

The Special Correspondent

CHAPTER IV.

There are a hundred passengers on board the Astara—a large number of them Caucasians trading with Turkestan, and who will be with us all the way to the eastern provinces of the Celestial Empire.

As I am going to pass the night on deck, I return up the cabin stairs. The American is there just finishing the packing of his case.

"May I ask how many teeth you are importing into China in those cases?"

"Eighteen hundred thousand, without counting the wisdom teeth!"

And Ephrinnell began to laugh at the little joke, which he fired off on several other occasions during the voyage. I left him and went on to the bridge between the paddle boxes.

A rather large deal case, covered with a tarpaulin, attracts my attention. It measures about a yard and a half in height and a yard in width and depth. It has been placed here with the care required with these words in Russian, written on the side, "Glass—Fragile—Keep from Damp," and then directions, "Top—Bottom," which have been respected. And then there is the address, "Mademoiselle Zineka Klork, Avenue Choua, Pekin, Petchili, China."

This Zineka Klork—her name showed it—ought to be a Roumanian, and she was taking advantage of this through the train on the Grand Transasiatic to get glass forward! Was this an article in request at the shops of the Middle Kingdom? How otherwise could the fair Celestials admire their almond eyes and their elaborate hair?

The bell rang and announced the 6 o'clock dinner. The dining room is forward. Ephrinnell had installed himself nearly in the middle. There was a vacant seat near him; he beckoned to me to occupy it.

Was it by chance? I know not; but the Englishwoman was seated on Ephrinnell's left and talking to him. He introduced me.

"Miss Horatia Bluet," he said. Opposite I saw the French couple conscientiously studying the bill of fare. At the other end of the table, close to where the food came from, was the German with a ruddy face, fair hair, reddish beard, clumsy hands and a very long nose which reminded me of the proboscidean feature of the plantigrade.

"He is not late this time," said I to Ephrinnell. "Do you know his name?"

"Baron Weisschnitzdorfer."

"And with that name is he going to Pekin?"

"To Pekin, like that Russian major who is sitting near the captain of the Astara."

I looked at the man indicated. He was about fifty years of age, of true Muscovite type, beard and hair turning gray, face prepossessing.

"You said he was a major, Mr. Ephrinnell?"

"Yes; a doctor in the Russian army and they call him Major Noltitz."

Evidently the American was some distance ahead of me, and yet he was not a reporter by profession. Ephrinnell chatted with Miss Horatia Bluet, and I understood that there was an understanding between these two perfectly Anglo-Saxon natures.

In fact, one was a traveler in teeth, and the other was a traveler in hair. Miss Horatia Bluet represented an important firm in London, Messrs. Holmes-Holme, to whom the Celestial Empire annually exports two millions of female heads of hair.

The pitching now becomes very violent. The majority of the company cannot stand it. About thirty of the passengers have left the table for the deck. I hope the fresh air will do them good. We are now only a dozen in the dining room, including the captain, with whom Major Noltitz is quietly conversing, Ephrinnell and Miss Bluet seem to be thoroughly accustomed to these inevitable incidents of navigation. The German baron drinks and eats as if he had taken up his quarters in some bier-halle at Munich or Frankfurt.

A little way off are the two Celestials, whom I watch with curiosity. One is a young man of distinguished bearing, about twenty-five years old, of pleasant physiognomy, in spite of his yellow skin and narrow eyes. A few years spent in Europe have evidently Europeanized his manners and even his dress. His moustache is silky, his eyes are intelligent, his hair is much more French than Chinese.

His companion, on the contrary, whom he always appears to be making fun of, is of the type of the true porcelain doll with the moving head; he is from fifty to fifty-five years old, like a monkey in the face, the top of his head half shaven, the pigtail down his back, the traditional costume, frock, vest, belt, baggy trousers, many-colored slippers; a China vase of the Green family. He, however, could hold out no longer, and after a tremendous pitch, accompanied by a long rattle of the crockery, he gave up and hurried on deck. And as he did so, the younger Chinaman shouted after him, "Cornaro! Cornaro!" at the same time holding out a little volume he had left on the table.

What was the meaning of this Italian word in an oriental mouth?

Madame Caterna arose, very pale, and Monsieur Caterna, a model husband, followed her on deck.

CHAPTER V.

