

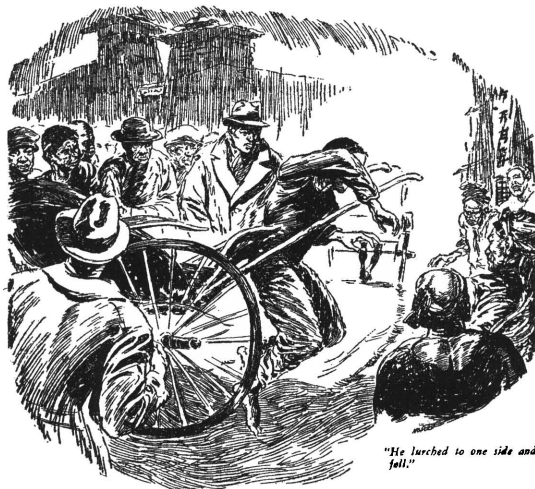
Oriental STORIES

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Contents of Summer Issue, 1932

Cover Design	M. Brundage	
The Dragoon's Confession	Otis Adelbert Kline	292
<i>Mosul—Hamed the Dragoon falls in love with a Chinese princess, and has a surprising adventure</i>		
Pirate Whelp	Warren Hastings Miller	322
<i>Malaya—a complete novel about a great sea battle, and the beautiful wanton who ruled the native state of Kota Sembilan</i>		
The Twisted Three	S. B. H. Hurst	358
<i>Burma—a complete novelette about Bugs Sinnat, the Tooth of Buddha, and two mysterious murders</i>		
The Further Adventures of Ali Baba	Allan Govan	386
<i>Bagdad—what happened after the death of the forty thieves</i>		
The Bend in the Road	James W. Bennett	395
<i>Shanghai—a strange tale of rickshaw racing</i>		
The Black Adder	Dorothy Quick	405
<i>India—a dancing-girl tries to thwart the rajah's burning passion</i>		
The Hidden Monster	David H. Keller	412
<i>Chinatown—an Oriental story transplanted to America</i>		
A Battle Over the Tea-Cups	August W. Derleth	417
<i>Manchuria—guile fights guile as two Chinese generals meet</i>		
Jungle Twilight	Clark Ashton Smith	420
<i>Verse</i>		
Cobra Teeth	M. Small	421
<i>Shanghai—a strange story of double-dealing, blackmail and murder</i>		
The Souk		425
<i>A chat with the readers</i>		
The Snare	Arreph El-Khoury	430
<i>Arabia—a pilgrim returns from Mecca to find he has been mulcted of his money</i>		



The Bend in the Road

By JAMES W. BENNETT

A tale of Chinese rickshaw racing, and a Taoist monk who was not above risking money by betting

WHEN Sandy discovered Waung among a group of rickshaw pullers on the Shanghai Bund, Sandy's scalp was visited by a tingling sensation—all too rare these days—which was an omen that luck was about to change for the better. He noted the coolie's exceptional height and magnificent legs.

Sandy hopped into Waung's rickshaw.

An exhilarating sprint up Nanking Road behind Waung intensified the conviction that here was an exceptional runner. Sandy wasted no time. He hired Waung as his private rickshaw boy.

Unobtrusively yet persistently Sandy let it be known that he had a paragon of a rickshaw coolie. At first the news awakened no echo of interest. In fact it had

aroused a certain skepticism. A sailor from the American gunboat *Villa Lobos* whom Sandy had managed during three disastrous prize fights, had proved that his jaw was made of a substance surprisingly like glass. And Sandy's efforts to interest his fellow Americans in the purely Oriental sport of quail fighting had been equally unfortunate, since the birds touted by him folded their wings and expired early in the struggle.

Before long, however, he heard a rumor that August Delafield, an operator on the Shanghai Silver Exchange, also had a rickshaw boy of exceptional speed. This brought a gleam to Sandy's faded, mournful eyes. August Delafield!

During a day of Race Week, the previous autumn, Sandy had been waiting his turn before a pari-mutuel booth, prepared to wager his shirt on a pony named *Foo-bab*. Delafield, in top hat, spats, morning coat and binoculars, had stopped at Sandy's side.

