



**A**DMIRATION for bravery is universal. There are countries where honesty is held low, countries where the cultivation of loyalty is neglected, countries where unselfishness is despised as weakness. But black, white, red, brown and yellow men unite in the worship of courage.

We were talking in this vein, Skipper "Dredge" Amory and I, one lazy afternoon on the bridge of Amory's little tramp steamer, the *Sham\_pan*, which lay at a wharf in Marseilles.

Dredge loved to philosophize, to go to the bottom of a subject and, "muck around for all lumps of fact," as he put it, which was how he got his nickname.

"Speaking of courage, look a£ them Chinks coming aboard now," said Amory, waving a hand toward a stream, of Chinese coolies which poured off the dock over a gangway and down into the odoriferous hold of the old steamer. "With most white men 'Chinamen's courage' is proverbial for no courage at all. Yet I've seen things in the East that'd make me think twice before I'd say that the Chinaman's yeller goes any deeper than his skin."

The skipper paused and narrowed his eyes as he always did when thinking.

"I believe courage is mostly a question of what a man thinks is worth fightin' for," he

continued. "A flag ain't nothin' to a Chink. But just you try to take a foot of his land from him, or maybe, suggest disturbin' the bones, of his ancestors."

A reflective sparkle in Amory's eye grew quickly to a blaze of amusement.

"I seed a feller oncet—" he was fairly crackling with internal laughter now—"I seed a feller oncet try to put a street car line through a Chinese cemetery. Roary, Boary Alice!"

In his gusty laughter the captain choked on his quid; his tanned face turned purple. The approach of the third officer with a question about stowing the cargo put an end to our conversation.

I did not dream how soon we were to have a demonstration of the quality of Chinese courage as I leaned over the bridge rail and watched the coolies coming aboard. They were some of the invalids weeded out of the labor corps which were used to make roads and dig reserve trenches in France. When a Chinaman in a foreign country becomes sick in body he becomes homesick in soul. A homesick Chinaman is no use to any one, including himself. Therefore, these were being sent home on the *Sham\_pan*.

Home! That word has a meaning to a Chinaman which few of us nomadic

Americans ever know. For instance, here was I with an army discharge in my pocket bound for Shanghai instead of for New York. But to a Chinaman his home is half his religion. The skipper's words returned to me:

"I believe courage is mostly a question of what a man thinks is worth fightin' for. A flag ain't nothin' to a chink."

"Certainly no nation has less patriotism than the Chinese," I reflected, "but no nation has more love of family. And is not the Chinese attitude an intelligent one?"

I looked aft to number two hatch where a crane was dropping chunky, oblong boxes into the hold. There was an example of Chinese values. Each of those boxes held a body doubled up in the Buddhist fashion—the body of a labor coolie who had met death in France and who had put it in his contract that if he died his body must be shipped home. For to be buried in a foreign land is to the Chinese mind a tragedy too painful to contemplate.

The old *Sham\_pan* would ride high on this voyage. Except for the coolies, living and dead, she would carry little. A cargo of corpses! Yet it was a fitting cargo for this old hulk, a mere rotting corpse of a ship herself. How old she was, how many years she had sailed the four seas of China alone, no one seemed to know.

On the front of the deckhouse was an empty niche where had once been her builder's nameplate. Owned now by American and Chinese capital, she flew the Chinese flag. Her skipper was an American, her second officer a Portuguese, her third a Briton and her crew Chinese.

When the Oriental republic had entered the war the steamer had been in the China coastwise trade. Since then she had made one voyage to France laden with foodstuffs, and the effort had laid her up three months for repairs. Her plates were rusty, her tackle was frayed, and her salt caked smokestack canted aft and to port.

Considering her Chinese name as two English words, the *Sham\_pan* was well named.

A dirty dock in summer is not a savory place, and all of us were glad when the wheezy old ocean wanderer joined a convoy of freighters bound for Suez.

