

# Cossacks

CHARGING THROUGH A MANCHURIAN VILLAGE.  
FROM ILLUSTRATION.



BY JOHN W. HARRINGTON.  
The wars once more the Cossacks go, rough riders of the Tsar, who for centuries have been in readiness to do his commands.

Their home has for ages been upon the grass-grown steppes. As free as the air above, as reckless of danger as the creatures of the wild, they have lived beneath the stars.

The popular conception of the Cossack is a whiskered atrocity who rides with the speed of the wind, comes to do acts of pillage and of rapine and then goes back again into the bosom of the tall grass, from which he came. By many he is supposed to belong to a legendary tribe whose history stretches back into the blackness of the dark ages from which he has not yet emerged.

No; the Cossack is in many respects like the simple Russian peasant; in others he is like the cowboy of the Western plains whose home is as much in the saddle as in his own village. Far from being oppressors, the Cossacks were once known entirely as the defenders of the poor and the wronged.

The name Kazak is of Tartar origin and means "freeman." It was applied to men who, driven from the more settled countries, took up the life of the unsettled countries and under the blue sky rode without the trammel of tradition, without the interference of kings, potentates and powers. There was a time when nobles laid heavy hand upon the subject, and human life was held in small account.

When the Cossack communities were first formed they were inhabited only by men. The Kazachestvo took vows of celibacy. It was an order that lived like anchorites and fought like demons. As the ages have passed there have been many changes. The Cossacks have families and their own home life. At first, however, young and daring youths were sent out to ride with the Cossacks, and there was no system of chivalry more punctilious than was this government of the men of the steppes. Offenses that involved violation of their

they invaded Constantinople itself in daring forays.

The rough riding knights of old swarmed to the border when there was need of them in every direction. To the poor they were champions, and what if they were indifferent concerning the property of the rich, what difference did it make if they were open handed and generous to those of low estate?

The Turks and the nations of the East who brought gold and spices from the magic lands of sun called the Kazaks "robbers." Many a caravan was pillaged by the marauding riders. There were certain things, like weapons and ammunition, food and equipment, which they had to have. They divided their spoils in council in accordance with their ideas of equity. One of the famous pictures of Cossack life represents a council where the chiefs are making up their accounts as they dictate to their scribe. About the group gathers a motley crowd. The dress of the Cossack has become more or less conventional as the years have gone. We see him in the long coat of brown or of green with the great lambakin cap on his head with strong belts containing cartridges about his waist. He shows the influence of military training. The Cossack of today is a model of elegance compared with what he used to be. He seized garments covered with gold lace, coats of silks and sable and smeared them with mire and tallow to show his supreme disregard of fine trappings. He wore coarse garb, but in the care of his weapons the Cossack has always been punctilious.

His marksmanship was deadly and accurate even while riding at full speed as that of the cowboys of the Western United States. The Cossacks have been expert swordsmen for centuries. Their

proficiency in arms came from their environment. The steppes in which they sought their livelihood were covered with grass often so high that only the head and shoulders of riders appeared above the top of it. Game was abundant in those thick tangles, fruit could be obtained easily, the rivers teemed with fish. The wants of the Cossacks were few and simple. They could do with much or little. A slice of horse flesh carried under the saddle to

keep it warm was a ration fit to be called a luxury. For property the Cossack cared little or nothing. For him in the old days of the rough and tumble knighthood from which he sprang it was enough to have his cloths and his fighting implements. Even when the communities became more established the Cossack would lay his sword across the breast of his newly born son and say, "Well, Kazak, this is all I have to leave you."

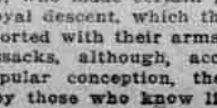
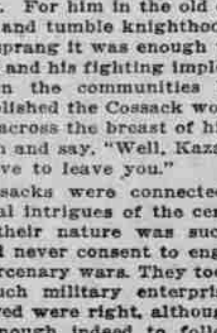
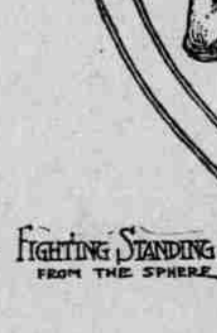
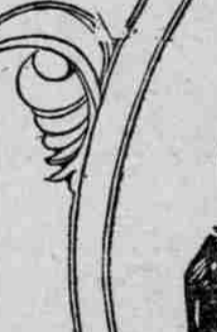
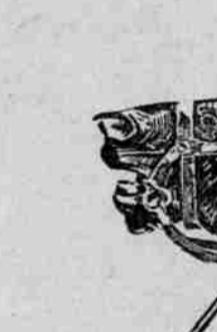
The Cossacks were connected with the political intrigues of the centuries, although their nature was such that they would never consent to engage in merely mercenary wars. They took part only in such military enterprises as they believed were right, although it is difficult enough indeed to follow the course of their reasoning in some cases. Once the Cossacks even made a Tsar where they backed the claims of the boy Dmitri, who made certain pretensions to royal descent, which the Cossacks supported with their arms. The Cossacks, although, according to the popular conception, they are supposed by those who know little of

them to be of the earth earthy, have always had an idealistic side in their nature. They are worshipers of heroes; even dreamers of dreams. They had their men idols—they stood for all those things which made for the chivalry of old.

And out of the mists of time looms the figure of Mazepa, an Adonis of the Steppes, the subject of the Byronic poem which bears his name. Whatever the reason of the departure of Mazepa from Poland it is quite well known that for the commission of some offense he had to flee for his life and that he escaped to the Ukraine, one of the provinces in which there were many Cossack communities. He became secretary or scribe to the Cossack chief Samoilowitch, and in 1687 he succeeded him in office.

