

# The Godless Heathen

By CARLTON DAWE

He was an unctuous, stolid, slit-eyed son of Asia, as free of mitigating circumstances as a murderer caught red handed. Yet that inconsiderate husband of hers, fully aware of her antipathy to all colored folk, returning on a certain occasion from one of his periodical visits to the town where he sold his farm produce, brought the incomprehensible Ah Quong in his train. At first she could scarcely believe her own eyes, and though her husband shouted a joyous greeting to her, she scarcely ventured to return his salutation, but walking around to the back of the buggy, looked up into the stolid face of the impassive Quong. There he sat, as unconcerned as any old joss, and not unlike one, she thought. His attitude was one of easy negligence, and to her uncompromising stare of disgust he blinked an impassive curiosity. His feet, dangling over the tailboard of the buggy, were unshod, while his dress was a curious mixture of heathendom and larrikins. On the top of a long yellow throat was affixed a head quite remarkable for its lack of beauty, while down the back of his greasy blouse hung a long black "pigtail," which reminded her of nothing so much as a venomous snake.

The husband, flinging the reins on the horse's back and slowly dismounting, came round to her.

"What's the matter, Jess?"

"Him!"

She stared fixedly into the impassive yellow face, but made no other sign of movement.

"Oh, that's Quong. You've heard me speak of him? Was cook up at Tarrarooka in the old days. A good old joss-stick, isn't he?"

"What's he doing here?"

"I brought him along to help you. Met him over at Mangaratta. Rather down on his uppers, as you can see; in fact, he seems to have neither sole nor upper. Asked for a job, and—well, old girl, you know you'll be weaker before you're better."

He looked at his wife lovingly. He was a big man, with big, strong arms, and the shoulders of a prize ox; but as his clear brown eyes ran over the woman by his side they grew soft as a girl's, and she might have seen the pride and love glistening in them had she turned for a moment from the yellow man.

"You know I hate Chinkies," she said.

"Ah, but you won't hate old Quong. The beggar nursed me up Tarrarooka way when I was down with the fever. It was a close thing, Jess. But for that yellow image there I should never have known you."

"Still, I don't like the breed. I don't want him, and I won't have him."

He flung a big arm round her and drew her to him.

"You shall have just what you want, my dear, so don't worry that pretty head of yours."

He caressed her with both voice and hand, as one would a spoilt child; and, like a child, she nestled to him. In this woman lay all his joy, all his hope, and he knew that women in her condition are prone to whimsies.

"I admit he's not a beauty," he continued coaxingly, "but I owe him one, and I know you wouldn't have me play the dog, even on a Chinkie. Besides, the poor beggar was on his last legs, and he's got grit in him, in spite of his breed. I repeat, I couldn't do less than bring him along; but we'll give him a week or so's trial, and if you can't stick any more of him, we'll pack him off."

She shook her head, repeating stolidly, almost mechanically, "I don't like Chinkies."

"Neither do I—in the lump. But I rather think Quong is a bit exceptional."

Closer that big arm pressed her. It was something like the grip of a bear, but she didn't seem to mind it. Perhaps she rather liked that protecting rough caress.

He turned to the impassive Chow, who all this time had sat blinking obliquely at the woman, apparently serenely indifferent as to the result of their cogitations.

"Now, then, Quong, look alive and make yourself useful. Get down and put up the horse."

"All right, Dick."

"And, hark ye, my friend; no 'Dick' if you please. I'm the boss now."

"All right, boss."

"And something more, Quong; this is the missis, you understand. What she says I say; what she thinks I think."

"Me allee same sabbie," answered the impassive Quong, as he slipped from the buggy, sidled up to the horse's head and softly led it away.

The man and woman walked slowly toward the house—an indifferent wooden affair which he had built with the aid of a distant neighbor. Long years this man had lived alone in the wilderness, rolling from station to station, aimless, purposeless, until one day he looked into Jess' soft gray eyes, noted the golden sheen in her hair, the extraordinary white skin that the sun had not touched, then he began to think seriously of life.

