SNUFFS AND BUTTERS
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TZE WAI was born in one of the remoter provinces of China, and the missionaries got him when he was of a young age, no more than a three-foot child. They taught him English, which proved serviceable. As he grew older, his useful English brought him into contact with merchants and traders, and he made a valuable go-between among certain members of the ruling race, and certain members of his own race, and money changed hands through his intervention. All of which whetted his ambition to make more money, so he left his native China when he was still a young man. It presented, to his mind, certain drawbacks. He felt he would do better, financially, if he moved to a certain great city in the Orient, under European control and administration. Tze Wai had a profound re-

spect for European methods. They led to money, and he wanted money badly. Not for himself, but for his young son, to whom he would give the best he could afford.

In his new home, in this European colony near the equator, Tze Wai kept a shop. A very nice shop, for the sale of a certain commodity which was forbidden in China, but which in this city under European management could be traded in freely. Europeans were more lenient in their outlook than Chinese. More understanding and tolerant. There were several hundred shops here of the kind Tze Wai kept, and all were doing very well. Year by year he applied for a renewal of his permit to keep this particular kind of shop, and year by year it was given him again, with no fuss at all. Such a contrast, these European methods, with the old-fashioned methods of his native land! Wai never regretted having moved from his native land, and having become, by adoption, the subject of a powerful, alien race. The English his missionaries had taught him, and the opportunities his adopted country gave him—or, rather, the European country which had adopted a slice of his own—he was grateful for it all.

As the years went by, Wai found himself slowly amassing the little fortune he had dreamed of. All his savings, all the economies of a frugal life, were to be for the benefit, some day, of his beloved son. Young Wai had been given the usual advantages; that is, he had been sent to the missionaries to learn English, but the completion and rounding out of his education was to be on a more ambitious scale. It was to be completed in other lands, far distant, where he might be in contact with the head and fount of Western civilization. In other words, young Wai was going to London to finish his studies. Not to any of the foreign colleges established at discreet intervals throughout the Orient, but to the great center of the universe itself, the city from which the Western races ruled the world.
Old Wai had long planned for this and young Wai, now one and twenty, looked forward to it eagerly. The time finally arrived when the first step toward fulfilment was at hand. The prospect had its excitements. Old Wai felt proud, young Wai felt proud, and the good missionaries, who had taught the lad English—also other things, but principally English—likewise felt proud to know that their promising pupil was going forth to build upon the foundations they had laid so well.

When the day of departure arrived, a rather silent little group assembled at the landing-stage to take the ship's tender. Young Wai was accompanied by his parents and the two missionaries. During the short traverse to the liner at anchor in the harbor, there was little conversation amongst any of the five. Besides, the last things had all been said long before. Only embarrassments remained, and the pain of parting, which pain could not be covered by futile, idle words. Young Wai was glad when he was finally aboard, and relieved when the tender put back to shore. He leaned over the rail, waving farewell, and his heart contracted with an ache that even his Oriental stoicism, together with other teachings, could not subdue.

The voyage was long, but young Wai was not too lonely. Other students were aboard, and they foregathered together, talking of their plans, of what they hoped to accomplish. They formed a little, isolated group on the ship, but, because they were a group, were not aware that they were isolated. On landing, each would go his own way, for each was destined to study in a different place. But they would keep in touch with one another, they promised, and there would doubtless be holidays and other occasions when they could meet one another again. But perhaps at the back of their young minds they were looking forward to the separation. They wished, secretly, to mingle with members of the ruling race, rather than with those of their own nationality. For they were setting forth to learn, to acquire, and this could not be if they clung together and spoke only with one another. They were glad, therefore, when Tilbury was reached, and glad when Waterloo was reached and they could part. They were now free to make the most of the culture and richness of the Western world.