"Hello, Weeks. Isn't this the wrong booth for you? You don't want to bet on *Foo-bab*!"

"Why not, sir? He's a good pony."

Delafield lowered his voice: "*Foo-bab* was a good pony. But I've just been talking with his owner. He tells me that the animal is over-trained. Gone stale."

The broker strolled away. Sandy stood, first on one foot and then the other. Delafield was a friend of *Foo-bab's* owner. Could he afford to disregard this tip, straight from the feed-box? With a sigh, Sandy dropped out and moved over to the booth that was accepting wagers on the favorite.

Foo-bab won. Won with ridiculous ease. Gloomily Sandy had watched his money evaporate into the clear autumn air. A few moments later, he observed Delafield turning in a sheaf of winner's tickets—on

Foo-bab. The broker had deliberately talked the pony down, to keep the odds from mounting. Hurriedly Sandy had left the track to avoid giving way to the impulse to shake a skinny, freckled fist under Delafield's nose.

Now, as soon as Sandy had confirmed the rumor about the rival rickshaw marvel, he set out hurriedly to find the broker. He located Delafield in the lounge of that rendezvous of Shanghai's flashier business men, the Taipans' Club. Drawing from his trousers pocket a huge roll of bills—his stock-in-trade—Sandy spoke quaveringly:

"Mr. Delafield, I hear you have a rickshaw boy that you favor. I have one, too. I'll race mine against yours, any distance you name, even money. For this—a thousand dollars."

Delafield stared coldly at Sandy. He shook his head and buried it in a newspaper.

"Are you afraid to match your runner?"

The broker's face emerged from the journal. "You, probably have some professional foot-racer, Weeks. My coolie is an amateur. I'm not interested."

"No. Wait, sir." Sandy's red-rimmed eyes looked appealingly into Delafield's, and he put away the roll of bank notes. "Will you do this: race your boy against mine, tomorrow, without any stakes? Just for the sport of the thing?"

Delafield hesitated. Here, the bystander intervened:

"Go on, Del! That's fair enough! Call his bluff!"

The broker's habitual look of suspicion deepened, but, glancing at the ring of grinning, slightly malicious faces, he capitulated. . . . A few moments later Sandy left the Taipans' Club and an intricate scheme that had germinated in his mind was now beginning to flower.

SANDY'S initial preparations were simple. He visited seven or eight bars in Hongkew and, after purchasing small beers in each, told of the race. Coolly he strolled into the American Club—which had previously shown its dislike for his method of livelihood by blackballing him. Before departing, he spread the news. Similarly he brazened his way into the Shanghai Club and the Cercle Sportif Français. Nor did he neglect the hotel lobbies.

That night, thanks to Sandy's press-agenting, the foreign colony discussed the coming race. And the next morning, there was a sudden influx of population at Jessfield. That suburb just outside the International City had been chosen, since it was not subject to the interference of a Municipal Council that had forbidden rickshaw racing.

Along the curving road chosen for the course the spectators thronged. Near the finish were perhaps four hundred foreigners and lining the road were at least three thousand Chinese who had gotten wind of the race. Sandy sighed a trifle dolefully at the thought of giving this exhibition free.

Two Englishmen with well-known sporting proclivities were asked to serve as starter and finish judge. A Chinese grain-seller was pressed into service. On a steelyard he measured a hundred *catty* of rice—fifty pounds into each of two bags. These bags were tied to the rickshaw seats in order to add to the vehicles' momentum.

While this was taking place, Sandy shrewdly studied Han, the broker's rickshaw boy. The runner was short and stocky, with heavily muscled legs. His torso was wide; his pock-marked face was stubborn. He seemed capable of a steady gait, but Sandy doubted his ability in the way of a final sprint.

In contrast to Han's dourness, Sandy's boy, Waung, was grinning, confident, jiggling up and down between the shafts of his cart, enjoying the excitement.

The course was cleared, then the starter shouted:

"Catchee ready, boys? Then—Go!"