It is half-past seven when I sit down on one of the seats in the stern of the Astara. But with this increasing wind it is impossible for me to remain there. I rise, therefore, and make my way forward. Under the bridge between the paddle boxes, the wind is so strong that I seek shelter among the packages covered by the tarpaulin. Stretched on one of the boxes, wrapped in my rug, with my head resting against the tarpaulin, I shall soon be asleep.

After some time I am awakened by a curious noise. Whence comes this noise? I listen more attentively. It seems as though some one is snoring close to my ear.

"That is some steerage passenger," I think. "He has got under the tarpaulin between the cases, and he will not do so badly in his improvised cabin."

By the light which filters down from

the lower part of the binnacle, I see nothing. I listen again. The noise has ceased. I look about. There is no one on this part of the deck, for the second-class passengers are all forward.

Then I must have been dreaming, and I resume my position, and try again to sleep. This time there is no mistake. The snoring has begun again, and I am sure it is coming from the case against which I am leaning my head.

"Goodness!" I say. "There must be an animal in here!"

Now I am off on the trail. It must be a wild animal on its way from some menagerie to some Sultan of Central Asia.

I light a wax vesta, and as I am sheltered from the wind, the flame keeps upright. By its light what do I read? The case containing the wild beast is the very one with the address: "Mademoiselle Zineka Klork, Avenue Choua, Pekin, China."

Fragile, my wild beast! Keep from damp, my lion. Quite so! But for what does Miss Zineka Klork, this pretty Roumanian, want a wild beast sent in this way?

My thoughts bewilder me. I have a two-pound weight on each eyelid. I lie down along by the tarpaulin; my rug wraps me more closely, and I fall into a deep sleep. It is not yet daylight when I awake.

I rub my eyes, I rise, I go and lean against the rail. The Astara is not so lively, for the wind has shifted to the northeast.

The night is cold. I warm myself by walking about briskly for half an hour. I think no more of my wild beast. Suddenly remembrance returns to me.

I look at my watch. It is only 3 o'clock in the morning. It will go back to my place. And I do so with my head against the side of the case. I shut my eyes.

Suddenly there is a new sound. This time I am not mistaken. A half-stifled sneeze shakes the side of the case. Never did an animal sneeze like that!

Is it possible? A human being is hidden in this case and is being fraudulently carried by the Grand Transasiatic to the pretty Roumanian? But is it a man or a woman? It seems as though the sneeze has a masculine sound about it.

The eastern horizon grows brighter. The clouds in the zenith are the first to color. The sun appears at last all watery with the mists of the sea.

I look; it is indeed the case addressed to Pekin. I notice that certain holes are pierced here and here, by which the air inside can be renewed. Perhaps two eyes are looking through these holes, watching what is going on outside.

At breakfast rally all the passengers whom the sea has not affected; the young Chinaman, Major Noltitz, Ephrinnell, Miss Bluet, Monsieur Caterna, the Baron Weisschnitzdorfer, and seven or eight other passengers. I am careful not to let the American into the secret of the case.

About noon the land is reported to the eastward, a low, yellowish land, with no rocky margin, but a few sand hills in the neighborhood of Krasnovodsk.

In an hour we are in sight of Uzun Ada, and twenty-seven minutes afterward set foot in Asia.

CHAPTER VI.

As may be imagined, it hardly takes an hour to see Uzun Ada, the name of which means Long Island. It is almost a town, but a modern town, traced with a square, drawn with a line on a large carpet of yellow sand.

As the train starts at four o'clock this afternoon, I must telegraph to the Twentieth Century, by the Caspian cable, that I am at my post at the Uzun Ada station. That done, I can see if I can pick up anything worth reporting.

Nothing is more simple. It consists in opening an account with those of my companions with whom I may have to do during the journey. That is my custom, I always find it answer, and while waiting for the unknown, I write down the known in my pocketbook, with a number to distinguish each:

1. Fulk Ephrinnell, American.
2. Miss Horatia Bluet, English.
3. Major Noltitz, Russian.
4. Monsieur Caterna, French.
5. Madame Caterna, French.
6. Baron Weisschnitzdorfer, German.

As to the Chinese, they will have a number later on when I have made up my mind about them. As to the individual in the box, I intend to enter into communication with him, or her, and to be of assistance in that quarter if I can do so without betraying the secret.

The train is already marshaled in the station. It is composed of first and second-class cars, a restaurant car and two baggage vans.