**A**T SEA again! To leave behind the foul smells of the city, the rattle of cabs, the shock of cobblestones for the soft green restfulness of the sea. When, at the harbor's mouth, the *Sham\_pan* met the ingliding embrace of the ocean she gave herself to it gladly, utterly, as to the caresses of a lover long away.

Twenty-four hours out of port our engine began to weaken. The senior convoying destroyer's repeated inquiries as to whether we needed help were stopped at last with the message that little could be done for us, in the opinion of our chief engineer, who had diagnosed our engine trouble as "senile decay." Whereupon the destroyer set standard speed for the flotilla at a pace that made us seem to crawl, and morning found us alone.

Behind, for miles, our low trailing smoke brushed the foamy wake undisturbed by a breath of air. The day was frightfully hot. The slight groundswell which crept through the expanse of viscid blue jelly about us gave it no more life than the painted canvas ocean of "The Witching Waves" at Coney Island. The sun climbed higher; our decks sweated pitch.

On such still, hot days as this one, and those that followed, the best hour is just after sunset. As the sky darkens the air grows slightly cooler, and men who have dozed all day begin to walk about the ship a little. It grows yet darker and a big star shines out above the foremast. The officer of the deck lights a cigaret contentedly, for now he has "a tall ship and a star to steer her by."

An even fringe of white foam clings to the ship from end to end and hisses softly,

steadily, sleepily. It is a cool sound, too, for it suggests the faint rustle of slush ice on a Spring morning when the tide begins to move. A straight furrow runs diagonally off each bow, deepened by the shadow from the faint moon. Except for that soft, steady sleepy hiss overside there is no sound, unless you go aft to the uneven roar of the wake.

Down beneath number two hatch, candles always glimmered and incense burned before the coffins. A boy of nineteen, called Teddy because of a fancied resemblance to a famous American statesman, and an elderly Chinese named Sing Wo, were the chief mourners. It seemed that one of the queer shaped coffins contained the body of a brother of Sing Wo, and another held all that was left of the father of Teddy, and each time I went near this sepulchral part of the ship I found the devoted man and boy in attitudes of immovable grief.

It was good to leave this gloom for the noonday blaze of the bridge. From here an officer and a seaman swept the horizon with glasses. The same alert watch was kept by a sailor in each of the two crow's-nests. A lone steamer, armed with only a three-inch gun, and limping along at five knots an hour would make easy picking for a U-boat.

Through borrowed glasses I swept the horizon myself until my eyes began to wince at the monotony of blue sea broken only by blue sky. I was about to lower the glasses when miles away something thin and sharp jutted from the polished surface of the Mediterranean. Then the water boiled, and a great gray shape rose dripping from the sea and bulged against the horizon until the lenses were filled with the familiar profile of a large submarine.

Orders were shouted this way and that, and miraculously the old *Sham\_pan* hummed with sudden life. Coolies ran to our side and stared stupidly at the distant steel monster, then jabbered excited gutturals to other coolies

below. Eager hands tore the canvas jacket off the gun at our stern. Black smoke poured from the steamer's stack. She had been making her best speed under the conditions, yet almost imperceptibly she began to make better. She lurched about on short zigzags, creaking and groaning.

We pointed our gun, but the range was too great to fire. Almost immediately a column of water shot up off our bow, but two hundred yards short.

Another geyser leaped up three hundred yards the other side of us. He had the range of us. The enemy's gun carried farther than ours. He could keep out of our reach and pepper us until he got a hit home.

There was nothing to do but to heave to and surrender. Probably Dredge Amory was about to do this when a fluke shot struck fairly on our bridge, knocking the skipper senseless, killing the second officer and two seamen and carrying two spokes out of our wheel.

I was stunned myself, bruised and cut. By the time I recovered my wits Benson, the third officer, had reached the damaged bridge from his post at the gun and was shouting orders like a mad man. Our engine stopped obediently and the five colored flag of China fluttered down the jackstaff.

