

The Special Correspondent

CHAPTER XXI.

When I awoke I seemed to have had an unpleasant dream. The bandit chief, Ti-Tsang, had prepared a scheme for the seizure of the Chinese treasure: he had attacked the train in the plains of Gobi; the car is assaulted, pillaged, ransacked; the gold and precious stones, to the value of fifteen millions, are torn from the grasp of the Celestials, who yield after a courageous defense. As to the passengers, another two minutes of sleep would have settled their fate—and mine.

But all that disappeared with the vapors of the night. Dreams are not fixed photographs; they fade in the sun, and end by effacing themselves.

In taking my stroll through the train as a good townsman takes his stroll through the town, I am joined by Major Noltitz. After shaking hands, he showed me a Mongol in the second-class car, and said to me, "That is not one of those we picked up at Douchak when we picked up Faruskiar and Ghangir."

"That is so," said I; "I never saw that face in the train before."

Popof, to whom I applied for information, told me that the Mongol had got in at Tcherchen. "When he arrived," he said, "the manager spoke to him for a minute, from which I concluded that he also was one of the staff of the Grand Transasiatic."

I had not noticed Faruskiar during my walk. Had he alighted at one of the small stations between Tcherchen and Tcharkalyk, where we ought to have been about 1 o'clock in the afternoon? No, he and Ghangir were on the gangway in front of our car. They seemed to be in an animated conversation, and only stopped to take a good look toward the northeastern horizon. Had the Mongol brought some news which had made them throw off their usual reserve and gravity? And I abandoned myself to my imagination, foreseeing adventures, attacks of bandits and so on, according to my dream.

I was recalled to reality by the Rev. Nathaniel Morse, who said to me: "It is fixed for to-day; do not forget."

That meant the marriage of Fulk Ephrinnell and Horatia Bluett. Really, I was not thinking of it. It is time for me to go and dress for the occasion. All I can do will be to change my shirt. It is enough that one of the husband's witnesses should be presentable; the other, Caterna, will be sure to be magnificent.

It was at 9 o'clock that this marriage was to take place, announced by the bell of the tender, which was to sound full clang as if it were a chapel bell. With a little imagination we could believe we were in a village. But whether did this bell invite the witnesses and guests? Into the dining car, which had been conveniently arranged for the ceremony, as I had taken good care.

It was no longer a dining car; it was a hall car, if the expression is admissible. The big table had been taken away and replaced by a small table which served as a desk. A few flowers bought at Tcherchen had been arranged in the corners of the car, which was large enough to hold nearly all who wished to be present—and those who could not get inside could look on from the gangways.

A quarter to nine. No one has yet seen the happy couple. Miss Bluett is in one of the toilet cabinets in the first van, where she is probably preparing herself. Fulk Ephrinnell is perhaps struggling with his cravat and giving a last polish to his portable jewelry. I am not anxious. We shall see them as soon as the bell rings.

I have but one regret, and that is that Faruskiar and Ghangir should be too busy to join us. Why do they continue to look over the immense desert? Before their eyes there stretches not the cultivated steppe of the Lob-Nor region, but the Gobi, which is barren, desolate and gloomy. It may be asked why these people are keeping such an obstinate lookout.

"If my presentiments do not deceive me," said Major Noltitz, "there is some reason for it."

What does he mean? But the bell of the tender, the tender bell, begins its joyous appeal. Nine o'clock; it is time to go into the dining car.

The passengers move in a procession, the four witnesses first, then the guests from the end of the village—I mean of the train; Chinese, Turkomans, Tartars, men and women, all curious to assist at the ceremony. The four Mongols remain on the last gangway near the treasure, which the Chinese soldiers do not leave for an instant.

We reach the dining car. The clergyman is seated at the little table, on which is the certificate of marriage he has prepared according to the customary form. He looks as though he was accustomed to this sort of thing, which is as much commercial as matrimonial.

Here is Mr. Fulk Ephrinnell, dressed this morning just as he was dressed yesterday, with a pencil behind the lobe of his left ear, for he has just been making out an account for his New York house.