Each coolie gave a twist to pull his cart from the slight rut into which it had settled, grunted, took a dozen dog-trot steps—and began to race. Down the road they sprinted, neck-and-neck. Faster, still faster they went, the precious momentum from the carts aiding their speed. At the bend in the road, two-thirds of the way down the course, neither runner appeared to have the advantage. The last few yards, they fairly lifted themselves through the air, steadied and pushed by the weight of their loaded carts.

In a magnificent spurt, Sandy's Waung won by ten yards. After checking his rickshaw, he stood smiling, breathing easily. At his side Han drew up, panting with deep shuddering breaths, like a spent pony after a hard chukker of polo. Han stooped to rub one of his legs which had begun to cramp.

Watching the finish, Sandy was satisfied. He had proved his point—concerning which he had never had any doubt—to the satisfaction of the onlookers. Now he could go ahead with his scheme.

Lusty shouts arose from the Chinese who crowded around Waung, offering felicitations. An elderly Oriental in the blue robes of a Taoist monk pressed close to Waung and thrust in his hands a paper with a printed prayer, efficacious in warding off evil.

THAT evening, Sandy called at Delafield's flamboyant home on Bubbling Well Road, and sent in a thumb-marked card. There was such a long delay that Sandy wondered in some dismay if he

would be refused admittance. At last the broker's Number One Boy returned and—apparently mirroring his master's mood—curtly bade Sandy to enter.

"See here, Weeks, what have you come for?" growled Delafield. "I hope you're satisfied; your boy won."

"I'm not here, sir, to rub it in. Are you convinced now that your rickshaw coolie is outclassed?"

Delafield snorted. "Not only am I convinced—but so is the whole of Shanghai."

"That being the case, I want to talk to you about another proposition. You agree that all Shanghai believes my Waung can beat your Han over a mile stretch. That belief should be worth a lot of money to us."

"I'm not interested," said the broker shortly, repeating his words at the Taipans' Club.

"Not if you could make five thousand—ten thousand?"

"How?"

"In this way, Mr. Delafield. Tomorrow, you will make a statement that your coolie was out of training——"

"But he isn't, Weeks! He's in as good training as he'll ever be. There's not an ounce of fat on him."

"I know! But you'll say: give your man a chance to train and he can beat my Waung, hands down. And that you're willing to bet on the results——"

"I'll do nothing of the kind!" Delafield again interrupted. "I'm through!"

"Won't you please hear me out, sir?"

"Very well." The broker's voice was charged with surliness.

"You'll say that your runner is potentially the better. And that you're willing to wager five or ten thousand on him."

Delafield gave a loud, derisive laugh and Sandy went on quickly:

"I shall bet the same way. I've been

running into a bit of hard luck lately, but this is a sure thing and I'll dig up as much coin as I can. I'll leave the money with you—let you place it for me on Han. That thousand I showed you yesterday, I'll leave that with you."

"And how are you going to bring about this victory for my coolie?"

"Easily, sir. Waung will have an accident, during the race. He'll fall down—at that bend in the course, about two-thirds of the way along. If necessary, the night before, I'll wet the road there. When he hits that wet patch, his cart will skid and trip him. That's all the handicap your coolie needs. Simple, isn't it?"

Delafield made no reply and Sandy continued:

"To make it absolutely sure that Waung does fall, I'll station myself at that bend in the road."

The broker hesitated. "Even so, how am I to know that you'll do what you say?"

Sandy paused a moment and then he answered triumphantly:

"I have it! Suppose you station yourself at the bend. If Waung isn't afraid of me, he will be—of you."

Delafield's eyes glistened. "Yes, I can put the fear of God in him, all right! I know how that can be done. . . ." He was silent a moment. "It's risky, it's damned risky—but you're right: there should be a pile of money in it for us." He rose from his chair. "I'll go in with you. But remember this, Mr. Weeks: the slightest tricky move out of you and I reverse my bets. And you'll find yourself holding the sack!"

Sandy nodded and then left hurriedly, lest Delafield should change his mind.

THE night before the second race between his Han and Sandy's Waung, Delafield sat in his study fretting over a bank balance that was top-heavy by a

thousand dollars. He had put out a large amount in bets, but this remaining sum he had been unable to place on his runner, Han.