And so he saved a little and borrowed a little, and took up his selection, and on it he built a house, lovingly, tenderly, because she had promised to come and look after it for him. Most of the furniture he made with his own hands, rough stuff, to be sure, yet shaped and smoothed with loving fingers; but the cane rocking chair he purchased at a store in Wanganaratta. That rocking chair had been the dream of his life. He fancied he could see Jess sitting in it on winter nights, the glow of the fire in her hair and on the red of her mouth. Then the wind might roar as wildly as it pleased, the rain come down in torrents. He thought the rain would sound pleasant with Jess on one side of the fire and him on the other.

And then one day she told him, told him so shyly, that, great stupid old that he was, he did not grasp her meaning; but when it all became clear to his intelligence he trembled

like a little child, and for about the first time in twenty years something like a tear glistened in his eye. When she had gone to bed he lit his pipe afresh and went out and told it to the stars, and whispered it to the stolid old gums until the very air seemed full of the grand sweet news.

And then she grew weaker, and as the Boss had to make his periodic journeys for the purpose of buying and selling, he always bestowed the following injunction on the attentive Celestial before setting out:

"Look after the Missis, Quong. If anything happens to her I'll belt the life out of you."

And Quong, grinning in his silly Chinese manner, as invariably answered, "My make 'em all li, Boss."

He was not a man of many words, this imperturbable Quong, but the Boss seemed satisfied with his modest assurance.

And then the great event happened. Quong was sitting up that night because the Boss was restless. He watched him pass in and out of the door a dozen times; look up at the stars, fill his pipe, light it, walk up and down with hasty strides, and generally behave in a manner inconceivable in one of his weight and inches. The doctor man from Wanganaratta was inside, also the wife of a distant neighbor. Quong wondered why they should make such a fuss over a common happening.

Yes, of course, it was a boy—it couldn't well be anything else to a man like the Boss—and from that moment Quong's allegiance alternated between father and son. Jess was weak for a long time after, and the farmer's wife had her own affairs to mind, but Quong stepped into the breach, and aided nurse to that of his other duties. If, hitherto he had revered the father, he now adored the son. Dick swore the fellow had been a woman in another life, and truly no woman could have played her part with greater care and assiduity.

And so twelve months passed on, and the child grew and prospered, and with it prospered the little household. Dick junior was now a lusty young rogue, tumbling about and stuttering a few words in pidgin English, which shocked his mother inconceivably, but made his father roar with laughter. "Little beggar!" he said, "he's as bad as old Quong."

And then he would lecture him on the iniquities of the yellow man, to all of which the child would listen with wide, wondering eyes—those eyes which seemed to draw the soul out of the father. And he could touch him now without fear of breaking the little bones, and toss him about as though he were a ball, all of which the child bore with never a whimper.

The day came round for Dick's accustomed journey to the town, but this was to be a journey which would be marked with a red letter in the history of their lives; for things had prospered with them, and he was going into the town to complete the purchase of a larger tract of land, and he intended to mark the occasion by returning with presents for his beloved ones. The parting injunction had an addition now, but it always came in exactly the same way, "Look after the Miss and the kiddie, Quong. If anything happens to them I'll belt the life out of you."

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Dick went away early as usual, and Quong, who had some work down by the creek, returned to it after dinner, having seen the Missis stow the Young Boss away in his little crib for the afternoon sleep. His work was only a quarter of a mile or so away. If he mounted the little hill behind the trees he could see the house quite plainly.

He had worked for perhaps a full hour when he scrambled out of the hole he was digging to take a few puffs at his pipe, but just as he was in the act of lighting up he happened to look round and saw a woman approaching him from lower down the creek. At first he did not quite realize who it was, nor did he understand her wild gesticulations or her cries. But as she came nearer he knew it to be the Missis, and in his stolid way he stood blinking at her till she approached. Then he saw that her face was deathly white, her eyes staring from her head and that she reeled in her steps like one about to fall. Indeed, he knew that nothing but a supreme effort of will prevented a physical collapse.

"What's up, Missis?" he asked. Quong's blood flowed coldly; his manner reflected the cold blood. She tried to speak, yet nothing but an unintelligible gibbering passed her lips. Her mind, however, was working clearly enough, and seizing him by the arm she swung him round and pointed to a column of smoke which rose above the trees. He started, and the wooden face suddenly grew animated. Fear and intelligence widened the oblique eyes.