Here is Miss Horatia Bluett, as thin, as dry, as plain as ever, her dust-cloak over her traveling gown, and in place of jewelry a noisy bunch of keys, which hangs from her belt.

The company politely rise as the bride and bridegroom enter. They "mark time," as Caterna says. Then they advance toward the clergyman, who is standing with his hand resting on a Bible, open probably at the place where Isaac, the son of Abraham, espouses Rebecca, the daughter of Rachel.

We might fancy we were in a chapel if we only had a harmonium. And the

music is here! If it is not a harmonium, it is the next thing to it. An accordion makes itself heard in Caterna's hands. As an ancient mariner he knows how to manipulate this instrument of torture, and here he is swinging out the andante from "Norma" with the most accordion-like expression.

It seems to give great pleasure to the natives of Central Asia. Never have their ears been charmed by the antiquated melody that the pneumatic apparatus was rendering so expressively.

But everything must end in this world, even the andante from "Norma," and the Rev. Nathaniel Morse began to favor the young couple with the speech which had done duty many times before under similar circumstances. "The two souls that blend together—flesh of my flesh—

In my opinion he had much better have got to work like a notary: "Before us there has been drawn up a deed of arrangement regarding Messrs. Ephrinnell, Bluett & Co."

My thought remained unfinished. There are shouts from the engine. The brakes are suddenly applied with a scream and a grind. Successive shocks accompany the stoppage of the train. Then, with a violent bump, the cars pull up in a cloud of sand.

Everything is upset in the dining car, men, furniture, bride, bridegroom and witnesses. No one kept his equilibrium. It is an indescribable pell-mell, with cries of terror and prolonged groans. But I hasten to point out that there was nothing serious, for the stoppage was not all at once.

"Quick!" said the major. "Out of the train!"

CHAPTER XXII.

In a moment the passengers, more or less bruised and alarmed, were out on the track. Nothing but complaints and questions uttered in three or four different languages, amid general bewilderment.

Faruskiar, Ghangir and the four Mongols were the first to jump off the cars. They are out on the line, kandjar in one hand, revolver in the other. No doubt an attack has been organized to pillage the train.

The rails have been taken up for about a hundred yards, and the engine, after bumping over the sleepers, has come to a standstill in a sand hill.

"What! The railroad not finished—and they sold me a through ticket from Tiflis to Pekin! And I came by this Transasiatic to save nine days in my trip round the world!" shouted the voice of the irascible baron.

"The baron is mistaken," said Popof. "The railway is completed, and if a hundred yards of rails have been lifted here, it has been with some criminal intention."

"To stop the train!" I exclaim.

"And steal the treasure they are sending to Pekin!" says Caterna.

"There is no doubt of that," says Popof. "Be ready to repulse an attack."

"It is Ki-Tsang and his gang that we have to do with?" I ask.

Ki-Tsang! The name spread among the passengers and caused inexpressible terror.

The major said to me in a low voice, "Why Ki-Tsang? Why not my lord Faruskiar?"

"He—the manager of the Transasiatic?"

"If it is true that the company had to take several of these robber chiefs into its confidence to assure the safety of the trains—"

"I will never believe that, major."

"As you please, Monsieur Bombarnac. But assuredly Faruskiar knew that this pretended mortuary van contained millions."

"Come, major, this is no time for joking."

No, it was the time for defending, and defending one's self courageously. The Chinese officer has placed his men around the treasure van. They are twenty in number, and the rest of the passengers, not counting the women, amount to thirty. Popof distributes the weapons, which are carried in case of attack. Major Noltitz, Caterna, Pan Chao, Ephrinnell, driver and stoker, passengers, Asiatic and European, all resolve to fight for the common safety.

On the right of the line, about a hundred yards away, stretches a deep, gloomy thicket, a sort of jungle, in which doubtless are hidden the robbers, awaiting the signal to pounce upon us.

Suddenly there is a burst of shouting, the thicket has given passage to the gang in ambush—some sixty Mongols, nomads of the Gobi. If these rascals beat us, the train will be pillaged, the treasure of the Son of Heaven will be stolen, and, what concerns us more intimately, the passengers will be massacred without mercy.

