

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 Tcharaklyk, 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 called 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 Ephrinell and Horatia Bluet. 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 herald 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 Bluet is in one of the toilet cabinets in the first van, where she is probably preparing herself. Fulk Ephrinell 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 Ephrinell, 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 Bluet, as thin, as dry, as plain as ever, her dust-coat 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 accented 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. Ephrinell, Bluet & 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 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-Taang and his gang that we have to do with," I ask.

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

The major said to me in a low voice, "Why Ki-Taang? 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, Ephrinell, 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. The actor has given place to the old warrior 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 the other Chinese passengers. Popof and the railway men did their duty bravely. Sir Francis Trevelyan, of Trevelyan Hall, took matters very coolly, but Ephrinell 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.

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 intrench 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 Bluet 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 Kinko.

Major Noltitz comes near me and says, "This 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-Taang is dead! So perish all who bear weapons against the Son of Heaven!"

(To be continued.)

A SANTA FE HOTEL

Las Vegas Man Suggests Unique and Attractive Hotel.

Appropos of a short article from the Kansas City Star which appeared in the Optic last Saturday, referring to the proposition to mark the old Santa Fe trail, an enterprising citizen suggests to the Optic a project that has attractive features.

The gentleman touched upon the proposition to establish a three-story hotel of native brown stone in Las Vegas, and said: "Why should not the hotel be called the 'Santa Fe Trail,' and the company be incorporated as 'The Santa Fe Trail Hotel Company?'"

"I would suggest a big dining-room of 220 feet linear measurement and have portrayed on its walls the entire Santa Fe trail from Westport on the Missouri River to ancient Santa Fe, with a sketch of the modern scenic route in addition. On the walls of the reception-rooms and dining-room could be hung canvases representing the old prairie schooners, stage coaches, caravans, United States cavalry squads, the roaming buffalo and antelope and deer, the 'noble redman' as he then was, and pictures of Colonel Doniphan, Kit Carson, F. O. Kihlberg, Colonel Bruns- wick, William Kroege and other heroes of the picturesque way. Memorable scenes along the way could be depicted, and such places as Olathe, Kan., Council Grove, Bent's Fort, the Raton Mountains, Red River Station, Fort Union, Fort Craig, Las Vegas, Pigeon Roost, Santa Fe, all as they were in the brave old days.

"I tell you that the names and scenes and places which made famous the Santa Fe trail should be perpetuated. In what better way could the end be gained than according to the plan I have suggested. And, then, would not the name and fame of such a picturesque hotel bring thousands of visitors? Would any tourist ever pass through this region without stopping to learn at a glance an important chapter of the history of this nation?"

"I would further suggest that such a hotel have 60 rooms; that 45 of the rooms bear the names of the States of the Union, and be decorated in typical symbolism; that the 5 territories each be given a room, and that the foreign possessions be allowed a place. I propose my suggestions to the people of Las Vegas in the form of a resolution. Let us have the amendments offered promptly and begin work. I might add that such a hotel as I have proposed of native brown stone has been estimated to cost \$80,000."—Las Vegas Optic.

The recent census in Bengal reveals the fact that there are 4,000 baby girls in that province alone who have been married, and of this number 600, all less than a year old, are widows.

AFTER THE STORM.



The Russian Peasant's Vision of the Future.—Cincinnati Post.

Conquest of the Great American Desert

No achievement of his administration gives President Roosevelt more thorough satisfaction than what is termed "The Reclamation Law." He esteems it one of the wisest and most beneficial pieces of legislation of recent years and is confident that it will promote the public welfare quite as much as the Morrill act, which dedicated a great part of the public lands to the education of the people, or the Homestead Law, which did more than any other measure to build up the great West. The Reclamation Law is intended, without expense to the tax payers, to make the arid regions of the West capable of cultivation. It applies the proceeds from the sale of public lands to the construction of irrigation systems and reservoirs to supply them; which are to be sold at cost price on ten years' time to the people who enjoy the benefits created by them. The money thus refunded is to be used again and again, and still again, in extending the irrigation system, until every acre of the arid regions is watered and fit for human habitation.