Young Wai took a cab, doing so with assurance, for he had been well drilled in his first steps, by his missionaries. His small box was placed in front, and he drove out of the station yard, amazed, wondering, delighted. The traffic astonished him, and the congestion on Westminster Bridge was terrifying. He was diverted by sight of the Houses of Parliament looming up on the left, with the Abbey beyond—great buildings such as he had never dreamed of, accustomed as he was to European buildings in the Orient. These exceeded anything he had ever imagined.
The cab rolled along Victoria Street, and then lost itself in the quieter reaches back of Victoria Station, turning down first one and then another of those shabby, dreary streets through which the Number 24 omnibus meanders. Pimlico—he was bound for Pimlico, to an address given by his missionary friends. But even in these dull and sordid streets, with their rows of early Victorian houses, high and gloomy and now converted into cheap lodging and boarding-houses, his delight continued.

The cab finally drew up before a high house in the middle of a row, and he found himself presently standing under the shabby portico of gray stucco, before a heavy door from which the paint was scaling. He waited long at the door, dismayed at the bell dangling from a length of drooping wire. The cab drove away, and he stood alone in the rain before the forbidding door, with his new little box, deserted and perplexed. Finally he tried the iron knocker, giving a timid rap. He repeated it again and again, louder, and at last, desperate and emboldened, banged heavily. From within he could hear the resounding, cavernous echoes,

finally footsteps. The door at last opened grudgingly and a slatternly maid surveyed him with contempt.

"No Chinks," she remarked decisively, and slammed the door in his face. Taking courage, Wai knocked again. He was conscious of a whispered conversation hurriedly carried on within. Presently the door opened once more, and the landlady stood before him. Wai explained his presence and the landlady's face cleared. Yes, she had had his letter. She had also had a letter from his friends the missionaries—had not seen them, herself, for twenty years. To oblige them, however—for the time being—against her custom it was to take in— She hesitated over the word. Against what she usually did, had never done before, in fact, but to oblige old friends. Her remarks were rather disjointed and Wai could not gather the drift of them. Would he come in, please, and perhaps, as it was a small one, he would not mind carrying his box himself.

Servants were so difficult nowadays, since the war, and she did not like to ask them ---

Young Wai seized his small trunk and dragged it into the hallway, which was redolent of onions and cabbage, the typical smell of entry halls in Pimlico. He followed his guide, who threw over her shoulder a stream of disjointed and incoherent remarks as she preceded him up the steep stairs. Top of house. She was sorry, but no other rooms now. Full up, she was, every one coming back to town now, last of October. Flight after flight, steep and dark, Wai dragged his little box. Finally, on the fifth landing, the landlady threw open the door of a small room under the roof. Not half bad, she said, once one got used to it. All she had to offer—but to oblige an old friend— Then she left him abruptly, saying
that dinner was at eight and he would hear the gong.

It was not quite the welcome Wai had expected. The missionaries and their friends all shook hands with one and were cordial. Still, of course, there were many white people who did not shake hands with one, so it was nothing new. Only—after such a long voyage, coming from such a distance, and into a strange land, and she being an old friend of his dear missionaries ---

Wai inspected his room. It was small, and in one corner stood an army cot, covered with a red blanket. A rickety chest of drawers, with a disorganized mirror, a small wash-hand stand, a shaky table, and one stiff, straight chair completed the furnishing. The roof sloped, so that it was not possible to stand upright, except in certain limited places. The room was under the roof. He could hear the rain pattering overhead. A large, irregular patch on the ceiling showed damp, and a drop glistened, ready to fall. The small dormer-window gave on a deep gutter, with a high parapet beyond, so that he could not look down into the street. Nothing but the grimy parapet and the water flowing through the gutter could be seen from the window. He was conscious of the cold, damp and penetrating, and of the rapidly gathering dusk. Soon it would be dark. He must hasten with his unpacking and settling in before it grew quite dark, for the candlestick on the table had no candle, and there was no gas.

He opened his box and brought forth his clothing, some of which he hung carefully in the shallow cupboard, and the rest laid away in the dingy drawers. He placed his few books on the table and when his toilet things were put out, his box was empty and he pushed it under the bed. He gazed about him in the gathering darkness. How little impression he had made upon the room! How full his box had seemed when he packed it!—full to bursting with his possessions, yet now they scarcely denoted his presence.

The room might have been untenanted for all the impression his presence, his belongings had made upon its sordid dreariness. How he had overestimated the contents of his box!

