

"It's right, too. And I guess there's less divorcin' among 'em than anywhere else. Now an' then a couple even goes to the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City an' gets married for eternity."

"For—what was that? For"—

I find my breath leaving me again.

"For eternity. If they've been married regular by a Mormon bishop, they can go an' get married in the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle for eternity."

"I see, I see. But what if the wife dies and the widower marries again?"

"Well, he can marry her just for this life or he can go to Salt Lake again an' get married to her for eternity too."

I am bewildered by such ingenuity. "Then polygamy has not been given up, only postponed. Is that it?"

That, he tells me, is it.

I feel as though I were hurtling back through ten thousand yesterdays.

It is he himself who brings me back to Tucumcari and the third decade of the twentieth century. He is on his way to Kirtland, Ohio, he says, to visit the central temple of the Reorganized Church. He tried at the railway offices at El Paso to get a job in the offices of the railway at Memphis, but—he laughs—they got on to him.

"What was the idea? I don't quite get it."

"If they'd given me a job at Memphis, they'd have let me have a pass to get there."

"Oh, I see. Then you'd planned to work there for a while?"

"That's what I wanted the general manager to think. I didn't want no job. What I was after was free transportation. Then I'd have hopped the next train for Columbus. I guess I'm out of luck." He laughs.

This little manifestation of what a cynic might term the modernistic approach to the problem of existence gives me a certain sardonic satisfaction. I had been half afraid that my Mormon was a psychic projection of a fictitious character, imperfectly imagined.

Over the cigars he continues to unfold the peculiar Christlikeness of all Mormons. I watch him enthralled, conscious that my Museum of American Character has received an addition which deserves a room to itself.

Her Wicked Finger

By ELIZABETH WASHBURNE WRIGHT

THE monsoon, due to have broken days before, held back and would not break, and again night like a woolen blanket fell upon Calcutta. It was a suffocating and gasping town.

There was no moon, but the night was full of a great luminousness. The treacherous Hugli, slipping past Fort William and up into the heart of the native town, was silent. On the breast of her the river craft threw black and immense shadows, and the surface of the stream was smooth as a mirror, smooth as a basin of oil. Golden and greasy stars, weary of their own weight, seemed to have dropped from the low-hanging heavens and lay upon that sleek and mirror-like surface to be picked up by any passer-by.

A low hum that rose and fell—almost a moan—hung over the town. Now and then a shadow slipped down the empty roads.

There was no breeze or breath; nothing but the cloud of heavy heat that was not to be stirred, that was weighted with the breathings of thousands of souls, their strange foods cooking, the sickening fumes of incense rising from little shrines, the night fragrance of flowers cloying in their sweetness—the stale offensive breath of a community packed to suffocation and gasping for air.

From across the river there began the muffled steady beating of a tom-tom. A mechanical and rhythmic pounding, expressing dumb endurance, hopeless and hypnotized, to continue without cessation to the very end of time.

In a bungalow under the shadow of the fort three men were dining together. A

punkah with a flounce of red cotton swung back and forth over the length of the table. It beat rhythmically like a great red wing—a silent thing stirring the dead air into a semblance of life. The room was lighted with oil lamps that suffused a dull yellowish glow and were turned low to reduce their heat. Behind each man stood his own watchful bearer in wrappings of clean white muslin. At the host's side was stationed a native wielding an enormous fan, fashioned after the manner of a gigantic ax and crudely decorated in swirls of orange and blue paint.

The room had no windows, but numberless doors that opened on a wide veranda. The jungle itself seemed only to stop at this barrier—the reek of it was in the room and the smothering scent of rank flowers in full bloom. Little lizards darted in and out and a steady chorus of insect life rose to a shrill and metallic cadence and sank again in rhythm. Squatting without in the shadows of the veranda, the *punkah-wallah* pulled forever and let slide a rope which vanished through a tiny opening in the wall and suddenly returned.

Conversation, which had lagged and died away, that seemed to follow with unconscious rhythm the eternal sweep and swing of the *punkah*, of a sudden flared up.

"By Jove, opium again—it seems to me the subject can never be left in peace. In the old days there was no trouble about the trade." Efferton, the host, a large florid man, put down impatiently the mango he had been on the point of opening.

