

# The Special Correspondent

## CHAPTER XXV.

I have not seen Kinko for two days, and the last time was only to exchange a few words with him to relieve his anxiety. To-night I will try and visit him. I have taken care to lay in a few provisions at Sou-Tcheou.

We started at 3 o'clock. We have got a more powerful engine on. Across this undulating country the gradients are occasionally rather steep. Seven hundred kilometers separate us from the important city of Lan Tcheou, where we ought to arrive to-morrow morning, running thirty miles an hour. At dinner Mr. and Mrs. Ephrinnell, sitting side by side, hardly exchanged a word. Their intimacy seems to have decreased since they were married. Perhaps they are absorbed in the calculation of their reciprocal interests.

We have had a bad night. The sky, of purple, sulphury tint, became stormy to-ward evening, the atmosphere became stifling, the electrical tension excessive. It meant a "highly successful" storm, to quote Catena. In truth, the train ran through a zone, so to speak, of vivid lightning and rolling thunder, which the echoes of the mountains prolonged indefinitely. I think there must have been several lightning strokes, but the rails acted as conductors, and preserved the cars from injury. It was a fine spectacle, a little alarming, these fires in the sky that the heavy rain could not put out—these continuous discharges from the clouds, in which were mingled the strident whistlings of our locomotive as we passed through the stations of Yanlu, from Tchong, Houlan-Sien and Da-Tshing.

By favor of this troubled night, I was able to communicate with Kinko, to take him some provisions and to have a few minutes' conversation with him.

"Is it the day after to-morrow," he asked, "that we arrive at Pekin?"

"Yes, the day after to-morrow, if the train is not delayed."

"Oh, I am not afraid of delays! But when my box is in the railway station at Pekin, I have still to get to the Avenue Cha-Coua."

"What does it matter, will not the fair Zinec Klork come and call for it?"

"No, I advised her not to do so."

"And why?"

"Women are so impressionable. She would want to see the van in which I had come, she would claim the box with such excitement that suspicions would be aroused. In short, she would run the risk of betraying me."

"You are right, Kinko."

"Besides, we shall reach the station in the afternoon, very late in the afternoon, perhaps, and the unloading of the packages will not take place until next morning."

"Probably."

"Well, Monsieur Bombarnac, if I am not taking too great a liberty, may I ask a favor of you?"

"What is it?"

"That you will be present at the departure of the case, so as to avoid any mistake."

"I will be there, Kinko, I will be there. Glass, fragile, I will see that they don't handle it too roughly. And if you like I will accompany the case to Avenue Cha-Coua."

"I hardly like to ask you to do that."

"You are wrong, Kinko. You should not stand on ceremony with a friend, and I am yours, Kinko. Besides, it will be a pleasure to me to make the acquaintance of Mademoiselle Zinec Klork. I will be there when they deliver the box, the precious box. I will help her to get the nails out of it."

"The nails out of it, Monsieur Bombarnac? My panel? Ah, I will jump through my panel!"

"A terrible clap of thunder interrupted our conversation. I thought the train had been thrown off the line by the commotion of the air. I left the young Roumanian and regained my place within the car."

In the morning—26th of May, 7 a. m.—we arrived at Lan Tcheou. Three hours to stop, three hours only.

"Come, Major Noltitz; come, Pan Chao; come, Caterua; we have not a minute to spare."

But as we are leaving the station we are stopped by the appearance of a tall, fat, gray, solemn personage. It is the governor of the town in a double robe of white and yellow silk, fan in hand, buckled belt, and a mantilla—a black mantilla, which would have looked much better on the shoulders of a man. He is accompanied by a certain number of globular mandarins, and the Celestials salute him by holding out their two fists, which they move up and down as they nod their heads.

"Ah! What is this gentleman going to do? Is it some Chinese formality? A visit to the passengers and their baggage? And Kinko, what about him?"

"Nothing alarming, after all. It is only about the treasure of the Son of Heaven. The governor and his suite have stopped before the precious van, bolted and sealed, and are looking at it with that respectful admiration which is experienced, even in China, before a box containing many millions.

I ask Popof what is meant by the governor's presence, has it anything to do with us?"

"Not at all," says Popof; "the order has come from Pekin to telegraph the arrival of the treasure. The governor has done so, and he is awaiting a reply as to whether he is to send it on to Pekin, or keep it provisionally at Lan Tcheou."

If the imperial treasure was a matter of indifference to us it did not seem to be so to Faruskiar. But whether this van started or did not, whether it was attached to our train or left behind, what could it matter to him? Nevertheless, he and Ghangir seemed to be much put about regarding it, although they tried to hide their anxiety, while the Mongols, talking together in a low tone, gave the governor anything but friendly glances.

Meanwhile, the governor had just heard of the attack on the train, and of the part that our hero had taken in defense of the treasure, with what courage he had fought, and how he had delivered the country from the terrible Ki-Taung. And then in laudatory terms, which Pau Chao translated to us, he

thanked Faruskiar, complimented him, and gave him to understand that the Son of Heaven would reward him for his services.

The manager of the Grand Transasiatic listened with that tranquil air that distinguished him, not without impatience, as I could clearly see. Perhaps he felt himself superior to praises as well as recompenses, no matter from how great a height they might come. In that I recognized all the Mongol pride.

It is ten minutes to 10 when we return to the station, absolutely tired out; for the walk has been a rough one, and almost suffocating, for the heat is very great.

My first care is to look after the van with the millions. It is there, as usual, behind the train, under the Chinese guard.

The message expected by the governor has arrived—the order to forward on the van to Pekin, where the treasure is to be handed over to the finance minister.

Where is Faruskiar? I do not see him. Has he given us the slip? No. There he is on one of the platforms, and the Mongols are back in the car.

Ephrinnell has been off to do a round of calls—with his samples, no doubt—and Mrs. Ephrinnell has also been out on business, for a deal in hair, probably. Here they come, and, without seeming to notice each other, they take their seats.

The other passengers are only Celestials. Some are going to Pekin; some have taken their tickets for intermediate stations like Si-Ngan, Ho-Nan, Lou-Ngan, Tai-Youan. There are a hundred passengers in the train. All my numbers are on board. There is not one missing. Thirteen, always thirteen!

## CHAPTER XXVI.

On leaving Lan Tcheou, the railway crosses a well-cultivated country, watered by numerous streams, and hilly enough to necessitate frequent curves. There is a good deal of engineering work; mostly bridges, viaducts on wooden trestles of somewhat doubtful solidity, and the traveler is not particularly comfortable when he finds them bending under the weight of the train. It is true, we are in the Celestial Empire, and a few thousand victims of a railway accident is hardly anything among a population of four hundred millions.

"Besides," said Pan Chao, "the Son of Heaven never travels by railway."

At 8 o'clock in the evening we are at King-Tcheou, after skirting for some time the capricious meanderings of the Great Wall. Of this immense artificial frontier between Mongolia and China there remain only the blocks of granite and red quartzite which served as its base, its terrace of bricks with the parapets of unequal heights, a few old cannons eaten into with rust, and hidden under a thick veil of lichens, and then the square towers with their ruined battlements. The interminable wall rises, falls, bends, bends back again, and is lost sight on the undulations of the ground.

All night was spent in running three hundred kilometers. A fog lasted all day, and this hindered the progress of the train. These Chinese engine drivers are really very skillful and attentive and intelligent. Luckily, the fog rose early in the evening. Now it is night—and a very dark night, too.

The idea occurs to me to walk to the rear of the train, and I stop for an instant on the gangway in front of the treasure van.

The passengers, with the exception of the Chinese guard, are all sleeping their last sleep—their last be it understood, on the Grand Transasiatic.

Returning to the front of the train, I approach Popof's box, and find him sound asleep. I then open the door of the van, shut it behind me, and signal my presence to Kinko. The panel is lowered, the little lamp is lighted.

It is ten minutes to 1. In twelve minutes we shall pass the junction with the Nankin branch. This branch is only completed for five or six kilometers and leads to the viaduct over the Tjon Valley. This viaduct is a great work, and the engineers have as yet only got in the piers, which rise for a hundred feet above the ground.

As I know we are to halt at Fuen-Choo, I shake hands with Kinko, and rise to take my leave. At this moment I seem to hear some one on the platform in the rear of the van.

"Look out, Kinko!" I say, in a whisper.

The lamp is instantly extinguished, and we remain quite still. I am not mistaken. Some one is opening the door of the van.

"Your panel," I whisper.

The panel is raised, the car is shut, and I am alone in the dark. Evidently it must be Popof who has come in. What will he think to find me here? The first time I came to visit the young Roumanian I hid among the packages. Well, I will hide a second time. If I get behind Ephrinnell's boxes it is not likely that Popof will see me, even by the light of his lantern.

I do so, and I watch. It is not Popof, for he would have brought his lantern. I try to recognize the people who have just entered. It is difficult. They have glided between the packages, and after opening the further door, they have gone out and shut it behind them.

They are some of the passengers, evidently; but why here—at this hour? I must know. I have a presentiment that something is in the wind. I approach the front door of the van, and in spite of the rumbling of the train I hear them distinctly enough.

Thousands and ten thousand demons! I am not mistaken! It is the voice of my lord Faruskiar. He is talking with Ghangir in Russian. It is indeed Faruskiar. The four Mongols are accompanied him. But what are they doing there? For what motive are they on the platform, which is just behind the tender?

Of these questions and answers exchanged between my lord Faruskiar and his companions, I do not lose a word.

"When shall we be at the junction?"

"In a few minutes."

"Are you sure that Kardek is at the points?"

"Yes; that has been arranged."

What has been arranged? And who is this Kardek they are talking about? The conversation continues.

"We must wait until we get the signal," says Faruskiar.

"Is that a green light?" asks Ghangir.

"Yes. It will show that the switch is over."

I do not know if I am in my right senses. The switch over. What switch? A half minute elapses. Ought I not to tell Popof? Yes, I ought. I was turning to go out of the van, when an exclamation kept me back.

"The signal—there is the signal!" says Ghangir.

"And now the train is on the Nankin branch!" replies Faruskiar.

The Nankin branch. But then we are lost. At five kilometers from here is the Tjon viaduct, in course of construction, and the train is being precipitated toward an abyss.

Evidently Major Noltitz was not mistaken regarding my lord Faruskiar. I understand the scheme of the scoundrels. The manager of the Grand Transasiatic has a scoundrel of the deepest dye. He has enticed the service of the company to await his opportunity for some extensive haul. The opportunity has come with the millions of the Son of Heaven! Yes. The whole abominable scheme is clear enough to me. Faruskiar has defended the imperial treasure against Ki-Taung to keep it from the chief of the bandits, who had stopped the train, whose attack would have interfered with his criminal projects. That is why he had fought so bravely. That is why he had risked his life and behaved like a hero.

But somehow we ought to prevent this rascal from accomplishing his work. We ought to save the train, which is running full speed toward the unfinished viaduct; we ought to save the passengers from a frightful catastrophe. As to the treasure Faruskiar and his accomplices are after I care no more than for yesterday's news. But the passengers—and myself—that is another affair altogether.

(To be continued.)

## RUSH INTO DEATH VALLEY.

The Hunt for Pots of Gold at the Foot of the Rainbow.

The moral of the old Persian proverb, "The cheapest thing in the kingdom is what men hold most dear," is called to mind by the story which comes from San Francisco of the daily sacrifice of human lives in the mad search for gold in the Death valley. Past Funeral mountains, which stand warden at the gate, men are struggling, lured by the lust of lucre.

Men have strayed into Death valley many a time before, says the Des Moines Register, but it was when they were crazed with thirst and knew that no torment of the unknown could surpass the agony of the known. From end to end Death valley is strewn with bleaching, sun-dried and vulture-picked skeletons. It is the most barren and forsaken place in North America.

Death lurks on every hand, but men are giving up comfortable homes by the hundreds, with chances a million to one against them, and storming Funeral mountains in hope to struggle into Death valley to despair because gold has been found a little further on. The tortures awaiting them have been heralded widely, but cannot daunt the adventurous spirit of the argonauts.

Al though Death valley, as well as along the fringe of both the Mojave and the Colorado desert, the atmosphere is so devoid of moisture that everything is as dry as a bone. The new arrival finds that all superfluous fat and flesh appear to melt away from him. He has to take up several holes in his belt and he has to drink gallons of water every day where he ordinarily drank several glasses.

In fact, the system craves so much water that when it cannot be procured the man's strength falls rapidly, and to be without it, even in the shade, is sure death after a day or two. To run out of water on the trail and to be forced to travel over the desert in the fierce glare of the sun means insanity in a few minutes and death in a few hours.

Not even the seasoned resident can resist this heat for long. The only recourse of the old resident who loses his water supply in any way is to seek shelter under a mesquite bush and to wait until the sun goes down. Then he must hit the trail and reach a well before sunrise, or unless he has wonderful vitality his skeleton will be added to the large collection that lines all the roads through Death valley.

The old Persian proverb has been proved over and over again, but never more conclusively than in this case. The hunt for gold has always been the hunt for death. The Western plains, over which the argonauts of 1849 struggled toward California and gold, the silent places along the Chilkoot pass, the great steppes of Siberia, the great wastes of South Africa, wherever gold has been found, men have offered in bounteous measure that which they hold most dear and yet that which is cheapest in kingdom or republic.

Men by the thousands have left riches at home to tempt fate and that will-o'-the-wisp gold, and have added their bones to the funeral pyres that mark every such struggle. The Death valley rush is only another in the long list since men sought to find the pots of gold at the foot of the rainbow.

## Grand Collection.

Sharpe—Come out to our china closet. I want to show you a collection of souvenirs.

Wheatlon—Why, every piece of china is broken and numbered!

Sharpe—Yes, they are souvenirs of our different cooks.

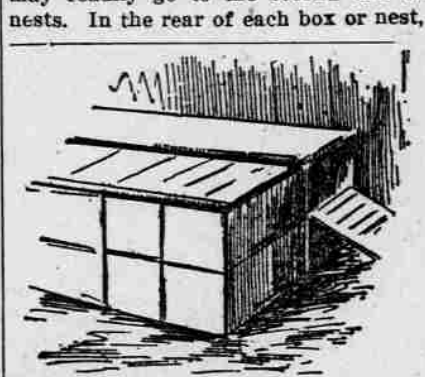
Haste trips its own heels and fetters and stops itself.—Seneca.



## Orange Boxes for Nests.

In nearly every town orange boxes may be bought at moderate prices. They make the very best nest boxes, especially if they are arranged in the following manner: As every one knows, the orange box is partitioned through the center, thus making plenty of room for two nests in each box. Take a number of boxes and stand them on end, and fasten them securely together with strips of wood. Then from old boxes or other sources obtain sufficient lumber to make an alley way darkened by a board over the top.

Place a little walk so that the hens may readily go to the second tier of nests. In the rear of each box, nest,



## BOXES FOR LAYING HENS.

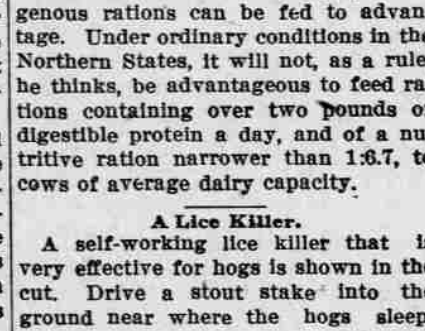
near the top, make a hole just large enough to get one's hand in, so that the eggs may be removed in this way and the nest material changed when necessary. With this arrangement each hen has a nice dark place to lay, and is not disturbed by anything. The illustration shows the idea clearly.—Indianapolis News.

## Food and Quality of Milk.

Recent evidence collected by F. W. Wolf of the Wisconsin station goes to show that the food of the dairy cow influences the quality of the milk produced to this extent, that the cow will yield a maximum flow of milk of the highest fat content which she is capable of producing on rations relatively rich in nitrogenous substances. The productive capacity of the cow, the prices of feeding stuffs and of the milk products are the main factors that will determine how highly nitrogenous rations can be fed to advantage. Under ordinary conditions in the Northern States, it will not, as a rule, be thinks, be advantageous to feed rations containing over two pounds of digestible protein a day, and of a nutritive ration narrower than 1:6.7, to cows of average dairy capacity.

## A Lice Killer.

A self-working lice killer that is very effective for hogs is shown in the cut. Drive a stout stake into the ground near where the hogs sleep.



## RUBBING IT IN.

Wind with an old rope, mauling it well, and saturate the rope twice a week with a mixture of equal parts of lard and kerosene. The hogs will do the rest if there are any lice on them.—D. V. S., in Farm and Home.

## Getting Good Breeds.

If you wish to start in poultry raising or to begin with a new variety, and wish to invest as much as the cost of a good breeding pen made by a reliable and skillful poultry raiser, that is the best way to begin. Otherwise purchase eggs, as many settings as you wish to invest in, and each from a different breed, but always from a reliable one. From each of these settings you should raise both roosters and pullets. Mark them all carefully and plainly, so that you cannot mistake them, and next spring you will be in a position to mate up two or three breeding pens of your own.

## Doesn't Pay to Coddle Alfalfa.

If an alfalfa field is in bad condition it is usually best to plow up and re-seed. It scarcely ever pays, at least where irrigation is practiced, to coddle a poor stand of alfalfa. Many growers recommend disking every spring, even when the stand is good, and some have even found it a paying practice to disk after each cutting. Such disking will often prevent the encroachment of weeds. In the Eastern States alfalfa fields sometimes suffer a check in their growth, tend to turn yellow and otherwise show a sickly condition. Oftentimes this condition is accom-



William Woodville Rockhill, the successor to Minister Conger at Pekin, has had long and extensive training in diplomatic relations with oriental peoples.

At the age of 3, he was appointed second secretary of the American legation in Pekin and the following year, 1885, to the full secretaryship. In 1886-1887 he was w. w. ROCKHILL, charge d'affaire in Korea and during the next two years explored China, Mongolia and Tibet, visiting many remote regions of those countries. Returning to the United States, Mr. Rockhill became chief clerk of the State Department in Washington; then third, and, in 1896-1897, First Assistant Secretary of State. In 1897 he was appointed United States minister to Greece, Roumania and Servia. From this post he resigned in May, 1899. In July, 1900, he went to Pekin as special envoy and remained in China during the long-continued negotiations between the Chinese government and the powers, and was largely instrumental in securing the signing of the final protocol.

To have been an important part in the developing of a national reputation for a husband is an enviable accomplishment for any woman. To an unusual degree Mrs. William E. Cramer was of assistance in the building of the honorable reputation of the late editor of the Milwaukee Evening Wisconsin. For over forty years, during practically all of the time her husband was engaged in the formation of his career, Mrs. Cramer was his eyes and ears and his trusted and necessary assistant. She accompanied him on tours of Europe and of this country and rendered him invaluable assistance in the securing and preparation of the manuscript that made the blind and deaf editor a national character. Her devotion to her husband was beautiful, and at the last tinged freely with the pathetic. She remained at his bedside and ministered to his needs until his death. Among the remarkable experiences she had while traveling with Mr. Cramer was during the Franco-Prussian war, when the Cramers were locked up in Paris for several months during the siege.

Rev. Lee Anna Starr, a Methodist minister at Paris, Ill., recently came into public notice through her refusal to marry a couple until she was furnished evidence that neither of the contracting parties was a divorcee. Miss Starr has been in the gospel ministry ten years, and in that time she says she has officiated at many Rev. L. A. STARR, weddings. In but one instance has she deviated from her rule not to marry a person who has been absolved from a marriage contract by legal action. In that instance the ceremony had practically commenced before Miss Starr learned that the woman was divorced. She immediately caused the proceedings to be postponed until she learned that the divorce had been obtained on the ground of desertion, and that the wife had been unable to secure trace of the husband who had wronged her. Considering that this constituted scriptural grounds Miss Starr proceeded with the ceremony. She believes divorce to be a growing evil which can be combated by clergymen refusing to marry divorced persons.

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