How pathetically inadequate they seemed, to give him a background in this vast London which enveloped him, which lay below him, below the parapet over which he could not see. The darkness settled upon him, blotting out the small, mean room and his few poor possessions. Outside the rain dripped, heavily. He put on his overcoat, and sat shivering in the upright chair, waiting for the dinner-gong to sound. He had a long wait.

The gong startled him, booming through the passages. He opened his door and made his way slowly downstairs, slowly, down the five flights, groping his way by the banisters.
Other people came out of various doors upon other hallways, and gave him a casual glance and passed on. He followed them, timidly, and presently found himself in the dining-room, where a long table ran down the center of the room. The seats at it were all full, and Wai stood irresolute, hesitating. The landlady came toward him, embarrassed.

"Mr. —?" She paused.

"Wai," supplied Wai.

"Mr. Wai," she continued, "as I said—so many people—all full up now. You 've the last room in the house. Table quite full up, too. Perhaps you won't mind being here." She led him to a small table at the end of the room, a table set for one, himself.

The guests looked up curiously as he entered, and stared at him with hostile eyes, much as the slovenly maid had stared at him at the doorway, when he arrived. One man at the long table spoke loudly, and the others tittered at his remarks.

"Snuffs and Butters!" he expostulated. "What are we coming to, I 'd like to ask, when we take in Snuffs and Butters, and sit down to meals with them!" He looked at the landlady pointedly, and set forth his ideas on coffee-colored peoples of all shades. Wai sat at his little table, with downcast eyes, embarrassed, trying not to listen. A tide of loneliness swept over him.

Presently the maid set a plate of soup before him. She put it down hurriedly, slopping much of it on the cloth. Though only tepid, it warmed him a little, taking away something of the chill that had settled into his body, that seemed ready to overwhelm his soul. He waited long for the next course, and the guests were rising from the table before she came again with a plate of meat and potatoes and slammed them down before him. It was evident from her manner that she disliked waiting upon Chinks. In this, her attitude was in conformity with genteel, lower-middle-class opinion, such as prevailed amongst the boarders at this genteel and respectable boarding-house in Claverton Street, Pimlico.

When the guests had all left the dining-room, giving furtive or sniggering glances as they passed him, Wai rose and went upstairs again. He made his way up the dimly lighted stairs, and into his dark bedroom. He had not liked to ask for a candle, so he undressed in the dark, groping for his overcoat, which he spread upon the bed for extra warmth. The thin blanket, half cotton, was insufficient. In this manner did Wai begin his new life.
It is necessary in this tale which deals with two persons who live half the world apart from each other, yet whose existence and the scenes of whose lives run parallel, to transport you somewhat abruptly from the great Oriental city on the equator to the great city in the Western world, some forty degrees north of it. And back again, with like abruptness. You must travel back to the Orient with young Wai's letters, received by his father, whom let us now distinguish as old Wai.

Old Wai had come to his doorway one morning, expecting the postman, for the mail-boat had arrived in the roads the evening before, and he was anxious for word of his son. The last few letters had been disquieting. They dwelt much on the climate, which differed from that to which young Wai was accustomed. They spoke, in regard to the climate, of an excessive darkness, of perpetual rains, which were unlike the tropic rains in that they carried no warmth. Cold and incessant they were, bringing with them at times a darkness such as made candles at midday a necessity. Always, it seemed, the days began late and closed early, and cold it was upon arising, and cold upon retiring to bed, and through the day as well. It had been like this in November, also in December, and in the month of January.

In his letters, Wai spoke little of his medical studies, though he mentioned that he had enrolled himself as a student soon after his arrival. Subsequently, in a later letter, he mentioned that he had been absent from school during a certain period, because of his health. His health, however, would undoubtedly improve as he grew more accustomed to the climate. Perhaps it would have been better if he had come to this strange climate in the middle of summer, instead of at the beginning of winter. He would not then have been obliged to lose so much time at school as he was now losing, for he would then have been gradually accustomed to the climate. He dwelt much on its vagaries, unlike anything he had ever experienced.

All this worried old Wai, as well it might. Gone, for some reason, was the cheery note that had marked the boy's letters on the voyage out, which he had mailed from port to port along the way, as the vessel stopped.