At this a babel of voices rose from the stern. Our coolie passengers began gathering there in an excited mass. Their tones quickly changed from fear to unmistakable anger. Fists were raised at the scorching sky.

Two men who had no business on our bridge appeared there, Sing Wo and Teddy, the two Chinese I had seen mourning their dead in the hold. Behind them on the companionway were the faces of three or four of their fellows, serious faces with glistening eyes. The mien of Sing Wo and Teddy was serious, too, almost menacing as they approached the third officer.

"Master," said wrinkled Sing Wo, "we wanchee speak you."

“What’s the matter?” asked Benson.

Of course he should have booted them off the bridge with celerity, but he was a man of slight morale at best; and he was not at his best now, under the sudden burden of responsibility.

“You no makee fight, master?” asked Sing Wo. “No makee more fight submaline? You dlop China flag, hey? You makee one sullenda?”

“—— you, yes, we’re surrendering,” yelled Benson, gradually regaining something like the proper air for an officer. “We’re surrendering to keep you all from being blown to pieces like them two seamen was. —— — you, yes, we’re surrendering, and you two —— —— monkeys get to —— off this bridge!”

Sing Wo did not move. Benson raised his arm to strike. A Chinese quartermaster seized the upraised wrist.

“No mus’ slike him, master,” said the quartermaster apologetically as Benson turned on him with a snarl. “He velly good man, number one holy man.”

Benson wrenched himself free and made to beat down the quartermaster when the old Chinese, whom till now I had supposed to be a common coolie, stepped between the two.

“Master, I speak you ploppa,” said he. “Master, you listen me. Two hunda China boy here, they all follow Sing Wo.”

Indeed there was an air about Sing Wo which implied he had long been accustomed to speak with authority.

“Master,” he continued, “suppose we no fight. How fashion submaline do this ship? Submarine makee sink evellything?”

“No,” snapped Benson; “you and your precious two hundred can have a chance to save your lives in the lifeboats. You no drown, old chink.”

“But *Sham\_pan* go sink?” persisted Sing Wo. “Evellything inside bottomside *Sham\_pan* go sink? All dead China boy mus’

go sink?”

“——\_ ——, yes,” yelled Benson; “and if you and your —— pals don’t climb off this bridge and obey my orders you can tell them all there’ll be two hundred more China boys that’ll go sink. Get, I say—get!”

Sing Wo “got,” but without dropping a particle of his dignity.

We looked at the submarine again. She was signaling:

Abandon ship immediately. Have your commander board us with ship’s papers. Let all your other boats stand by halfway between your ship and us.

A canny boche, that. He was still far enough away to be a very difficult mark for us to hit even if we had had the whole concealed armament of a “mystery ship.”

Benson gave an order for lowering and manning the lifeboats and went to get some papers from the captain’s cabin, where Amory had been carried and lay still unconscious. I went to my cabin, which adjoined Benson’s in the bridgehouse, and began throwing things into a canvas carryall.

**P**RESENTLY I heard Benson enter 3jgj\$ his own room and begin to rummage about there. Then from his direction came a choking sound like an outcry stifled at birth.

I turned toward my door and plumped into the arms of two sinewy Chinese seamen. In my weakened condition I could offer very little resistance, and in a few seconds was trussed against my berth, an undershirt stuffed into my mouth for gag. I heard Benson’s door slam, then my door was closed also and locked from the outside.

Feet pattered about the deck beneath my porthole for a few seconds, then absolute silence fell over the *Sham\_pan*.

What treachery was this? I judged the only other able white men on the ship, Benson, the chief and the second engineer,

had met the same fate as I, or a worse fate. If only that submarine would hasten and board us! Austrians would be welcome now.

“If I must be a captive,” I thought, “I would rather be an honorable prisoner of war than a victim of God-only-knows-what underhand plot.”

The key clicked in my door. Sing Wo and Teddy entered. They bowed with polite gravity.

