed his eyes and permitted wave after wave of tender memories to sweep over his soul, leaving sickening pain in their wake. Time had been when he had had wife and children, when Christmas had been the most joyful anniversary of the entire year. Now riches were his in abundance, but wife and children had been swept away. He was quite alone in the world. He had given lavishly to charity this Yuletide, and now he had crept back to this house of his to spend a solitary Christmas with the memories of his beloved.

A deep sigh escaped him, and he turned to go upstairs when his eyes glanced down the length of the dark hall and rested on a bar of yellow light that shone under the dining room door.

"Intruders," he muttered grimly, and, gripping his cane more firmly, he turned into the darkened drawing room and approached the lighted room by another way.

From the back drawing room double doors led into the dining room, and presently Paul Brainard was standing before the wide crack between the sliding doors and looking in on a strange scene.

It was a singular scene because it was so unexpected in this house that had been given over to ghostly memories.

A fire burned in the wide grate, and the glowing coal threw a ruddy glow over the room that was lighted by one small kitchen lamp placed unobtrusively in a corner. From the mantelpiece there hung a child's little white stocking. Before the fire was a small table, and sitting there, partaking of plain bread and milk, were three people—a haggard young man, who looked as though he needed a juicy beefsteak to strengthen his gaunt frame; a pretty, careworn little woman almost a girl in years, and a beautiful four-year-old boy with a tuft of yellow hair like that of his own little lad of long ago.

What were these people doing here—here, where he had expected only gloom and cheerlessness? Here there were light and warmth, and the spirit of Christmas pervaded the little group.

It looked very much as though they were attempting, in a feeble way, to celebrate the birth of the Christ Child.

Brainard stood there a long time. At last he rolled the door aside and entered the dining room.

At once the intruders were hushed into fear-stricken silence.

"I did not expect guests," said Brainard with grave courtesy.

Mark Thurston arose and broke into hurried explanations. He took all the blame upon his shoulders, although Editha explained that it was all her plan. Teddy Thurston smiled upon the strange gentleman and slipped a chubby hand into Brainard's.

Brainard held it tightly, and its warmth seemed to penetrate his very being. A melting tenderness possessed him. Out of a bleak world God had sent him these people who needed him, needed what he could give to them, what would save them—a father, a mother and a little child! He bowed his head a moment, and his lips moved. His hand went out to Mark Thurston.

"I am glad you came," he said warmly. "I expected to spend a lonely Christmas. You have saved the day for me. But it will never do to have a lean Christmas, and we have just found each other. I will telephone for the motorcar, and perhaps you will all come with me to the village and do some Christmas marketing and shopping." He spoke almost gaily as he tossed Teddy into the air.

The astonished Roberts brought the car around, and Mr. Brainard and his unexpected guests entered and were whirled away to the little village, where they spent two happy hours. Long after midnight Editha Thurston and her husband helped Mr. Brainard trim Teddy's diminutive stockings and fill a tiny tree for the little boy sleeping upstairs in a big, warm bed.

It was a beautiful Christmas for everybody. Mr. Brainard declared that the day had brought him something to live for; Editha cried over the soft, warm furs Mr. Brainard had hurriedly chosen from the village store; Mark rejoiced in a fur lined overcoat as well as the promise of a position as resident secretary with Paul Brainard, and little Teddy declared that their kind host must be Santa Claus himself.

And ever after that all of them called the place the "Christmas House." "Because," said Mr. Brainard reverently, "it brought peace and joy and good will to all of us!"

## NOTICE TO TAXPAYERS

(SEE CHAPTER 24, LAWS OF 1913.)

It is the duty of every inhabitant of the State, of full age and sound mind, to make a list of all property subject to taxation of which he is the owner or has control or management, in the county where the same is situated on the first day of January of the current year.

Such list must show, in the case of real estate, a description thereof such as would be sufficient in a deed to identify it as that title thereto would pass.

Such list must contain a detailed statement of all personal property, including the average value of merchandise for the year ending January 1, 1914.

Such list must be verified by the affidavit of the person making the same.

Lands entered or purchased under any act of congress are not subject to taxation until patent therefor has been issued, except in cases where the issuance of patent has been delayed by the neglect or default of the entryman or purchaser, or of his assigns.