Russians will take us up to the frontier of Turkestan, and Chinese will take us through China. But there is one representative of the company who will not leave his post, and that is Popoff, our head guard, a true Russian of soldierly bearing, hairy and bearded, with a folded overcoat and Muscovite cap. I intend to talk a good deal with this gallant fellow. For ten years he has been on the Transcaspien between Uzun Ada and the Pamirs, and during the last month he has been all along the line to Pekin. I call him No. 7 in my note-book.

It occurs to me to have a look at the mysterious box. Has it not a right to be so called? Yes, certainly. I must really find out where it has been put and how to get at it easily.

The famous box was still on the platform. In looking at it closely I observe that air holes have been bored on each of its sides, and that on one side it has two panels, one of which can be made to slide on the other from the inside. And I am led to think that the prisoner has had it made so in order that he can, if necessary, leave his prison—probably during the night.

Just now the porters are beginning to lift the box. I have the satisfaction of seeing that they attend to the directions inscribed on it. It is placed with great care near the entrance to the van, the side with the panels outward, as if it were the door of a cupboard. And is not the box a cupboard—a cupboard I propose to open?

"There it is all right!" said one of the porters, looking to see that the case was as it should be, top where top should be, and so on.

"There is no fear of its moving," said another porter; "the glass will reach Pekin all right, unless the train runs off the metals."

The American came up to me and took a last look at his stock of incisors, molars and canines.

"You know, Monsieur Bombardier," he said to me, "that the passengers are going to dine at the Hotel du Czar before the departure of the train. It is time now. Will you come with me?"

"I follow you."

The dinner ends ten minutes before the time fixed for our departure. The bell rings and we all make a move for the train, the engine of which is blowing off steam.

The Baron Weisschnitzdorfer is not behind hand this time. On the contrary, it is the train this time which is five minutes late in starting; and the German has begun to complain, to chafe and to threaten to sue the company for damages. Ten thousand roubles—not a penny less!—if it causes him to fail. Fail in what, considering that he is going to Pekin?

At length the last shriek of the whistle cleaves the air; the cars begin to move, and a loud cheer salutes the departure of the Grand Transasiatic express.

For fifteen years our guard had been in the Transcaspien service. He knows the country up to the Chinese frontier, and five or six times already he has been over the whole line known as the Grand Transasiatic.

I asked him if he knew anything of our fellow travelers. I meant those who were going through to China, and in the first place of Major Noltitz.

"The major," said Popoff, "has lived a long time in the Turkestan provinces, and he is going to Pekin to organize the staff of a hospital for our compatriots, with the permission of the Czar, of course."

"I like this Major Noltitz," I said, "and I hope to make his acquaintance very soon. And these two Chinese, do you know them?"

"Not in the least, Monsieur Bombardier; all I know is the name on the luggage."

"What is that?"

"The younger man's name is Pan-Chao, the elder is Tio-King. Probably they have been traveling in Europe for some years. As to saying where they come from, I cannot. I imagine that Pan-Chao belongs to some rich family, for he is accompanied by his doctor."

"And the two French people, that couple so affectionate," I asked. "Who are they?"

"Stage people who are going to a theater in Shanghai, where they have an engagement at the French theater."

"That is capital. I will talk about the theater, and behind the scenes, and such matters, and I shall soon make the acquaintance of the cheery comedian and his charming wife."

As to a certain scenerial gentleman aboard, our guide knew nothing beyond that his luggage bore the address in full: Sir Francis Trevelyan, Trevelyan Hall, Trevelyanhire.

"A gentleman who does not answer when he is spoken to," added Popoff. "Now we get to the German," said I.

"Baron Weisschnitzdorfer?" said I. "He is on a trip round the world."

"A trip round the world?"

"In thirty-nine days."

And so after Mrs. Bislard, who did the famous tour in seventy-three days, and Citizen George Francis Train, who did it in seventy, this German was attempting to do it in thirty-nine?

"He will never do it!" I exclaimed. "Why not?" asked Popoff.

"Because he is always late."

(To be continued.)

"PET" AVERSIONS.

Most Folk Have Unreasonable Dislikes.

"We are all born with an aversion to something, and this aversion is a thing we can no more direct than we can fly by merely beating on the atmosphere with our hands," George MePherson informs me.