The Cossacks are essentially a military organization. In peace they carry on such industries as are necessary for their support and for that of their families, but when the bugles blow they are quickly to horse. They can ride like centaurs and swim like fish. The Cossacks of old rode the almost

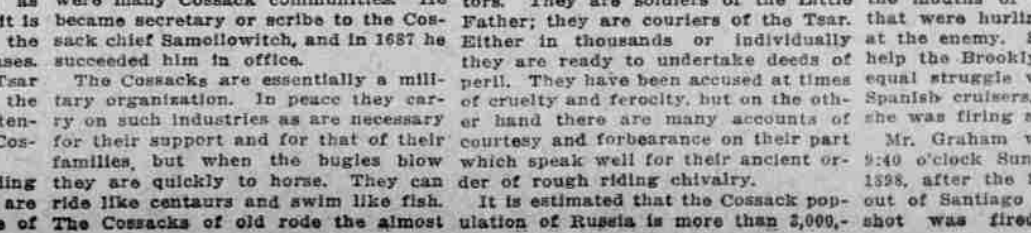
untamed couriers of the steppes and, with weapons in their teeth, swam turbulent streams alongside their wiry steeds. Neither fatigue, nor peril, nor heat of day, nor gloom of night prevented them from their duties to their native land. They came in squadrons with the fleetness of the wind, rushing down upon the foe like a tempest. Their charges were like those of the wild Mamelukes. Regardless of danger and riding with incomparable skill, they spread terror into the ranks of their foes. The present Cossacks preserve all the traditions of their ancestors. They are soldiers of the Little Father; they are couriers of the Tsar. Either in thousands or individually they are ready to undertake deeds of peril. They have been accused at times of cruelty and ferocity, but on the other hand there are many accounts of courtesy and forbearance on their part which speak well for their ancient order of rough riding chivalry. It is estimated that the Cossack population of Russia is more than 2,000,-



FIGHTING STANDING.  
FROM THE SPHERE.

AGILE AS A COWBOY.  
FROM THE SPHERE.

CROSSING A RIVER.  
FROM LE MONDE ILLUSTRÉ.



000. The military service begins at 13 years and is continued for 20. After that the male Cossacks are placed in the reserve or in the National Defense. To this day they are of the flower of the Russian army and constitute one of the most efficient light cavalry organizations in the world.

## Old Battleship Oregon

(Continued From Page 2.)

dently in trouble. Looking back, we saw, instead of what we expected, our own fighting ships in fighting array, simply a heavy pall of smoke and not an American ship in view. Schley turned around and grimly said to Captain Cook, "Well, Cook, we'll have to stand alone with this crowd," but just then, out of a curtain of smoke there came a mighty foam-crested wave, and after a dash of immense brilliancy a roar followed that bespoke a 13-inch gun. It was the Oregon and as our men and officers saw it, they yelled with delight.

### Oregon's Shells Telling.

"Over her low foreboard broke the surging waters that she pushed aside in her mighty race, and they dashed

up against her great steel turrets under the mouths of the big 13-inch guns that were hurling death and defiance at the enemy. She was coming up to help the Brooklyn in her terrible unequal struggle with these four great Spanish cruisers, and every shot that she was firing seemed to take effect."

Mr. Graham wrote that it was at 10:40 o'clock Sunday morning, July 2, 1898, after the Spanish fleet steamed out of Santiago harbor, that the first shot was fired, and at 10:22 the

around the pyramids,

Oregon, which had been riddled with shells, caught fire. About that time the Oregon and Brooklyn each put a big shell aboard the Maria Theresa, Admiral Cervera's flagship, and she began to burn, turning for the beach at 10:31.

The fight with the Viscaya began at 10:36 and at 10:50 the Oregon got close enough to land several six-inch shells on the Viscaya and dropped a few 13-inch projectiles around the Colon.

### Oregon Wins Up Fight.

At the end of 24 minutes of close action, an eight-inch shell from the Brooklyn struck the Viscaya's bow a glancing blow and exploded in her tube a torpedo that was ready to be fired. Immediately after, the Oregon fired an eight-inch shell that struck the Viscaya's quarterdeck rail and raked her fore and aft, one end of her bridge tumbling down, and at 11:06 she turned and headed for shore, her deck a mass of flames and her flag hauled down.

The Brooklyn and Oregon chased the Colon and the race lasted from 11:35 to 1:15. It was about that time that the Oregon raised a signal reading "Remember the Maine," and the Brooklyn answered, "We did."

### The Sleepy Egyptian.

(Leslie's.)

Egyptians can lie down and go to sleep anywhere. They look around until they find a particularly busy place in the street where there is a patch of shade, wrap a dusty cloth around their faces, curl up and peacefully glide off into dreamless sleep. In walking along the street one has to be careful of every epithet of shadow that he comes to for fear of stepping on a native's face. Even when you do step on this usually sensitive part of the anatomy, they merely sit up, yawn thankfully that you are a medium-sized man and lastly turn over on the other side. But these are the people that the papers are quoting as being in bloody revolt. The only danger of revolt would be if some country should come along and pass a law prohibiting the use of all shady spots from 1 till 2. Then there would be trouble—the amount of bloodshed makes even the most uninterested shudder.

As soon as an Egyptian finds out

that a person is an American his first breathless question is: "Will there be that were hurling death and defiance at the enemy. She was coming up to help the Brooklyn in her terrible unequal struggle with these four great Spanish cruisers, and every shot that she was firing seemed to take effect."