During the past fortnight, the broker had made careful statements about the rolls of fat that had festooned his rickshaw boy's midriff at the time of the first trial. He had promised that his runner would be in prime condition for the second race. That point made, he had begun to place his money. It had been accepted eagerly at first, but finally the opposition had begun to grow wary. Perhaps Han had been under-trained before?

As he was racking his brains in an effort to figure out a way to dispose of this last sum, his Number One Boy entered the study to announce a "Chinese man" below.

Thinking this to be a client, Delafield nodded. A tall elderly Oriental in the garb of a Taoist monk appeared at the door. Without preliminary, the Chinese began:

"My have got two thousand dollah. My wanthee bet it on Waung boy for race tomorrow. My hear that you have thousand dollah left and that you ask two-to-one odd'. Can bet?"

Delafield gaped at the man. A certain dignity marked his bearing. Certainly he was of a different stripe from the blue-robed Taoist mendicants the broker had seen, begging-bowl in hand, infesting the lanes of the Chinese city.

"Can bet?" repeated the Taoist.

"Yes, you're damned right: can bet!"

"Where my put money?" asked the Chinese. "Who keep?"

"The Manager of the Hongkong-Shanghai Bank is my stakeholder. I've deposited the thousand with him. His bank's closed, of course, but you can go to his home and leave your money there. He'll note the bet and give you a re-

ceipt. . . . By the way, how do *you* happen to have so much money? I thought you monks were as poor as Job's turkey!"

The Chinese looked puzzled. "'Job's turkey?' My no savvy. . . . Managah Honkong-Shanghai Bank? Velly good. Thank you. Goo'-bye." He bowed jerkily and left the doorway.

Delafield gave a jubilant laugh. He was ready for the race; every penny was down. But, to make sure, he gave the Taoist time to reach the stakeholder's house, and then 'phoned.

"Yes, the fellow was just here," came the bank manager's answer. 'Brought a certified check for two thousand. . . . I've been totalling up your wagers. You're plunging pretty heavily on this, aren't you?"

"I suppose so. But I believe that my man can win."

"Well, it's none of my affair," the banker said quickly.

It was with a new thoughtfulness that Delafield hung up. Canny gamblers, the Chinese. At the spring and autumn races, they had a miraculous way of discovering in advance which was the fastest pony. . . . Such a large sum, coming from a Taoist monk of all persons, and at the last moment! Could it be that Weeks was planning to double-cross him? . . .

Delafield began to pace the floor. Then he broke off, went to the telephone and called Sandy.

WHEN Sandy appeared a few moments later, Delafield scowled truculently at him. The broker's face was tinted that hot dangerous purple of the deeply stirred man with apopleptic tendencies.

"I want a straight answer from you! What's this about the Chinese plunging at the last moment on your runner?"

Sandy stared at the broker, genuinely surprised. "That's news to me, sir."

Delafield then told of the Taoist's visit. Sandy shook his head and then spoke:

"I've brought my boy Waung over with me, as I promised. He's downstairs now. Have him come up. Tell him just what you want him to do, and he'll do it."

Delafield's flush faded slightly. "All right, then, let's have Waung in. We'll give him the works. Believe me, I'm not in any mood for nonsense."

A moment later, Waung was blinking at the foreign magnificence of the broker's study, quite unlike the monastic bareness of Sandy's domicile. A portrait of an Occidental woman in a state of extreme undress and a nude statue on a pedestal struck Waung as being highly immoral. But he turned an ingenuous face to the two men and gave a placative, coolie smile.

Delafield spoke, his voice grating: "Boy, we don't want you to win the race, tomorrow. Do you understand?"

Waung smiled more broadly. "No mabee fun of me, Mastah. Ey-yah! My run fast tomorrow! Run hard! Win race!"

"You're going to run fast, yes—but you're *not* going to win. You savvy that bend in the road, not far from the end?"

Waung nodded bewilderedly.