"The piece kid!" she shouted. "Yes—yes." The words came from her lips in a fierce gasp of agony. "My chi!"

Kicking off his old shoes he flung from her like a flash of lightning. She tried to follow him. She called on heaven, on her indomitable nature, but in vain. The earth sprang up to meet her. Once it struck her violently in the face. She scrambled to her feet and staggered onwards, but the weight of all the world seemed to press her down. Now she was groping wildly on her hands and knees toward the burning house, the smoke of which glared blood red in the sun. The great masses of her hair fell over her face and blinded her. That, too, seemed a blood red haze through which she saw a world on fire.

With the return of consciousness, she found herself supported by the most grotesque looking creature in the world. His face was black and bilious, he had not a scrap of his pigtail left, and even the few clothes

he wore were burned or singed beyond recognition. But he was tenderly bathing her face with water drawn from the creek, and speaking to her in a coaxing, singsong fashion—just as he soothed the "piece kid," in its most turbulent moments.

"Quong!" It was both an exclamation and an interrogation.

"All li, Missis. 'Ave got."

He pointed to a scorched and blackened blanket by her side. The "piece kid" looked up at her and crowded. Not a hair of his head was singed.—The Sketch.

## BUYERS SPENDING MILLIONS.

Thousands of Merchants in New York Show Returning Prosperity.

Ten thousand business men and women from the West and Southwest are in town spending. It is estimated, \$100,000,000. They have driven pessimism from the great downtown jobbing district with stories of assured prosperity and are spreading joy and cash among the hotels, theaters and other amusement places.

This is the annual buying period for the spring trade, and reduced rates on the railroads are bringing merchants here from the small towns in far-away Texas as well as from Chicago, St. Louis and the big centers. The registration at the Merchants' Association is within a hundred odd of the phenomenal registration last spring, when prosperity was at its height. Up to yesterday nearly 2,000 buyers, or their representatives, about one-half of whom are women, had registered. They are coming at the rate of nearly 200 a day. As only a portion take advantage of the special railroad rates, it is estimated that the total number of buyers at present here is about 10,000.

Every hotel that caters to the out-of-town custom is crowded, the big hotels have all they can handle, and the family hotels are turning hundreds of people away. The buyers are being entertained at clubs, dinner parties, theaters, and with automobile trips by the merchants who are receiving the benefit of their trade.

S. C. Mead, secretary of the Merchants' Association, said yesterday of the influx of buyers:

"It means that the country is all right. The men who are coming to New York now to lay in their spring stocks are mainly from the West and Southwest. I have not heard one of them talk about hard times. They laugh at the idea, and I tell you their optimism is having a big effect here in New York. Our merchants rather had the idea that trade was going to be dull this spring, but they have changed their opinion in the past few days. Buyers have registered here from towns of not over 1,000 population in Texas, the new State of Oklahoma, and the entire Southwest, as well as from Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Detroit and other big cities."

"The most encouraging reports are brought from Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas, where the crops have been good. I have been surprised at the number of new faces and have been told that scores of new business houses are springing up."—New York American.

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And Quong blinked his invariable reply, "Me make 'em all li, Boss." The promised belting never gave offense. He never belted it necessary, but on the whole he liked it. It showed that the Boss took an intelligent interest in him.

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He had worked for perhaps a full hour when he scrambled out of the hole he was digging to take a few puffs at his pipe, but just as he was in the act of lighting up he happened to look round and saw a woman approaching him from lower down the creek. At first he did not quite realize who it was, nor did he understand her wild gesticulations or her cries. But as she came nearer he knew it to be the Missis, and in his stolid way he stood blinking at her till she approached. Then he saw that her face was deathly white, her eyes staring from her head and that she reeled in her steps like one about to fall. Indeed, he knew that nothing but a supreme effort of will prevented a physical collapse.

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## MYSTERY OF BLOODY FEUDS.

Contest of Race Elements at the Bottom of Many Crimes.

The tragic end of James Hargis at Jackson, Ky., calls attention once again to the peculiar conditions of life which have marked a state long known as "the dark and bloody ground."

That a man who had taken several lives in the course of a bitter feud should die by the shots fired by his own son only emphasizes the strangeness of a social organization where life is held so cheap and where the guilty so often escape the punishment provided for by law.

It has been a puzzle which no one has solved. Why these feud conditions should prevail in that one section of the country far more than anywhere else is hard to understand. Why men meet in a public place and slash each other with knives or shoot each other as dogs are shot is a question which has aroused the wonder of many a student of American social life.

Some of them have traced the spirit back to old Virginia, where the rough forms of English sport found early lodgment. The fox-hunter, horse-racing, cock-fighting Virginians, who loved to wrestle with his opponent or took delight in the game of gouging where the fist ceased its attempt to push out the eye only when the cry, "King's cruse," was heard may have been the ancestor of the Kentucky feudist as he was of the Kentucky pioneer.

The ever-ready rifle of the wilderness hunter who crossed the mountains, pierced the gaps, or floated down the stream into the Western country may have been the legitimate predecessor of the murderous gun of the later generation of Kentuckians. The facility in the use of firearms and the common training to shoot straight and sure which were absolutely necessary in the days of Boone and men of his type may have brought its own natural development in the quickness in handling the trigger which has marked the fights of a century.

The contest of different race elements as the men of the East of the old English blood met in the struggle for the possession of the land with the hardy pioneers of Scotch, Irish and German extraction who pushed their way southward along the mountains and through the valleys to turn aside toward the attractive lands in Kentucky may offer some explanation.

The division of families brought about by the Civil War, may have added its element of discord. The peculiar conditions which developed in the border states when the war broke out are well remembered. Neighboring families made different choices. One followed the flag of the Union. Another went with the South. In many cases the breach was never healed.

In some of these theories, in a combination of them or in none of them the origin of the Kentucky feud and the cheapness of human life in that Commonwealth may be discovered. There is a practically unworked field for the future investigator of social conditions. In a state whose history from many points of view is more interesting than that of any other in the United States this unsolved problem remains one of the most puzzling which have been presented to those who have tried to understand and interpret the peculiar phases which have combined to make the story of the American people—Chicago Tribune.

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In some of these theories, in a combination of them or in none of them the origin of the Kentucky feud and the cheapness of human life in that Commonwealth may be discovered. There is a practically unworked field for the future investigator of social conditions. In a state whose history from many points of view is more interesting than that of any other in the United States this unsolved problem remains one of the most puzzling which have been presented to those who have tried to understand and interpret the peculiar phases which have combined to make the story of the American people—Chicago Tribune.

The tragic end of James Hargis at Jackson, Ky., calls attention once again to the peculiar conditions of life which have marked a state long known as "the dark and bloody ground."

That a man who had taken several lives in the course of a bitter feud should die by the shots fired by his own son only emphasizes the strangeness of a social organization where life is held so cheap and where the guilty so often escape the punishment provided for by law.

It has been a puzzle which no one has solved. Why these feud conditions should prevail in that one section of the country far more than anywhere else is hard to understand. Why men meet in a public place and slash each other with knives or shoot each other as dogs are shot is a question which has aroused the wonder of many a student of American social life.

Some of them have traced the spirit back to old Virginia, where the rough forms of English sport found early lodgment. The fox-hunter, horse-racing, cock-fighting Virginians, who loved to wrestle with his opponent or took delight in the game of gouging where the fist ceased its attempt to push out the eye only when the cry, "King's cruse," was heard may have been the ancestor of the Kentucky feudist as he was of the Kentucky pioneer.

The ever-ready rifle of the wilderness hunter who crossed the mountains, pierced the gaps, or floated down the stream into the Western country may have been the legitimate predecessor of the murderous gun of the later generation of Kentuckians. The facility in the use of firearms and the common training to shoot straight and sure which were absolutely necessary in the days of Boone and men of his type may have brought its own natural development in the quickness in handling the trigger which has marked the fights of a century.

The contest of different race elements as the men of the East of the old English blood met in the struggle for the possession of the land with the hardy pioneers of Scotch, Irish and German extraction who pushed their way southward along the mountains and through the valleys to turn aside toward the attractive lands in Kentucky may offer some explanation.

The division of families brought about by the Civil War, may have added its element of discord. The peculiar conditions which developed in the border states when the war broke out are well remembered. Neighboring families made different choices. One followed the flag of the Union. Another went with the South. In many cases the breach was never healed.