And Faruskiar, whom Major Noltitz so unjustly suspected? I look at him. His face is no longer the same; his fine features have become pale, his height has increased, there is lightning in his eyes.

The bandits fire a volley, and begin brandishing their arms and shouting. Faruskiar, pistol in one hand, kandjar in the other, has rushed on to them, his eyes gleaming, his lips covered with a light foam. Ghangir is at his side, followed by four Mongols whom he is exciting by word and gesture.

Major Noltitz and I throw ourselves into the midst of our assailants. Caterna is in front of us, his mouth open, his white teeth ready to bite, his eyes blinking, his revolver flourishing about.

or who has reappeared for the occasion. "These beggars want to board us," said he. "Forward, forward, for the honor of the flag! To port, there, fire! To starboard, there, fire! All together, fire!"

And it was with no property daggers he was armed, nor dummy pistols loaded with inoffensive powder. No! A revolver in each hand, he was bounding along, firing right and left, and everywhere.

Pan Chao also exposed himself bravely, a smile on his lips, gallantly leading on the other Chinese passengers. Popof and the railway men did their duty bravely. Sir Francis Trevelyan, of Trevelyan Hall, took matters very coolly, but Ephrinnell abandoned himself to true Yankee fury, being no less irritated at the interruption to his marriage than as to the danger run by his forty-two packages of artificial teeth.

Faruskiar, my hero—I cannot call him anything else—displays extraordinary intrepidity, bearing himself the boldest in the struggle, and when he had exhausted his revolver, using his kandjar like a man who had often faced death and never feared it.

Already there were a few wounded on both sides, perhaps a few dead among the passengers, who lay on the line. I have had my shoulder grazed by a bullet, a simple scratch I have hardly noticed. The Rev. Nathaniel Morse does not think that his sacred character compels him to cross his arms, and, from the way he works, one would not imagine that it was the first time he has handled firearms. Caterna has his hat shot through. He utters something about thunder and port hole, and then, taking a most deliberate aim, shoots stone dead the ruffian who has taken such a liberty with his best headgear.

For ten minutes or so the battle continues with most alarming alternations. The number of wounded on both sides increases, and the issue is still doubtful. Faruskiar and Ghangir and the Mongols have been driven back toward the precious van, which the Chinese guard have not left for an instant. But two or three of them have been mortally wounded, and their officer has just been killed by a bullet in the head. And my hero does all that the most ardent courage can do for the defense of the treasure of the Son of Heaven.

I am getting uneasy at the prolongation of the combat. It will continue evidently as long as the chief of the band—a tall man with a black beard—urges on his accomplices to the attack on the train. Up till now he has escaped unhurt, and, in spite of all we can do, he is gaining ground. Shall we be obliged to take refuge in the vans, as behind the walls of a fortress, to trench ourselves, to fight until the last has succumbed? And that will not be long, if we cannot stop the retrograde movement which is beginning on our side.

To the reports of the guns there are now added the cries of the women, who in their terror are running about the gangways, although Miss Bluett and Madame Caterna are trying to keep them inside the cars. A few bullets have gone through the panels, and I am wondering if any of them have hit Kluko.

Major Noltitz comes near me and says, "This is not going well."

"No, it is not going well," I reply, "and I am afraid the ammunition will give out. We must settle their commander-in-chief. Come, major—"

But what we are about to do was done by another at that very instant. This other was Faruskiar. Bursting through the ranks of the assailants, he cleared them off the line, in spite of the blows they aimed at him. He is in front of the bandit chief, he raises his arms, he stabs him full in the chest.

Instantly the thieves beat a retreat, without even carrying off their dead and wounded. Some run across the plain, some disappear in the thickets. Why pursue them now that the battle has ended in our favor? And I must say that without the admirable valor of Faruskiar I do not expect any of us would have lived to tell the story.