“Master,” said the “number one holy man,” now the evident leader of all his countrymen aboard the *Sham\_pan*, “master, I think you good flen’ all China people. We no wanchee hurt you, master. But you sawee we no wanchee submaline makee sink all dead China boy.” A pleading note crept into Sing Wo’s voice as he continued:

“Master, you been China side. You savvee ploppa ’ligion China people say all China people when die mus’ be belly (buried) China side, ploppa China glave. If submaline makee sink *Sham\_pan* thlee hunda China boy soul no havvee peace. You sawee?”

I “saweed.” I had heard of the doctrine of Feng Shui, or Incomprehensible Wind Water, which dictates that every Chinese after death must be given a properly placed grave in his own country.

Well, to put Sing Wo’s story into plain English, he declared that he and his countrymen had decided that the *Sham\_pan* would never go to the bottom with that Celestial cargo except after a fight which made a corpse of every Buddhist aboard her.

I gathered that they felt that the salvation of their own souls was at stake, that they would be doomed to writhe in some Chinese hell under the eternal curses of their children and children’s children unless they resisted to the last breath any violation of Chinese theories for the proper burial of those corpses in the *Shampan’s* cargo.

Yes, Sing Wo was aware that our three-inch gun was practically useless against

the heavier ordnance of the U-boat. He was aware that the submarine showed no intention of coming near enough to permit us to board her. But he had determined on a “tlick.” To make this “tlick” effective my help was needed.

“We let you loose, you help us, master?”

After very little consideration I promised that I would loyally help this mutiny for the purpose of continuing the resistance against the sworn enemies of my country; this mutiny of Chinese against the order of her British commander that the ship be surrendered.

Sing Wo led me below decks and aft, always keeping me out of range of observation from the U-boat. In the semi obscurity between decks Teddy and the Chinese quartermaster who had intervened between Benson and Sing Wo, brought from a locker a quantity of dynamite and explosive caps. These extraordinary Orientals explained that they wanted to make a bomb—

“Velly big number one bomb, master, plenty big makee sink submaline.”

They did not know how to make it. Could I show them? I could and I did.

Apparently only Sing Wo, Teddy, the quartermaster and four seamen were in the conspiracy. The quartermaster directed two lifeboats already loaded to row off toward the submarine, which had become suspicious of the delay and was signaling furious threats to resume firing. Then he proceeded lowering, filling and dispatching the other boats with the exception of the dingey, which he held ready at a rope ladder on the side of the steamer away from the U-boat.

Meanwhile I was showing Sing Wo and Teddy how to make a tremendous bomb by stuffing a quantity of dynamite into a galvanized iron ashcan. After fitting on a detonating device we wrapped the can in a tarpaulin, leaving exposed only the firing pin.

Straps and a handle were then taken from a suitcase and fitted to the bomb, giving it the appearance of a crude duffel bag, just such a piece of baggage as a seaman might carry.

Sing Wo and Teddy saluted each other gravely, almost tenderly. Followed by two seamen who carried the bomb, Sing Wo went above, hiding a hammer in his clothes as he went.

Teddy told me to stay where I was while he looked forward to make sure that Amory, Benson and the two engineers were still prisoners. Teddy and six seamen were to stay aboard the *Shampan* to guard us five Occidentals. The bulk of the Chinese were already bobbing up and down in badly overcrowded lifeboats at distances of a few hundred yards from the old steamer. The captain's dingey put off from the ship and was rowed rapidly toward the submarine by the four seamen who were in the conspiracy. The bomb lay beneath a thwart, within easy reach of old Sing Wo in the stern sheets.



Teddy brought sea glasses for himself and me, and through a half shrouded porthole we watched the progress of Sing Wo's desperate plan to save our gruesome cargo from desecration.

The submarine began to run in rapidly, its gun trained on the dingey. When a cable length from the tiny craft it hove to.

We saw a man in the conning tower

raise a megaphone to his lips. No doubt he was asking why there were no white men in the dingey. Sing Wo stood up, dignified even through the glasses, and shouted between his hands.