It was as well, perhaps, that the old man could not visualize his son. He would have seen him in a small garret room under a leaking roof, filled with the penetrating cold of a London winter. There was no fireplace in the room, no way of mitigating the sharp, raw dampness. Wai lay on his bed, under the thin blanket and his overcoat, and coughed incessantly. At times, however, whenever he possibly could, he would drag himself up, put on his overcoat, and descend the many stairs to the dining-room, to feed. Little he ate at these times, however, shivering with fever, his thin hands trembling, his body racked with
pain. It was hard work climbing again the many stairs.

Once his landlady, friend of the missionaries, came to his room and brought him a cup of broth. She said he must not humor himself like this; he must try to make an effort, and pull himself together. It was impossible for her, she said, with her busy life and many duties, to attend to him if he got ill. Nor could she ask it of the maid, servants being what they were. Being what they were, with firm ideas, convictions almost, about waiting on a Chink, especially a sick Chink. To her credit, be it said, the landlady did not explain all this to young Wai, but in some way, from her manner, he gathered it. Hence he made the effort to go down, whenever he possibly could, and the boarders looked coldly at the coughing Chinese and found his presence distasteful.

Old Wai, not being in a position to visualize all this, was only vaguely and not concretely worried. Nevertheless, he awaited with anxiety the arrival of each mail-boat.

He stood at his door one morning, looking down the road for the postman. It was early and the street was deserted, it being the kind of street that is lively by night, with excessive patronage, but quiet in the morning when the patrons are sleeping it off. The particular business conducted in this street was of the kind that old Wai himself conducted. The high, narrow, foreign-style houses, built in long rows, were all closely shuttered, and all those within them were sleeping it off. Wai had rather a larger house than most, that could accommodate more customers, and it would be an hour or two yet before the first of these would pull himself sufficiently together to depart. Wai noticed a client of this kind leaving the house adjoining—a sallow, shaky man of any age, but looking aged. He came out with tottering steps and stood for a moment blinking in the clear, hot sunlight. Old Wai folded his arms within his wide sleeves and stood looking at him stolidly, with compassion rather than contempt. Who was he, Wai, to criticize? It was permitted.

A party of sight-seers turned into Church Street, led by a guide, a dapper little Chinese in European dress. They came along slowly, peering curiously, after the manner of tourists. They spoke in cheerful, loud tones, laughing a great deal, which laughter echoed through the narrow, deserted street, disturbing the quiet of those inside, sleeping it off. Old Wai resented it for his patrons. Only foreigners would so disturb them. The party approaching hilariously were not customers, merely curiosity-seekers. Doubtless they would want to look inside. They often did. Wai was used to parties like this, fresh from shipboard, wanting a look-round before the vessel departed.
Yes, they were looking within. As they came along, they rudely pushed open one door after another, the easy swing-doors of houses

like Wai's, that opened at a touch. At each threshold they stood for a moment, crowding and laughing. Unmannerly and jeering, and Wai resented it. He resented it for his patrons, his customers. These tourists might even wish to penetrate into his own establishment, and make rude comments on his own clients, engaged in sleeping it off. The young Chinese who led them from door to door watched their astonishment and amusement, and heard their remarks, with unmoved expression. Wai closed his door firmly behind him and placed himself solidly before it, blocking the entrance. The party passed him, looking at him curiously. They made comments, for the most part unintelligible to Wai. He caught a phrase or two, however.

"Disgusting, I call it," said one.

"Good for what ails 'em, eh?" sneered another.

"Oh, it's legal. These places are all licensed. Government makes lots of money through them. Nothing to worry over!"

The group passed on. Soon they reached the corner of the street and disappeared. Wai stood looking after them, snarling. Impudent foreign devils!—criticizing him, his clients, his Government even, for it came to that. So absorbed was he in watching the party out of sight, that he was startled when the postman touched him on the arm and gave him the letter he had been longing for. Or, after all, was it the letter he was expecting? Not in his son's handwriting, but something formally typewritten, with big printed head-lines across the top, bearing the name of some great London hospital.