If any person fail to render a true and complete list of his property, the assessor must make such list according to the best information he can obtain, and such person is liable to a penalty of twenty-five per centum; and any person who knowingly makes a false or defective list of his property, is liable to a penalty of twenty-five per cent, and shall be deemed guilty of perjury and punishable accordingly.

In any case where the exemption of \$200 is claimed by, and allowed to, a head of a family, such \$200 must be deducted from the full cash value of his property, and the assessment made at one-third of the value of the amount remaining after deducting the amount of such exemption.

Every owner of property must make a return thereof even though it may be all exempt from taxation, and the assessor should see that all property is listed and put on the tax roll in its proper school district, whether exempt or not, at the same time showing any exemption there may be, and in order to balance the tax roll, the amount of exemption must not exceed the actual value of the property.

Property owners must designate the school district number in which both real and personal property is situated, and the assessor shall arrange the tax roll by SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

All such lists must be made and returned to the county assessor, at any time after the first day of January and not later than the last business day in the month of February of each year, and a failure on the part of any person to make, and return such list within the time aforesaid shall subject him to a penalty of twenty-five per cent upon all of the tax levied against all of his property, to be collected the same as any other portion of the taxes.

The law for the assessment of property will be strictly enforced by me.

J. A. SHIPLEY,  
Assessor of Grant County,  
New Mexico.

First pub. Jan. 16

Notice for Publication.  
Department of the Interior.  
United States Land Office,  
Las Cruces, New Mexico,  
Jan. 9, 1914.

NOTICE is hereby given that John S. Brown, of Lordsburg, N. M., who, on June 21, 1913, made homestead entry, No. 97156, for lots 2 & 3, Sec. 7, T. 22 S., R. 18 W., NE 1/4, SE 1/4, NE 1/4 Section 12, Township 22 S., Range 19 W., N. M. P. Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final commutation proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before D. H. Kestler, U. S. Commissioner, at Lordsburg, N. M., on the 21st day of February 1914.

Claimant names as witnesses:  
Love R. Jones, of Lordsburg, N. M.  
J. H. McClure, of Lordsburg, N. M.  
Nick Hughes, Jr., of Lordsburg, N. M.  
B. W. Randall, of Lordsburg, N. M.  
JOSE GONZALES,  
Register

First insertion, Jan. 16, 1914

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.  
Department of the Interior.  
United States Land Office,  
Las Cruces, New Mexico,  
Jan. 9, 1914

NOTICE is hereby given that Samuel Ward, of Animas, N. M., who, on April 6, 1908, made homestead entry, No. 5537 (25265), for W 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 25, E 1/4 SW 1/4, Section 26 T. 50 S., Range 20 W., N. M. P. Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make Final Five Year Proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before Alfred B. Ward, U. S. Commissioner, at Animas, N. M., on the 21st day of February 1914.

Claimant names as witnesses:  
Ira B. Thompson, of Animas, N. M.  
Steven R. Dismagan, of Animas, N. M.  
Holmes Maddox, of Animas, N. M.  
Elbridge G. Howe, of Animas, N. M.  
JOSE GONZALES,  
Register

First pub. Jan. 16

NOTICE.  
Department of the Interior  
United States Land Office  
Las Cruces, New Mexico,  
Jan. 8, 1914.

NOTICE is hereby given that Clarence O. Wills, of Hachita, N. M., who, on August 24, 1913, made home-lead entry, No. 94673, for W 1/4 NE 1/4, W 1/4 SE 1/4, Section 17, Township 23 N., Range 17 W., N. M. P. Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final three year proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before T. J. Brown, U. S. Commissioner, at Hachita, N. M., on the 26th day of February 1914.

Claimant names as witnesses:  
Tom Upshaw, of Hachita, N. M.  
Will Upshaw, of Hachita, N. M.  
Augustus Lard, of Hachita, N. M.  
John Lard, of Hachita, N. M.  
JOSE GONZALES,  
Register

First pub. Jan. 16

## EAGLE RESTAURANT

THE BEST COOKING,  
THE BEST SERVICE,  
LOCATED IN