"Velly solly, master, white mans all dead; me havvee ship paper," I could imagine him calling.

There was a consultation on the conning tower. Then the dingey was ordered to come alongside.

THAT picture is unforgettable. The blue, swelling Mediterranean, the gray lifeboats gently rising and falling, filled, with huddled coolies, the great grim submarine glistening in the warm sun, and that frail cockleshell carrying five Chinese on their errand of preposterous bravery. I had little hope of their success. I knew that even if they could get alongside without arousing suspicion the efficacy of the crudely made bomb was very doubtful.

I wanted to take my eyes from the glasses, but I could not. The lenses were wonderfully strong; even the clear-cut features of the U-boat's commander were distinguishable. He was debonairly blond and lean. He seemed so young, such a handsome boy, that I felt a momentary glow of pity for him, an insane desire to warn him. This vanished when his face wrinkled with rage as he shouted an impatient order at Sing Wo. There was no telling when an Allied warship might happen along, and the Austrian wanted to be done with this job quickly.

The bow oarsmen in the dingey shipped their oars. One of them threw a line deftly across the submarine. An Austrian seaman caught it, and strong hands hauled the little boat alongside.

Sing Wo had remained standing since he had answered the U-boat's first hail. One hand lay on the steering oar. The other hand was hidden in his clothes. We knew it

clutched the hammer we had seen him pocket. Now, whipping this out, he bent forward and struck.

Nothing happened. Hurriedly he raised his arm again. The Austrian commander pointed at the old man, and an Austrian seaman leaped on Sing Wo just as his arm went down the second time.

There was a glare as if some one had suddenly opened the door of a gigantic furnace, then a rush of air and thunderous sound that capsized two lifeboats and shook even the distant *Sham\_pan* like the first burst of a typhoon. Where submarine and dingey had been the water was leaping and lashing skyward.

The only traces left of these two craft were a few splintered fragments which plopped into the sea about us a few seconds after Sing Wo blew himself into Buddhahood.

**T**HE lifeboats still afloat saved a few of the unfortunate coolies from the capsized boats and returned to the ship while Teddy and I liberated Benson and the two engineers. Amory was still unconscious and remained delirious for days.

With Benson in command again we got under way. Teddy and the quartermaster were never punished for their part in the insubordination. Benson, although weak, was not a bad sport. His report of the strangest mutiny perhaps ever chronicled was fairly written, and all sorts of posthumous honors were bestowed on the four seamen and Sing Wo by the Allied Governments.

To the Chinese, of course, the very word posthumous is absurd. As the *Sham\_pan* poked her way to Shanghai over waters ever

blue and ever smooth, the conduct of our coolie passengers and crew showed that to them Sing Wo and the four seamen were now more alive than ever. Candles burned for them, it is true, and prayers were said for them in the gloom below decks around the corpses their bravery had saved for proper burial. But the way the living referred to them proved how real to these coolies was what we Westerners speak of glibly as the immortality of the soul. Throughout the rest of that weird voyage we learned how actual to a Chinese is the oneness of past, present and future, the unity of the dead, the living and the unborn.

The self-immolation of Sing Wo and the four seamen was not a sacrifice of the living for the dead, as it seemed to us Occidentals. It was a sacrifice of men living in one state for men living in another, a sacrifice which those Orientals believed had saved the souls of our confined fellow voyagers from insult and degradation unthinkable. And it was a martyrdom which had sent Sing Wo and the four sailors—despite the dissolution of their own bodies—on to a plane much higher than the condition they had known in this world.

This belief in the continuity of existence—so instinctive in Buddhists that it is part of the very breath of the East—far surpasses in intensity similar convictions held by any but the most fanatical Christians. It could never be quite comprehended by lifelong materialists like Benson and me.

But the other lesson of Sing Wo's heroism was as clear as the tropical seas which bore us on to Shanghai. As Dredge Amory had said—

“Courage is mostly a question of what a man thinks is worth fighting for.”