
**Fragments from the Far
East**

McCarthy A A

Title: Fragments from the Far East

Author: McCarthy A A

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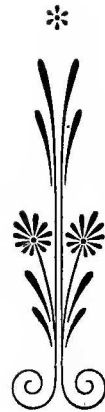
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Fragments

from the

Far East.



BY

A. A. McCARTHY.



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FRAGMENTS FROM THE FAR EAST.

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THE greater number of the following Tales originally appeared in the pages of "*Sport and Gossip*," and the writer is indebted to the Editor for the permission to reprint them.

Fragments from the Far East.

I

ONE MORE FELL BY THE WAYSIDE.

IT needed only the sudden and totally unlooked for transition from the giddy China port to the small lifeless Korean one, to dispel the last vestige of faith placed in the British Government by Schomberg, Acting Consul for Her Britannic Majesty in the Far East. He had long regarded the ancient institution with a suspicious eye, and it was with a deep and righteous feeling of indignation he stood on the deck of a small Japanese sea-tramp, bidding good-bye to a transient colleague, who was on his way to pleasanter fields ahead.

Schomberg wiped his eyeglass for the ninth time, when his argument as to the needed total abolition of red tape officialism in China was interrupted by the warning gong. There was a clatter of sandals down the gangway, and a dozen merry little Japs, waving European hats in European fashion; a profane mate scribbling on his shirt cuff "173rd trip," and adding two words which completely baffled an unsophisticated ship's boy a few days later in Nagasaki; and before he fully realised it, Schomberg was alone on his small launch, and the bigger craft steamed erratically out of the harbour. The loneliness of his situation after the departure of his only friend was considerably augmented by the fact that only two other unblessed mortals, and an occasional itinerant missionary—a trio acquaintanceship Schomberg was in no hurry to avail himself of—made up the remainder of the European community. He woefully remembered the busy, money-loving port he had quitted a month before, and he wondered if he would ever

know and feel the joys of civilisation again. Had he been of a praying order, he might have prayed his gods to reshift him once more, but Schomberg's gods were only earthly ones, for the most part of a liquid quality, and higher sentiment was beyond the lonely Consul's unsoftened heart. The picturesque surrounding country, and the fact that his domain was more than half the year round looked on with a paternal and favour-bestowing eye by the weather clerk, in no ways appealed to the unrepentant's nature. What he wanted, he argued with himself, was company; his old club companions; women—oh, for the delight of a countrywoman's face again!—his old haunts where he had been a king among his kind; and the China atmosphere which had made all its ports endeared to him. If he wanted scenery, there was enough and to spare in Japan, and he therefore wilfully shut his eyes to the beauties of hills and valleys of the sister country in which he found himself. What would be the end of it all? A dozen years frittered away in nothings, and then a few old acquaintances would see the obituary notice of the exile in the morning paper, and perhaps murmur half sympathetically:—"Well, Schomberg's liver has carried him off at last." It was the lot of half the Government servants who had wittingly, or otherwise, come out to the East, and it would last to the end of time, or at least until the arrival of an intervening millenium perhaps, when there might be a slight chance of renovating some constitutional consular laws, as Schomberg observed, with a scholastic regard for alliteration. Until that time, he felt with many an inward pang, and many an unlawful desire, that things existing were not always what they seemed, but would probably remain as they were.

There was not the slightest possibility of even welcoming strangers to this out-of-the-world territory; he must spend his