"History is rich in the account of such instances. There is Vincent, the painter, who would faint if the odor of a rose was wafted to his nostrils, and the great German sportsman, Vaughem, would become positively ill if he even saw a bit of roast pig. These aversions, often so entirely unaccountable, are curious things to study. I became somewhat interested in the subject a year or so ago, and have since that time been quietly adding to my store of information on this somewhat unusual topic by personal inquiries among my friends and acquaintances.

"Not one of them did I find without his pet aversion, for the existence of which he could give no good reason. Generally the aversion was toward some kind of food, but not always. One hated the color of blue, and nothing depressed him more than being in the company of people who were, for the most part, garbed in clothes of this hue. Another couldn't listen to the music of a harp without becoming irritated, while a third detested lilies to such a degree that he couldn't remain in the room where there was one.

"None of the men who had these aversions understood why he had them. One man told me he couldn't touch a drop of milk or cream without becoming sick, yet he thought nothing looked quite so appetizing as a glass of good rich cream. Often he had tried to partake of it, but without success. Parental influence will, of course, be urged as the reason for these aversions, but in the case of the man who couldn't touch milk or cream his mother and father were both very fond of milk, and another friend of mine who couldn't eat a strawberry had parents who simply loved them."

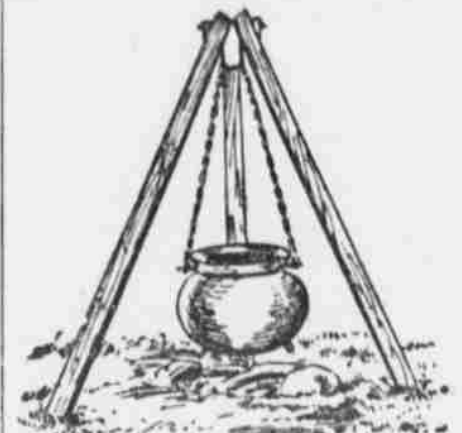
—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

Trying to Hedge. Wife—John, I'd like to have a short talk with you after breakfast. Husband—It's no use, Mary. I'm short myself.



The Hanging of the Kettle.

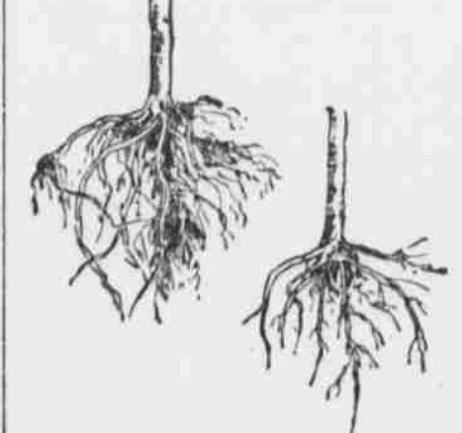
There are many farmers in need of something convenient to hang a large kettle on. Many support the kettle on three stones, which is unsatisfactory, especially if the heat cracks one stone and the kettle tips over. The accompanying cut is drawn from a photograph I took recently on a neighboring farm, and it comes very near to explaining itself. The device consists of three moderately heavy pieces of wood for legs, which are attached together at the top by a heavy bolt. Some six or eight inches below the union of the three legs a heavy clevis is secured to the middle leg. From this clevis two chains extend downward to proper distance and double backward to fasten on to the ears of the kettle.



which then hangs suspended. The length of the legs will depend on convenience and the size of the kettle they are to support. Those shown in the cut are eleven feet in length and were made from medium sized well seasoned fence rails. When the derrick is not in use it can be lowered, folded together and laid away.—Cor. Orange Judd Farmer.

Pruning Roots of Trees.

While there may be merit in the method of planting known as the Stringfellow plan, which provides for cutting away most of the roots of the young tree as well as the top, it is a plan which does not work well with all species of trees nor in all soils. As a result the average orchardist will stick to the best of the old methods which provides for a cutting back of the top so as to form a proper head and balancing the roots somewhat after the manner of the lower cut in the illustration. The upper cut shows the roots of the two-year-old tree after it



is dug in the nursery and the lower drawing shows how all the mass of fibrous roots, which would die anyway after exposure to the sun, have been cut away and most of the longer roots shortened. It is easier to plant a tree prepared in this manner and strong young rootlets will form from the ends of the roots which were cut, forming a mass of roots during the one growing season following planting which will give the young tree a good start in life.—Indianapolis News.

Fate of the Old Hen.