"I thought we'd made it plain enough, Cardwell; the Government can't assume responsibility for this trade. There's a great row on at home about it; agitators, busybodies—you know the sort—have scruples about it, talk about 'poisoning the Chinese.' All rot; does 'em good—in moderation. You know—every official in India knows—we'd be in an awful box if the trade were stopped. Where's our revenue to come from? The Puritans at home never seem to give that a thought! We can't tax our poor heathen here any more. Taxation's a ticklish question in any land, let alone out here in the East. Opium pays as nothing else does, and, in my opinion, it's a Godsend to India, and has come to stay. But of course, Cardwell," Efferton interrupted himself quickly, "you understand that this is my 'unofficial' view. Officially we can't support it—I've had it in so many words from the Viceroy himself—we know nothing about it. If you fellows care to run the risk of getting the stuff into China, why, that's your affair. The Government won't heed you; but we don't sanction it, we don't know anything about it. That's our position."

"And does nobody have any sympathy for the Trading Company? What's to become of us?" asked the man addressed as Cardwell, a singularly spare man with a face the color of white leather. "The Chinese are kicking up a devil of a row. They're such obstinate brutes, too—impossible to reason with them. My brother in Canton writes that the Emperor has sent a Commissioner—an old chap named Lin—to stop the trade entirely. Perfectly preposterous! But he's making no

end of trouble—actually refuses to let our merchants land the opium; and, by George, it's still out on the river in junks—or was, when Jim wrote. I suppose you can't interfere, but it's a nasty situation." Cardwell beat impatiently on the table with a spoon. "Dash it! And we've got another cargo waiting to be shipped this week—uncommonly fine stuff too, with just the touch the Chinaman likes!"

"It's hard lines, Cardwell—I admit it. But persevere; it's dogged does it. Jove, but they're a spunky lot to defy us like this!" Efferton applied himself once more to his mango.

"I say, you chaps," broke in here the final and youngest member of the party, who had been listening impatiently to the conversation, "I admire your patriotism, and its practical application to the coffers of India, and all that sort of thing. But it seems to me you haven't given much thought to how the shoe pinches the other fellow. Let me put in a word for John Chinaman. I've spent some years in his Flowery Kingdom, and I flatter myself that I know something of the brute. He's not a bad sort at bottom; he's the most industrious beggar in the world, and law-abiding too, if his rights are respected. Also he has brains, and was making use of 'em too when we in England were running around jolly naked and living on roots. That he thinks the devil of a lot of himself and his institutions seems to stir the bile of every good Britisher. But that's because the ordinary Englishman hasn't any imagination. If most of us didn't believe to-day along the lines the Chinaman does, 'Merrie England' would begin and end in the fogs of the North Sea."

"Hello, Hugh," interjected Cardwell. "I thought you'd been sent to China to look after our interests?"

"Now that you ask, Cardwell," returned that gentleman, sharply, "I don't mind telling you, if you traders don't call a halt pretty soon, I, for one, mean to get out. It's given me inflammation of the conscience—or some such distemper—to see your efforts to contaminate a decent people for the sake of a few dirty rupees."

"Gently, gently," interrupted Efferton as Cardwell flushed angrily, ready to retort. "We've nothing against our yellow neighbors—don't know what we'd do without them. You're biased, Hugh. This isn't a question of morals, but of business. This is a practical matter—a very vital matter, as it concerns our revenue—and we aren't going to chuck it out of sentiment for the Chinese or anybody else. Besides, we've got to protect ourselves. What with their tea and silks and what-not, the balance of trade

is all with them, and they'll drain us dry of our currency if we don't look out!"

"That's all rot, John. China's got a perfectly honest market in India, and you know it. Tea and silk, that people need, is one thing. Opium, that's rank poison and that we wouldn't under any consideration ship to our own country, is another, and you know it; and so do you, Cardwell. Here you force it on a people who don't want it, and have been yelling about it for decades past. And you won't listen to them. Get around them and their laws in every way you can and push it down their throats, and then call them 'obstinate brutes' because they protest. You're no better than pirates and smugglers, you and your blessed John Company. Now you know what I think about it," and Hugh Efferton brought down his fist on the table till the little glasses rang, and the *punkah-wallah*, who had dozed for some minutes unheeded, began of a sudden a terrific pulling of his rope.

"It's a disgrace to England!" continued young Hugh Efferton, hotly; "and it's beyond anything conceivable to me that straightforward, decent Englishmen can uphold any such rotten traffic, and then talk about 'the balance of trade.' Sorry if you don't like my views, but you're making trouble for yourself and England that'll take years to clean up. China will fight us before she yields to such methods. By George, and we rant about our civilization and 'pity the poor heathen in his blindness'! It's a dirty business, and I wouldn't be in your shoes, Cardwell, for all the rupees that cascade into your pocket per annum." Hugh pushed his chair defiantly from the table and glared at his opponents.

"Can't say China's done much for your manners, Hugh," drawled Cardwell of the pale face, "despite her centuries of progress."