The reclamation fund has grown very rapidly; much more rapidly than any advocate of the law expected. During the first year about four million dollars was turned into the treasury. On the 30th of June, 1904, it amounted to \$11,276,289.87 and by the end of the current fiscal year it will reach, if it does not exceed, fifteen millions.

Surveys have been completed for thirteen great irrigation projects in as many different States, contemplating the reclamation of 1,131,000 acres of desert land at a cost of \$31,395,000, or an average of \$27.26 per acre. The land thus improved will be sold to the public at that price in ten annual installments and thus the entire amount of money expended will be refunded to the government.

The President is also greatly gratified at the rapid progress that is being made by the irrigation bureau. Six of the projects in the above list have been begun; contracts have been let, and thousands of laborers are already employed in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada and New Mexico. The other propositions will be undertaken as rapidly as possible.

In Nevada work commenced as early as September, 1903, in building a dam in Truckee River to take the flood waters from the mountains and the overflow of Lake Tahoe and dump them into Carson River. Another dam will be built in Carson River to store these waters until they are needed in the dry season, when they will be distributed by means of canals and ditches over an area of about 100,000 acres, mostly desert land belonging to the government. The cost of this improvement will be \$2,600,000, or \$26 an acre, and the land improved is now subject to homestead entry in tracts of forty, eighty, 120 or 160 acres, according to its situation.

The law allows enough land to each settler to support a family. No cash payments are required; no commutations, but the settler must actually live on it and cultivate it for five years and pay \$2.00 an acre each year for ten years, when he will receive a title to the land and own the water rights without additional payments. Private land which receives the benefit of the water must pay at the same rate—\$2.00 per acre for ten years. After ten payments the owner of the land will have the water rights free of cost for all eternity. The land is good for alfalfa, sugar beets, potatoes and all the root crop and fruits of the temperate zone. It is only twelve hours from San Francisco by rail, fifty miles from

the capital of Nevada, and is surrounded by mining settlements in every direction.

Part of the land reclaimed will be the old Forty-Mile Desert, or Carson's Sink, which was a horror of early emigrants—the worst spot on the overland trail; and was lined the entire distance with the bones of men and animals. Thousands of poor creatures died there from thirst and exhaustion. Farmers who plow there now turn up in almost every furrow gun barrels which were driven into the earth to mark graves and have since been buried deep in the drifting sands. As an illustration of the perversity of nature, the engineers who have been laying out the proposed irrigation system have found an abundance of cold, pure water a few feet below the surface wherever they have made borings. All of this desert will be reclaimed and when the present proposition is finished the works will be extended to the Humboldt and Walker Rivers, which will bring several hundred thousand acres more under irrigation and make a paradise of what is now the most desolate spot in Nevada. These rivers carry plenty of water from the mountains, but it disappears as soon as it reaches the sand. The engineers propose to catch it before it reaches the "sinks" and store it in reservoirs, to be tapped when needed.

—William E. Curtis.

HIS BREAD RETURNED.

Small Loan Made Years Ago Brings Back a Large Fortune.

The Biblical parable of casting your bread upon the waters has turned out dramatically true in the case of Percival F. Nagle, of New York.

For many years Mr. Nagle has been one of the picturesque figures in the metropolis. Physically he is one of the largest men in the city and his generosity, in the days when he could afford to be generous, was unbounded. At one time he was champion oarsman of New York and then he drifted into the poolroom business. Under Mayor Van Wyck he served as street cleaning commissioner. Since leaving this position he has gone down financially and up to a few days ago did not know that he was worth more than a few thousand dollars at the most. But unknown to himself he was wealthy.