"That's the spot where you're going to slip and twist your cart in a patch of mud. You're going to fall. You will get up slowly and then limp after Han——"

"Wait a moment, sir!" Sandy interposed. "We've got to be careful, or we'll give the show away. When Waung gets up, it would be better for him to light out after Han—as fast as he could go. We can't have the race called off—and that finish judge of ours would do it like a shot if he got the least suspicion that it was

ribbed. . . . I've put a stop-watch on myself, falling down and getting up. And"—Sandy stared dourly at Delafield—"I think I've bruised my breastbone, doing it. The fall should give Han a fifty-foot lead——"

"But that too much, Mastah!" Waung broke in excitedly. "My no can catch up! Lose race!"

"Which is exactly what we have planned," said Delafield coldly.

The broker reached in the drawer of his desk and pulled out a shiny nickel-plated revolver of small caliber. Sandy gave a startled movement. His lips parted, but he said nothing. Delafield went on in that same cold tone:

"Boy, see this? I'm going to be carrying this, tomorrow. I'll be waiting at that bend in the road. If you don't fall down at that spot—you'll get a nice assortment of lead pumped into you. Now, do you savvy?"

Waung gave his master a reproachful stare but, gaining no consolation from Sandy's expression, he turned dispiritedly to Delafield. "Yes, my savvy."

RUNNING with that magnificent, tireless stride, Waung bore his thin, mournful-eyed master home from Delafield's. Once Sandy bent forward in the rickshaw. Waung slowed his pace to listen, for he knew it was the habit of those he carried to shift their positions just before speaking. But Sandy leaned back, muttering:

"No. Nothing, boy. Guess I won't say it. Except to tell you that this is a pretty rough deal we're handing you."

When they arrived at Sandy's house, the sports promoter shambled in, without as much as a backward glance. Waung put away the cart, turned and trotted down a side alley in the direction of his own home. . . . Waiting there for him would

be his aged father, blind, toothless, but still able of tongue and of whom Waung stood in filial fear. Also, his mother, who occasionally beat him for his soul's good. A wife. Three noisy children—and a fourth imminent.

As Waung turned the final corner, a man stepped from the shadow of a wall and stopped him. He wore the garb of a Taoist monk but of finer cloth than was generally seen on the shoulders of those who actively seek the Eternal Tao, the Way.

"Where may this person talk with you—alone?"

"This humble one would think it an honor to offer you the hospitality of his home. But you ask to be alone; and my beggarly hovel holds many persons. . . . Wait. . . . We can go to the shop of Bao-hing, the coffin-maker. He will lend us his workroom."

"Then let us go there."

Old Bao-hing, scenting possible customers, cordially bowed them into his shop with its coffins of catalpa wood in various stages of construction. Then he bowed himself out.

The Taoist monk began: "Waung, you may remember me? I gave you a prayer as an amulet, a charm against evil?"

"Ey-yah! I do remember. It was just after I had won that race."

The monk went on: "I am the unworthy head of the Taoist Order in this city. I have heard that your employer, Weeks, has placed a thousand dollars on Han for tomorrow's race. I have known for several days that Delafield has wagered heavily on his own coolie—but that, I thought, was a rather foolish loyalty to his runner. Delafield is no judge of an athlete, while your employer is said to be a good judge. I do not understand why Weeks is betting against *you*, his own runner."

Waung hung his head. In a tone increasingly stern, the Taoist went on:

"I have just placed two thousand dollars on you. This money is risked by poor men—small amounts from rickshaw coolies, barrow coolies, lightermen, from the men of the junks and sampans. In my hands this sum was placed—because they trusted me." He gave Waung a searching look and then asked abruptly: "Are you going to win? Or is the race decided in advance?"

Waung was silent. He had a vivid desire to tell of the way he had been trapped, of the threat against his life. But he withheld the story, deterred by an ingrained coolie caution. He began to pace up and down the dim, candle-lighted room, threading his way between piles of lumber and half-built coffins. . . . Slowly a resolve formed in his mind. . . .

He turned back to the Taoist who had remained motionless but keen-eyed, and said quietly:

"Prior-born, return to your temple. Trust me. I shall do my utmost. Let me warn you that you will see a strange thing happen. But do not lose your faith in me."

"Will you swear that you will win?" the monk asked sternly. "Swear it by the three divided ghosts of your ancestors? And if you fail, are you ready to suffer the punishment of the Ten Courts of Hell?"