"I say, it's a good thing you're a privileged character," broke in the elder brother, testily; "but, take it from me, I'll not pull the string to that shower again. You're strung up, my boy, and soft from your vacation. You'll feel better when the monsoon breaks. Let's adjourn to the veranda for a smoke. What do you say, Cardwell?"

"Right oh," responded that gentleman; "it's a filthy hot night."

The men filed out moodily, Efferton the elder and Cardwell seating themselves in long rush chairs without more ado.

Hugh walked to the edge of the veranda and stood staring at the scene below him.

"Your landscape's sad—smells sad. What do you suppose they are plotting down there in the jungle?"

Vague cries and murmurs sounding far

away, the howling of a dog, the glitter of the river, the throbbing tom-tom.

Hugh fussed with a cigarette and threw it away.

"Canton's pretty bad, but it's livelier than this. All your choking vines and flowers make my head ache. Look at the river too—shines like a pane of glass. How it shines, anyway, this country, even in the dark."

There was no response from the two men in the long chairs. Hugh glanced at them impatiently.

"I shouldn't mind having a shot at that tom-tom artist. Doesn't he get on your nerves, John?"

"My dear brother, I've outgrown 'nerves,' you'll find life much pleasanter and easier of solution when you do the same."

Hugh laughed shortly.

"Thanks—for nothing."

The men lapsed into silence.

The Indian night pulsed on, full of brooding, of mystery, of an indefinable sadness. The minor cries shrilled and sank and shrilled again. The great stars dragged their heavy weight across the skies.

"By Jove, how that fellow startled me!"

"A chit from your Mem-sahib, Cardwell. Here's your fellow. You should teach him not to creep up in that way."

Cardwell took the note and walked to a lamp burning low in the far end of the veranda. His sudden exclamation caused both men to turn.

"Not bad news, Cardwell?"

"Good God!" stuttered Cardwell. "I told you the kiddy was ailing. Listen to this from Edith."

He held the scrap of paper close to the lamp and read aloud:

"Come home at once—the Baba unconscious. Ayah's been giving him opium to keep him quiet—under her nail—and the darling sucked her wicked finger. She's just confessed. Hurry, hurry, and bring the doctor."

"Opium," the two men uttered simultaneously.

"The she-devil!" added Hugh.

Cardwell crumpled the note into a ball.

"If—if—the child—if anything happens—the woman'll die for it."

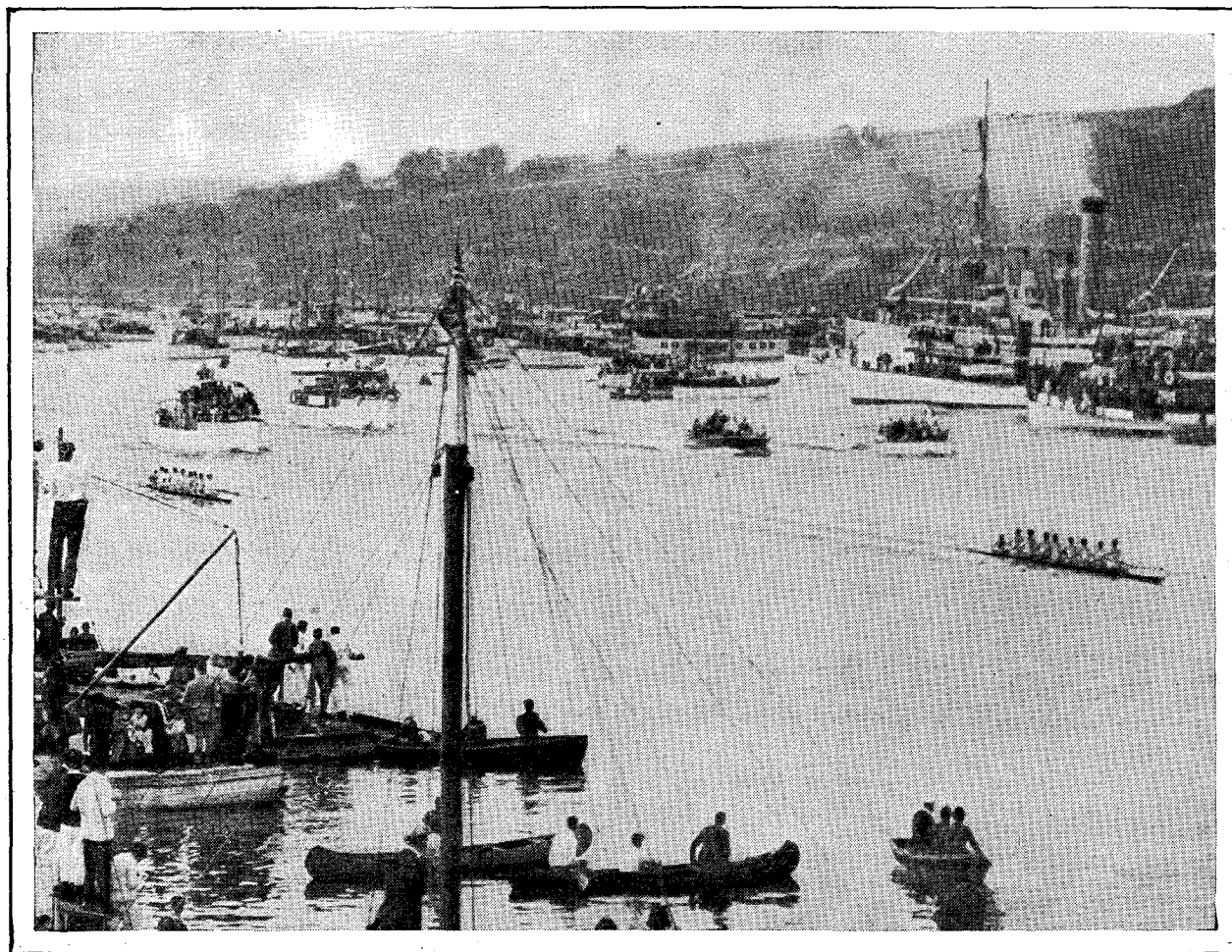
"I don't believe it's as bad as that, old man. Let me order the trap for you."

