



FLASH

THE LEAD DOG

By GEORGE MARSH

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued

If this was so—it this man was the father he sought, there was a mystery behind it, for Pierre Lecroix would never have spent the summer on the Carcajou with these men, while his son mourned him at Hungry House. What was behind it all?

Then Gaspard's dark face knotted with pain. Could he be hurt—so wounded that he was helpless—unable to travel? But Nipissing assured Gaspard that this stranger was actively working around the camp.

Thus ran Gaspard's thoughts as they traveled through the small spruce of the low ridge to a point commanding the river. Nipissing, in the lead, suddenly stopped and beckoned with his mitten. Joining him, Gaspard followed with eager eyes the arm which pointed. On the opposite shore, high above the river ice, stood a schooner, blocked up with heavy spruce logs where it had been warped up from the river beyond the reach of the spring freshets. Some distance upstream, rose the white roof and the snow-banked log walls of the traders' camp.

"Ah-hah!" murmured the half-breed. "There will be few men there now," said Nipissing.

"How many?" asked the other in Cree.

"Three—four."

"Any dogs?" asked Gaspard.

"No, they are away on the trap lines."

"Ah-hah!" And the eyes of the half-breed glittered as he swiftly made his plans.

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Of Course

John S. Sumner, of anti-vice renown, said at a dinner in New York: "Of course the pictures need censoring."
"Two little girls, as they came out of Sunday school the other day, talked together."
"So your nurse is taking you to the movies, is she?" said the first little girl. "What are you going to see?"
"Nurse wants to see 'Fast Life in Paris,'" said the second one, "but I'm all set for 'Why Women Fall!'"

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Perfect Failure

"All the mechanical toys you make seem to be successful."
"Yes," said the inventor. "I have had only one failure."
"Ah! What was that?"
"A toy tramp. It was too realistic; it wouldn't work."—Montreal Star.

Not That Class

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Assistant—Yes.
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beep beep! My fader!" And the chest of the son of Pierre Lecroix rose in a deep sob.

That night, at their hiding place back in the timber, three men sat long in a council of war.

CHAPTER XIV

The Vengeance of Gaspard Lecroix

The night following, in the blackness of the scrub behind the cabin of "Red" Macbeth, two men waited beside a dog team. That the dogs might not betray their masters, each was gagged with hide. A half-hour before, a third man had left the two who now waited impatiently for his coming, as they watched the yellow glow of the windows of the cabin. At last, the absent one returned.

"Any trouble, Gaspard?" asked Brock. "You've been away hours."

"Ah-hah! Little trouble; all right now!"

"What was it?"

"I meet some one."

"Too bad! What shall we do?"

"He weel not tell—now."

The grim significance of the answer closed Brock's mouth. He understood. Then, leaving Brock with the dogs, Gaspard and the Cree disappeared in the murk. With Flash's collar in his mittened hand, while he soothed the dog who resented the strapping of his jaws with rawhide, Brock strained anxious eyes toward the river shore. At last he saw it.

Gradually, beyond the cabin, the blackness of the night faded. Then, through the murk burst a yellow glow.



"The Boat Go—the Shack Go!" Rapped the Frenchman in Cree. "Where Are Your Dogs?"

throwing into relief the dark bulk of the schooner, as red flames licked up over its bilges. The tree-traders' boat was astir!

Shortly there rose a cry in the night, outside the cabin. "Iakute! Fire!" And Joe Nipissing burst wild-eyed into the shack.

"Iakute! De boat burn!" he cried to the startled Macbeth and the gray-faced men who reached for coats and moccasins.

Running to the door, the red-bearded leader stared in dismay at his blazing schooner. Then the three rushed out to the shore.

Turning at a sound, the excited Joe Nipissing saw a tall figure slide down the ladder, on the door of the great box stove, and seizing a half-burned stick, throw it on the bedding of a bunk. Sprung like a flash on the speechless boy, the steel fingers of Pierre Lecroix closed on his throat.

"The boat go—the shack go!" rapped the Frenchman in Cree. "Where are your dogs?"

But the choking Cree could not explain.

"You understand?" fiercely demanded the other. "We'll load your sled with grub and blankets and make for Hungry House! Quick!" And Lecroix pushed the protesting Nipissing through the door, then turned back into the already burning room for blankets and food. Then to his startled ears came a familiar voice from the door.

"Fader!" And Gaspard had the man he loved in his arms.

For a space, oblivious of the licking flames slowly filling the room with smoke, father and son gripped each other in a fierce embrace. