

**UNDER THE DRAGON
FLAG: MY EXPERIENCES
IN THE CHINO-JAPANESE
WAR. PP. 1-120**

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My Experiences in the Chino-Japanese War

BY
JAMES ALLAN

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CHAPTER I

THE following narrative is a record of my experiences during the late memorable war between China and Japan. Without going into any detailed account of my earlier life, some few facts concerning myself are probably necessary for the better understanding of the circumstances which led up to the events here presented. It will be obvious that I can make no claim to literary skill; I have simply written down my exact and unadorned remembrance of incidents which I witnessed and took part in. Now it is all over I wonder more and more at the slightness of the hazard which suddenly placed me at such a period in so strange an experience.

I am the son of a Lancashire gentleman who accumulated considerable wealth in the cotton trade. He died when I was still a boy. I found

B.

myself, when I came of age, the possessor of upwards of £80,000. Thus I started in life as a man of fortune ; but it is due to myself to say that I took prompt and effectual measures to clear myself of that invidious character. Not to mince matters needlessly, I ran through that eighty thousand pounds in something short of four years. I was not in the least "horsey"; my sphere was the gaieties of Paris and the gaming-tables of Monte Carlo—a sphere which has made short work of fortunes compared with which mine would be insignificant. The pace was fast and furious ; I threw out my ballast liberally as I went along, and the harpies, male and female, who surrounded me, picked it up. Bright and fair enough was the prospect as I started on the road to ruin ; gloomy the clouds that settled round me as I approached that dismal terminus. Then, when too late, I began to regret my folly. I seemed to wake as if from a dream, from a state of helpless infatuation, in which my acts were scarcely the effect of my own volition. The general out-look became decidedly uninviting.

About eleven o'clock one spring night of the year 1892, I was standing close to the railings of the Whitworth Park in my native city of Manchester, to whose dull provincial shades I had retired at the enforced close of my creditable

career. I remember that I was engaged in wondering what on earth I could have done with all my money, the only tangible return for which appeared to be an intimate and peculiar knowledge of the French language and of certain undesirable phases of French life. The hour, as I have said, was late, and Moss Lane, the street in which I stood disconsolate, dark and deserted. Presently there came along towards me a man whose uncertain gait was strongly suggestive of the influence of alcohol. He stopped upon reaching me, and asked if I could direct him to Victoria Park. This is an extensive semi-private enclosure, where numbers of the plutocracy of Cottonopolis have their residences. One of its several gates is nearly opposite the spot where Moss Lane leads into Oxford Street, which fact I communicated to my questioner. To my surprise he, by way of acknowledgment, struck his hand into mine and shook it fervently.

"Shake hands, shake hands," he said; "that's right—you're talking to a gentleman, though you mightn't think it."

I certainly should not have thought it. He was a short, thick-set man, of about five feet and two or three inches, shabbily dressed; and his unsteady lurch, swollen features, and odorous breath, told plainly of a heavy debauch. Amused by his manner,

I entered into conversation with him. He was, it appeared, a sailor, a Lancashire man, and, if he was to be believed, very respectably connected in Manchester. I gathered that he had ended a boyhood of contumacy by running away to sea, his people, though they had practically disowned him, allowing him a pound a week. This allowance had for some time past been stopped, and he was coming up in person to investigate the why and wherefore. Having a week or two before come off a voyage at Liverpool, he had at that port drawn £75 in pay, which he had spent in two days and nights of revelry, an assertion to which his personal appearance bore strong corroborative testimony. He appeared, on the whole, to consider himself an exceedingly ill-used person. "I'm a houtcast," he repeatedly said. I asked him in what capacity he served on shipboard. "A.B.," he replied, "always A.B.;" and certainly, in speech and appearance, he seemed nothing better than a foremast man, although, shaking hands with me again and again, he each time asseverated that it was the hand of a gentleman. At length he went on his way, and I stood watching his receding figure as he reeled down the street. I was just turning away, when I heard a loud outcry; the "houtcast," about a hundred yards distant, was hailing me. On what trifles does destiny depend!

My first impulse was to walk off without taking any notice of his shouts, and on the simple decision to stay and see what he wanted, turned the whole future. It appeared that whilst talking with me his obfuscated mind had lost the directions I had given him as to the locality of Victoria Park. Having nothing in particular to do, I volunteered to walk along with him, and keep him in the right direction, and accordingly we entered the park together. With considerable difficulty, he found out the road and house he was in search of; I doubt if, without my aid, he would have found it at all in his then condition. He had not, he informed me, been in Manchester for years, and those he was looking up had changed their residence. The exterior of the place, when found, seemed to bear out his statement as to the social position of his relatives. I asked him what sort of reception he thought he would get from them.

"He did not," he replied, "care a d——n what it might be, but he was going to see why they had stopped his quid, and no mistake about it."

He extended to me an invitation to come in with him "and have a drink," a courtesy which, needless to say, I declined. He then left me, after another vehement handshaking, and proceeded up the drive in front of the house. A feeling of curiosity to see

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what kind of greeting the drunken, wastrel "hout-cast" would command from his folk, all unconscious of his disagreeable proximity to their eminently respectable residence, induced me to follow him. I paused at a point where, concealed by some shrubbery, I had a view of the hall door, which, upon my friend's ringing, was opened by a smart maid-servant. Swaying up and down on the steps in a most ludicrous manner, the "hout-cast" addressed her, although I was too far off to make out the words, but to judge by her looks she felt no prepossession in his favour. After a while she went away, leaving the door open and him standing on the steps. In about a minute a stout, middle-aged gentleman appeared from the brightly-lighted hall, his whole aspect presenting the strongest possible contrast to that of the seedy mariner. The conference between them was brief and angry, and terminated with the gentleman's returning within and slamming the door in the other's face, who, with his hands in his pockets, stood for some time planted where he was, staring at the *visage de bois* as if dumfounded. Then he applied himself vigorously to the bell, and pulled with might and main. This course of treatment having no effect, he commenced shouting a series of objurgations much too vigorous to be here set down. No response, of course, was forthcoming, and at