But the chief of the bandits is not dead, although the blood flows abundantly from his chest. He has fallen with one knee on the ground, one hand up, with the other he is supporting himself. Faruskiar stands over him, towering above him. Suddenly he rises in a last effort, his arm threatens his adversary, he looks at him. A last thrust of the kandjar is driven into his heart. Faruskiar returns, and in Russian, with perfect calmness, remarks:

"Ki-Tsang is dead! So perish all who bear weapons against the Son of Heaven."

(To be continued.)

The Paths of Peace.

It was toward nightfall on the third day after Mr. Hogan's departure for Boston that he returned to his family in Chetwick, with a bandage round his head which covered one eye, and with his left arm in a sling.

Mrs. Hogan looked at him in silence for some moments.

"Well," she said at last, in a tone of great childliness, "you're a fine-looking man to be coming home from a visit to your uncle that's a priest."

"It was the great crowd did it," said Mr. Hogan, meekly. "We were all striving to get into the building at the one time, and there was one man fell against me when I was holding my arm out to make room for uncle, he being undersized, and that broke a bone, or at any rate sprang it out of place."

"And two minutes after, when uncle was trying to get me out of it, there was a man pushed us both flat, and then he and another one walked on me head."

"And what was all this great crowd?" asked Mrs. Hogan, suspiciously.

"It was the Peace Congress," said Mr. Hogan, calmly.—Youth's Companion.



Orchid Worth \$5,000.

The *Cypripedium Fairrieanum* is one of the rarest orchids in the world. It was introduced into England some fifty years ago, and at one time was comparatively well known, but subsequently it died out and is now to all intents and purposes a thing of the past. One tiny scrap is still known to exist in England, as well as four equally small pieces in Paris, but as flowering plants all specimens of the orchid have disappeared, alike in the collections of Europe and in the Botanic Gardens of Calcutta, where also they once flowered. For some years a



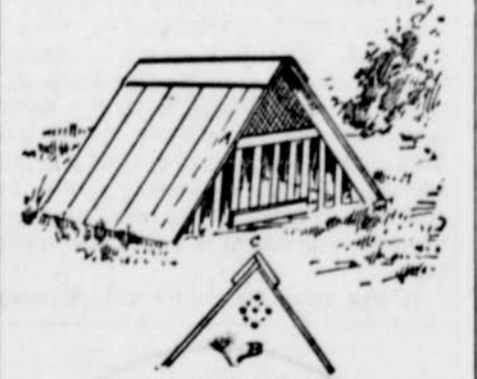
A \$5,000 ORCHID.

firm of orchid growers in St. Albans, England, has had a standing offer of £1,000 for a healthy specimen of the orchid, and as the plant originally came from the almost inaccessible wilds of Bhotan, among the lofty Himalayas, these regions have for many years been searched by adventurous spirits anxious to gain the reward. It is now announced that the search has been successful, and the lucky finder, when he lands his plants in England in good condition, will receive the prize of £1,000.

For Hen and Chicks.

While there are several forms of coops for the old hen and her chicks, says the *Indianapolis News*, the one built on the well-known lines, a full span, is generally considered the most desirable, although there are several ways of improving this old affair. One of the main troubles with the old coop is that it was not always dry, a serious defect when one considers how harmful dampness is to young chicks. This may be prevented as well as preventing the warping of the boards if the two strips placed across the top are lapped, as shown at Fig. C in the illustration.

Then ventilation may be supplied by placing a number of small holes in the peak of the roof at the back and in front, covering a similar place with fine wire netting, doubled as shown in the illustration and at the point B. This wire will keep out vermin as well. The lower part of the coop is so arranged that a small door may be readily opened when it is necessary to let the old hen out, and yet she cannot get it loose herself; the



CHEAP CHICKEN COOP.

slats are placed far enough apart so that the chicks can go in and out at will and they should be placed wide apart so that no change will need to be made as the chicks grow. A little more lumber and brains put in the making of coops for chickens would make the old hen more comfortable and prevent many of the chickens from dying of roup.

Feeding Silage to Cows.