After the old hen has raised her crop of chicks, she is not a fit subject for the carcass market. Turn her out on the range to get strong and in good shape to be fattened for the summer or early fall market, if she is not to be carried through another winter. It will cost little or nothing to feed her through the coming months and with a few months or even two months on the range she can be plumped up so as to fatten at the smallest possible expense, and the carcass will be reasonably tender and fairly satisfactory to the buyer. If she is not to be set again don't be in a hurry to take her away from the chicks. Let her run with them as long as they will stay with her, for she can do no harm, and may be able to help them more or less even though they may be half-grown. Don't be too quick to say the old hen is no longer useful or profitable.

Preserving the Eggs.

By the water glass method eggs may be preserved, and be in good condition for use several months later, although they will not pass as strictly fresh eggs. The procedure is as follows: Obtain the water glass from the drug-



Self-government is gradually developing in the Philippines. In 1902 Congress passed a law which provided that a census of the population of the islands should be taken, and that within two years after the completion of the census a representative popular assembly should be elected. The census was completed on March 27th of the present year, and on that day Governor Wright issued a proclamation fixing March 27, 1907, as the date for the first general Filipino election. The legislative body to be chosen is to contain between 60 and 100 members, elected by popular vote, and is to form, jointly with the Philippine Commission, the two-chambered legislature of the new government. This legislature, besides making laws, is to elect two commissioners to represent them in Washington. It is expected that these commissioners will be allowed to sit in the American Congress much as the territorial delegates now have seats there.

Moroccan affairs continue to hold an important place in international discussion. The desire of Germany, as stated in a memorandum to the United States, is for the maintenance of the "open door" in Morocco, for the preservation of the status quo, and for the protection of the commercial interests of all trading nations. It is pointed out, however, on the other hand, that the Anglo-French agreement of April, 1904, expressly declared for the principle of commercial freedom. April 6th, King Edward, on his way to join Queen Alexandra at Marseilles, paid a brief visit to President Loubet at Paris, and the incident, following soon upon the call of Emperor William at Tangiers, was interpreted by the French press as a reaffirmation of the Anglo-French agreement.

A reduction in freight rates on the Panama railway was suggested to Secretary Taft by the ministers in Washington of the republics in Central America and on the west coast of South America. They said that it cost much more to ship goods to New York by way of this railway than to send the same goods to London by the Strait of Magellan. They also asked that equal facilities be granted to goods shipped by all steamship lines, and charged that under the old management—that is, before the United States gained control of the road—various lines were discriminated against. Secretary Taft promised that the discriminations would cease at once.

The President has, by proclamation, invited "all the nations of the earth to take part in the commemoration" of the 300th anniversary of the first English settlement in America, at Jamestown, "by sending their naval vessels to the said celebration and by making such representations of their military organizations as may be proper." The festivities are to last from May to November, 1907, and are described as "an international naval, military and marine celebration." Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, the president of the managers of the exposition, at the time of his death, was engaged in persuading the various States to be represented at the exposition in some official way.

John Hay, when an undergraduate at Brown University, assisted in defending some lower classmen from unfair treatment in a hazing episode; but when a classmate recently wrote him about the incident, he humorously replied, "I remember nothing of my heroic conduct in the Gordon case. But my recollection of everything in those far-off days is dim, and heroism was my daily habit. I couldn't sleep nights if I hadn't saved somebody's life. Now I only save a nation now and then." Secretary Hay, just before he replied to the letter, must have been reading some Washington correspondent's description of how he had prevented the dismemberment of China.

Chinese Neutrality.—It has been officially disclosed at Washington that the movement in February, 1904, for concerted action by the neutral powers to induce the belligerents in the far East to respect the neutrality of China was made by the United States at the initiative of Germany. The reason that this fact was not made known at the time, it is stated, was that the German Emperor felt that the suggestion would be more certain to be adopted if it emanated from Washington rather than from Berlin.

With the beginning of the new administration for the second time in succession there is no change of party control, whereas from Garfield's inauguration to McKinley's there was every time an alternation from party to party, which made the retiring President seem almost like a captive chief gracing the triumph of a conqueror.

In the Sunday schools of the United States there are fewer pupils by about five millions than the number enrolled in the public schools. Putting the fact in another form, of every three girls and boys who attend the day schools, only two go to Sunday school. It would be a delicate task to apportion the responsibility for this state of affairs; but it is fair to suggest that when children stay away from the public schools their parents are held responsible.