In the old days of his prosperity he once loaned a friend \$1,000. The friend wanted to give him security, but Nagle refused. Nevertheless the friend had secretly transferred some unimproved property in the annexed district and it since lay in Nagle's name, without the latter's knowledge. A short time ago two men called upon Nagle and asked him to put a price upon his property in the Bronx. Nagle denied he owned property there, but at once made an investigation. He was surprised to find that he was the owner of 44 lots, valued at between \$200,000 and \$250,000—the same his friend had placed to his credit for the \$1,000 loan. It was a case of putting a crumb on the waters and getting back a whole loaf.

Speaking from Experience.

"Who is the chap over there who asserts that the rich are getting poorer and the poor richer?"

"That's old Spuds; two of his daughters have just married foreign noblemen."—Puck.

"A Pea in a Bladder."

Cholly Netwit—If you refuse me, Miss Dolly, I shall—bah Jove! I shall put a bullet in my head.

Dolly Hotshot (absently)—How it will rattle around in there.—Cleveland Leader.

WILL TRAVEL A MILE A MINUTE.

Motor Monocycle Designed by a New York Man.

A motor monocycle of strange design and for which great things are claimed has been invented by Oswald Jensen, of New York. In appearance this traveling machine is unlike any other vehicle in use to-day. Within a huge wheel equipped with a pneumatic tire is suspended a seat on which the driver rides. The advantages claimed for this queer motor carriage by its inventor are many. It offers not only a new and easy method of rapid speeding overland, but it opens avenues of travel that are closed to all other styles of vehicles in its ability to move over rough, sandy and rocky country. "It bounds over rocks and other obstacles," declares its inventor, "with as much ease as a horse trained to jump." It requires neither road nor rail, but travels cross-country over fields and meadows, climbing hills and bounding over ditches and other irregularities of the land formerly considered insurmountable barriers even to the speed capacity of an express train—a mile a minute. In addition to the one large wheel upon which it travels the monocycle has two auxiliary wheels, which can be extended to the ground or drawn within the large wheel, as may be desired. The main wheel is nine feet in diameter and consists of a light steel rim five inches wide fitted with a pneumatic tire. The rider sits within this wheel upon a movable seat, which, in being operated toward either side,



THE MOTOR MONOCYCLE.

causes the wheel to be steered and balanced. The upright position of the motor and rider is maintained by means of eight small wheels which travel upon tracks fixed upon the inner side of the main rim. While these wheels render the position of the motor frame and seat independent of the rotary motion of the rim, the seat also retains a vertical position independent of the frame. To produce this effect the seat is suspended between two standards, which in turn slide laterally across the motor casing.

When traveling at leisure along country roads the rider extends the auxiliary wheels toward the rear on each side of the main wheel, thus converting the machine into a tricycle, but when it is desired to attain high speed or to cross uneven country he draws them within the large wheel and rides upon a single tire. The auxiliary wheels can also be extended so as to form three wheels abreast, in which position they are mainly intended to serve as stays to hold the vehicle in an upright position when at rest.

Since by the great diameter of the main wheel the monocycle is useful for traveling through rough country, ordinary obstacles presenting but slight obstruction to its passage, its inventor claims that it will prove of service for military purposes and also to those who for business or other reasons are compelled to pass through desolate territory.—Utica Globe.

FINE CHURCHES

In Mob-Ridden Baku, a Black Sea Section of Russian Empire.

In Baku, in southern Russia, on the Black Sea, where mob violence has recently been so manifest, there are to be seen magnificent edifices built in a semi-Oriental style of architecture.



BAKU SEMI-ORIENTAL CATHEDRAL.

The accompanying picture is of the great cathedral there, which is a vast edifice, and a typical example of how different systems of architecture are curiously blended and commingled.

New Phrase from Kansas.

Language doesn't stand still. Kansas people know a man is a tenderfoot when he talks about "cyclone cellars." People in the cyclone belt always refer to them as "frail holes."—New York Tribune.

A man was solicited to buy a ticket to an entertainment to help the poor. "You've got your nerve," said the man; "I am one of the poor."