Waung gave the monk an appalled stare. The Ten Courts of Hell! He had seen the plaster effigies of those who suffered punishment in the Taoist inferno. The souls of those who broke faith—mangled by maroon-visaged demons; tortured by the slicing death; stretched on the rack; their eyes gouged out; tongues torn from their mouths. . . .

He was suddenly a prey to apprehension, a fear that caught at his heart and made his hands tremble. Could he win?

If he ran straight, ran hard, and did not fall—he would face the bullets of that gross foreigner, Delafield. After he was dead, the monk could not blame him too much. After he was dead. . . . But if he were shot, he would lose the race and the Taoist would lose the poor men's money. . . . If he died, he would be faithless and suffer the torments of hell. . . .

If he died! Who then would protect the living: his wife, his parents, his children, from the devils that harried them, the Taoist demons of coughs and colds, of trachomatous eyes or pains in the joints of the elderly?

"Do you promise?" the monk repeated. "Do you promise to win—or suffer the punishment of hell?"

Waung answered slowly: "I promise."

THE day of the race was cloudy, with rapid rain squalls. Sandy choked the alarm clock which he had set for three a. m. and lay awake for a moment listening to a shower. He would not have to go forth at such an unhallowed hour to pour water at the bend in the road.

The general soggyiness of the atmosphere, however, did not prevent a record crowd of spectators from assembling later for the event. The course was thronged with Chinese, wedged three-deep along the way—testifying to their vital interest in the race, since rain storms have been known to scatter Chinese armies in battle. The start and the finish were jammed with foreigners who calmly placed themselves in front of patient Orientals who had taken their stations at dawn.

Sandy had thoughtfully spread the rumor that this was to be a grudge race. Delafield carried on the farce, glowering and refusing to speak to Sandy when the two met face to face. The broker announced loudly that he was going to sta-

tion himself down the course, to see that Waung did not barge into his Han at the bend. As though accidentally, he touched the slightly bulging pocket of his overcoat and gave Waung a quick, meaning glance.

Waung caught the gesture and the look. The foreigner was not going to have any mercy! Waung did not for a moment question that Delafield would shoot if he failed to fall. Nor did he consider the unpleasant consequences for the broker as a result of such shooting. Waung's reasoning was purely Chinese. Justice was on the side of the man with money—and Delafield was rich. Could not a rich man always buy his freedom in a Chinese court of law? The life of a rickshaw puller was not an expensive commodity. . . .

The starter tapped Waung's shoulder and he crouched low between the shafts of his rice-laden cart.

"Go!"

Waung jerked his cart free of the wet clinging road, took a dozen careful steps and then settled into racing speed. The course was slippery but he began to run recklessly. His mind kept urging him to faster and faster spurts. The ominous words of the Taoist monk rang and echoed in his ears. He could feel himself actually being pursued by those maroon-faced devils. Demons ready to mangle the hapless soul who had failed in its trust. He dared not look back to locate Han, lest he find, instead, those fiends, their bird claws reaching out to grasp him, to bring him to eternal punishment.

Not far ahead now was the bend in the road, where he must fall—or go on until his back was riddled by Delafield's bullets. Then he heard Han's footsteps, not more than ten paces back. In sudden panic, Waung realized that Han was moving faster than he had done in the first race. Those thick legs were stand-

ing Han in good stead, now that the road was muddy and the traction heavier.

Already Waung could see Delafield at the bend, hand thrust in an overcoat pocket. Waung could almost distinguish the sharp projection from that pocket, the barrel from which hot lead would pour—robbing him of life if he failed to fall.

His legs felt weary; his troubled mind was robbing his body of strength. . . . Here was the bend. No difficulty in picking a puddle; the turn was covered with water. . . .

Waung pounded into the miniature pond. He actually slipped, then mechanically he checked the rickshaw from overrunning him. But, instead of regaining his equilibrium, he allowed himself to lurch to one side and to fall. He felt the impact of cool water on his hot cheeks.

He struggled to his feet, then with a savage tug at his cart he splashed forward, grunting, spendthrift of energy.