Many cows will like silage the first time they taste it; a few will mince at it for a few feeds, but for a few feeds only. It is best not to feed too heavily to a cow just learning to eat it. I have had cows eat greedily of it the first few feeds and then become turned against it, but a little bit in their trough for a few feeds and they are all right again. For a cow, though, which is used to it, nothing under eighteen or twenty pounds to a feed will gorge her.—*Cor. Farmers' Guide*.

Keep a Sheep Dog.

Every farmer who has a flock of fifty or more sheep ought to keep a good shepherd dog. He is worth a big price in the first place, and will earn his cost every year in saving sheep and lambs and in doing the work of a man. Their intelligence is almost human and they will take sole care of a flock of sheep, spending every day and night with them if allowed to do so. It is better, however, to put the sheep in an enclosure at night, and relieve the dog from the care of watching them. In the morning he may be sent out with them, and he will herd them on any field of land or keep them within any bounds indicated.

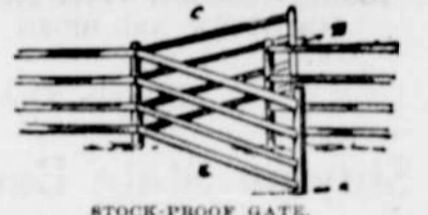
The fidelity of the shepherd dog is remarkable. In Colorado one night last winter a herder brought his flock and hurried to his cabin to cook himself some supper, for he was more than usually hungry. But he missed the dog, which usually followed him to the cabin of an evening to have her supper. The herder thought it rather strange, but made no search for the dog that night. But when he went down to the corral the next morning he found the gate open and the faithful dog standing guard over the flocks. The herder in his haste the night before had forgotten to close the gate, and the dog, more faithful than her master, had remained at her post all night, though suffering from hunger and thirst.

On another occasion this same dog was left to watch a flock of sheep near the herder's cabin while the herder got his supper. After he had eaten his supper he went out to where the sheep were and told the dog to put the sheep in the corral. This she refused to do, and, although she had no supper, she started off over the prairie as fast as she could go. The herder put the sheep in the corral and went to bed. About midnight he was awakened by the loud barking of a dog down by the corral. He got up, dressed himself and went down to the corral, and there found the dog with a band of fifty sheep which had strayed off the previous day without the herder's knowledge; but the poor dog knew it, and also knew that they ought to be corralled, and she did it.

A well-bred shepherd dog—the Scotch collie, if bred from working stock, is the best—will cost from \$25 to \$50, but they are worth it any time.

Stock-Proof Open Gate.

The drawing will give you an idea how much time and worry can be saved if you have cattle or horses in the pasture and through which many walkers pass daily. It takes only one extra panel of fence. Simply place a panel (C) one and one-half feet past



STOCK-PROOF GATE.

first post in panel D and panel E the same distance, but letting C be on one side, while E is on the other, and at the same time leave room enough through which one person may pass with ease. As panel D fits in between C and E, it becomes impossible for a horse or cow to pass. A shows the entrance and B the outlet. The main reasons why I say it is better than a gate are as follows: 1. It is always open to people and is shut to horses and cows. 2. If you had a gate in its place it would so often be left open by careless, indifferent, thoughtless people. 3. It is much easier to make or keep in good shape than a gate. Some may say that there is no need of either, but if you did not have some handy opening through which walkers could easily pass they would climb over your fence and then you would soon have two or three plunks off, and probably broken.—*Farm Journal*.

Poultry Pickings.

It is not always the fat hen that becomes broody.

The scratching hen gives her chicks much exercise.

Pullets hatched now will come in for late summer layers.

Give the whole wheat to the hen and soft feed to the chicks.

Drive the young under shelter during sudden showers of rain.

Try a camphor ball for lice. Place one in each nest as you set the hen.

Whole corn, grit and fresh water are the best fare for the sitting hen.

The fact that the hen is laying is no sign that she wants to leave her young.

Keep food constantly before the sitting hen so she can help herself at will.

Thirteen eggs in early spring and fifteen during late spring and summer are large enough hatchings.

Whitewash the interior of your coops and sprinkle carbolic lime on the floor. This disinfection drives away lice.

Covered runs are a protection from hawks, cats or dogs. They should be moved to fresh plots of grass each week.