

In Oxford Street the Reverend Ely's clerical composure and religious dignity would never fail to suffer a spectacular reduction. With each big stride of his feet onwards, his prominent nose would unerringly clash with some old lady's umbrella. As he retreated, stepping sharply backwards, his large leather shoes – which for some reason he always refused to sole with rubber – would almost always land squarely on the delicate little toes of some young miss. Then, as his hands clutched for his handkerchief, you can bet your life he'd jam an elbow into some lady's shopping basket. Every time he made the journey along this street, he'd need to change his shirt and replace a couple of sweat-soaked handkerchiefs when he got home. And during the journey, he'd inevitably utter the words 'Sorry!' and 'How careless of me!' at least one hundred times.

On this particular occasion, he succeeded at last in squeezing his way into Oxford Circus. There he drew a deep breath, and let out a pious 'Thank God!' His pace increased, and he forged ahead in an easterly direction, beads of perspiration drifting down like snowflakes through the white hair at his temples.

Although he was over sixty, the Reverend Ely's back was as straight as a writing brush. He possessed little hair but what he had was pure white. His cheeks were shaven to a glazed sheen, with no whiskers at all. Indeed, but for the wrinkles, his face would have resembled nothing more than a piece of china. His eyes were large, with a pair of tiny yellowy-brown eyeballs lolling in them, and above them hung two wedges of flesh, where twenty or thirty years earlier eyebrows must once have grown. Under the eyes dangled a little pair of spectacles. Because of his large nose, there was a full two inches between his eyes and the spectacles, which meant he generally looked at things over the top of the frames, rather than through the lenses. His lips were very thin, and dropped slightly at the ends. When he preached, with his eyes aimed unwaveringly across the rims of his glasses and his mouth yanked firmly down, he set the congregation's hearts trembling without a single word. In general, though, he was exceedingly affable; a missionary who can't be

friendly will never get anywhere in this world. Reaching Museum Street, he veered left, cut across Torrington Square and entered Gordon Street.

There were quite a few Chinese people living in this street. The Chinese living in London can be divided into two classes: workmen and students. The workmen mostly live in East London, in the Chinatown that brings so much ignominy to the name of China. Those Germans, French and Americans who lack the money for a journey to the Orient always nose around Chinatown in quest of material for novels, travelogues or news articles. Chinatown has no outstanding tourist spots; nor is there anything of note to be observed in the behaviour of the workmen living there. The mere fact that Chinese people inhabit the place is enough to draw the voyeurs. And all because China's a weak nation, every crime under the sun is attributed to this community of hard-working Chinese, who are simply seeking their living in a strange and foreign land. If there were no more than twenty Chinese people dwelling in Chinatown, the accounts of the sensation-seekers would without fail magnify their number to five thousand. And every one of those five thousand yellow-faced demons will smoke opium, smuggle arms, commit murder – hiding the corpses under their bed – rape women – regardless of age – and commit an endless amount of crimes, all deserving, at the very least, gradual dismemberment and death by ten thousand slices of the sword. Authors, playwrights and screenwriters are prompt to base their pictures of the Chinese upon such rumours and reports. Then all who see the play, watch the film or read the novel – the young girls, the old ladies, the little children and the King of England – firmly imprint these quite unfounded pictures upon their memories.

Thus are the Chinese transformed into the most sinister, most foul, most loathsome and most degraded two-legged beasts on earth. In this twentieth century, people are judged according to their nation. The people of a powerful nation are people; the people of a weak nation are dogs.