Ahead—far ahead now—was Han, pounding on surefootedly. To Waung's ears came a babble of Chinese cries: of horror or commiseration. The weight of his cart seemed tremendous, as though it were burdened with ten times the rice that it held. Would it never cease to drag on his loins and arms? Water dripped from his coarse black hair into his eyes, blinding him; he had to waste a precious second, wiping it away. . . .

Then he felt his left ankle oddly tingling. He had twisted it in his fall. With every step the pain increased, but he refused to heed it. . . . At last the rickshaw ceased to be a dragging burden and he could sprint again. Straining, he increased his stride, making wider and wider steps. Dangerous in this mud, but he must risk it.

The back of Han's rickshaw was nearer—yet the finish line was in sight. Ahead was a blurred mass of men, huddled in

the rain, who gave forth a sustained roaring clamor.

The pain in his ankle was growing almost unbearable but he felt queerly glad of it. The throb was like the lash of a whip, keeping his mind from focusing too intently upon those appalling demons. . . . Could he possibly increase the killing pace he had set for himself? He must!

WAUNG lifted his eyes an instant from the ground just ahead. Clearly now he could see the faces at the finish line. Han's rickshaw was still in the lead, hugging the outer rim of the road. The footage was rougher there; that would help a little. If only Han's lead were not so great! Too much, too much for any runner! But those demons of the thronged courts of Hell were pitilessly reaching up for him. Their bird talons were dripping with blood. . . . Could he lengthen his terrific stride even more?

A pulse beat cruelly in his temples and bands were pressing against his lungs. . . . Longer strides! . . . Must make them longer! . . . His feet slithered in the mud. Mad to take such a pace on a wet road—shouted all the caution in him, learned from the years of his calling. Mad—but not so mad as to let himself be captured by those maroon-faced demons! . . . His cart swayed. The spectators shouted a warning. He righted it without losing an ounce of momentum. He did not know where Han was, now, and he dared not look up to see. Every atom in him was calling for a final spurt, a last burst of speed. . . .

Suddenly the face of the finish judge drifted past him. The man was shouting. Waung was in the midst of a crowd of foreigners who caught at his rickshaw shafts. What new torture was this? Why wouldn't they let him go? Perhaps

he had been shot! At that bend in the road! And these were the demons beginning to make him suffer because he had failed to win!

He struggled to make his way through them, then vigorous arms were about him. A white man's visage loomed before his blurred eyes and he heard the words:

"Easy, boy! All through! You've finished! *Hao*—good! Greatest race that was ever run in Shanghai! Edged in by a foot—but you did it. You won!"

Everything swirled before Waung. A shower of sparks. Blackness. Finally he grew aware that some one was pouring down his throat the foreign version of triple-distilled rice wine, a pungent fluid. His eyes opened and he flinched as though menaced by a whip; for, bending over him, flask in hand, was Sandy.

The sports promoter was smiling dimly and his eyes were noticeably less mournful. He whispered:

"Good boy, Waung! I knew you could do it, even with a handicap. Although you had me scared." Then, as Waung was about to speak, Sandy shook his head warningly.

A half-hour later, in a dilapidated taxicab, with Waung seated fraternally at his side, Sandy allowed a trace of excitement to creep into his dismal voice.

"Waung, I had over five thousand dollars up on you. Every copper I could borrow."

"Then I do right, Mastah, to win, when you tell me not to win?" Waung put the question dazedly. "When you bet on Han?"

"That money I had on Han was just a blind. I've done some things in my life that I'm not very proud of, but I've never yet gone back on my own man. It isn't only the money; Delafield was due for a trimming and he got it! I figured out the race and believed that you could make it, even with that spill at the bend. What I didn't take into account was the lost momentum of your rickshaw. That almost wrecked you. . . ."

Sandy's voice went on, going over the details of the race. Waung leaned back on the shabby cushions of the taxi. His ankle pained fiercely but, with Oriental stoicism, he ignored it. His mind was at peace. Now he could view without fear the prospect of the journey that he—in common with all mankind—must some day take. The journey to the Ten Courts of Hell, there to be judged by the ghostly magistrate. He would not be turned over for punishment to the maroon-faced demons. . . . A contented smile widened Waung's heavy, coolie lips.