Wai's hands trembled—his thin old hands with their long nails, and the fine jade rings on the little fingers. He put on his horn spectacles and stood there in the sunshine, trying to understand these formal phrases, this curt, brusque announcement which somehow concerned his son. His old, half-forgotten missionary English—he did not trust his knowledge of it. It surely was telling him some-

thing which was not true. For the letter, as Wai read it painfully and with difficulty, was telling him an unthinkable thing—that his son, young Wai, was dying. Had not long to live, not many weeks. There was still time, went on the letter, if Wai chose to do so, for him to come out by the next boat and see his son before he died. His son could not come to him, but if it were possible . . . Slowly and dazed, the old man read and re-read the clear-cut words, the abrupt, hard phrasing. It was the climate, cold on the lungs; then followed a long word of many syllables, which had no meaning. Only, if old Wai would
see his son, he must hurry, he must take the next out-going boat.

The missionaries were kind and helped him. They were distressed and they were infinitely kind. They went with Wai to see all the officials it was necessary to see, to obtain permission for him to leave, and they arranged his passage. And as on that other day, six months ago, they came to the boat to say fare-

well to young Wai, so now they came again to see the old man off. They cautioned him not to lose the letter, not to lose the address of the hospital, for in London, they said, there were many, many hospitals, and above all things, old Wai must not lose the address. So in this manner and for this reason, did old Wai set forth upon his long voyage.

In his long life old Wai had witnessed much physical pain. Some—a few—of his patrons had come to him suffering physical pain. What he gave them eased them. Therefore, in a blind, unreasoning way, not knowing exactly how it would apply, not knowing indeed if his son was at all in pain, he took with him certain packets. The kind he sold to his customers. They could do no harm, they might or might not be useful. They occupied little space, and he had many in stock, so he took a number with him. They were small, triangular packets, wrapped in paper, their contents plainly marked outside, just as he had bought them from the Government. Perhaps they would serve, if his son was suffering. Perhaps. They weighed little and took up small room. So he placed many of them in his fine red-lacquer box, and many in his waist-belt, and forgot them. If only his missionaries could have known about this, could have warned him, could have told him not to!

The rest goes quickly—you have guessed it. It was because of his ignorance, his thoughtlessness in taking those little packets with him, that things happened as they did.

Wai followed what his missionaries told him: he carefully preserved, carefully safeguarded the letter from the hospital telling him his son was dying. The address he knew by heart: he could have lost his letter with impunity. But, the better to ensure its safety, he had placed it in the fine red-lacquer box at the bottom of his trunk, the box that held the many little packets. 'When the ship docked and the customs officials came aboard, they threw wide open the cover of the box. Wai, fearful for his letter, reached forth suddenly in protest, to protect it. . . .

He was dazed and stunned when they took him to the police-court on arrival, on charges that held no meaning for him. He could not understand. The magistrate told him not to make excuses, he had been caught red-handed. They produced all his little confiscated packets and asked him what he said to that. Wai's poor missionary English, his long-
disused, half-forgotten English—how could he, with his paucity of language, cope with them? How could he explain? He tried to tell them, in his halting, frightened way, that it was all right. He meant no harm. Against the law? He did not know. Not wrongful in the country he had come from. Why, he kept a shop—the Government allowed him ---

"All same Gov'ment," he protested. "All same Gov'ment, here and there. Wasn't it? All same Gov'ment, and Gov'ment there same as Gov'ment here. All same—no wrong there, no wrong here. All same Gov'ment."

But he was no match for them, of course. How could he be, bewildered, frightened, with a dying son whom he must get to quickly? The magistrate said sternly that of course it was all the same Government, in a sense, but what had that to do with it? Then he spoke with indignation about filthy heathen customs, and how such things did not go here, not in a civilized country. Well enough for Snuffs and Butters, all the shades from brown to yellow, but to try such tricks on here, amongst people of a different sort, a higher standard—To bring that stuff in, to corrupt them—yes, that was it—to corrupt people worth preserving! He 'd put a stop to that!

So old Wai got six months. Six months in which to think over the ethics of the thing. But six months was too long a time for young Wai to wait to see his father.