"No—no—couldn't wait—thanks just the same. Good-night, good-night," and Cardwell hurried from the veranda.

"Of all things," began Efferton, "opium—fancy now! You can't trust these natives—any of them. If that child dies, it's murder—nothing short."

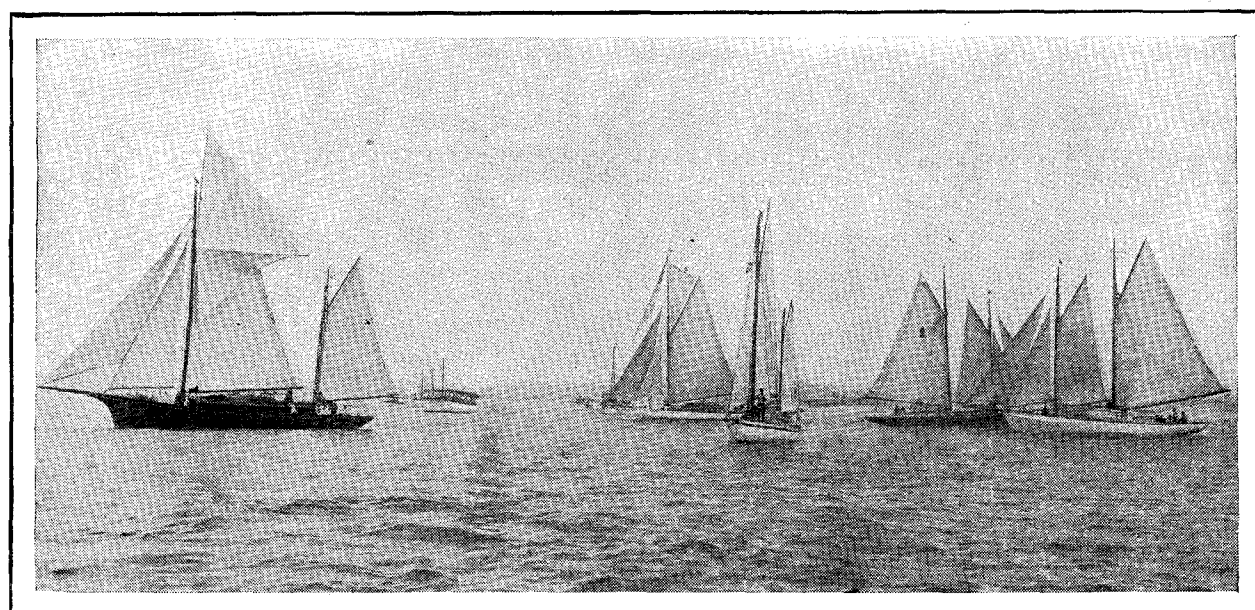
Hugh looked at him sharply, opened his mouth, and closed it again.

New London has a Feast of Races



(C) Underwood

The finish of the 'Varsity race between Yale and Harvard, with Yale far in the lead. The Yale crew following its victory sailed abroad to represent the United States in the Olympics



International

The start of the annual ocean race from New London, Connecticut, to Bermuda. The yachts are maneuvering for position in the light air as they await the gun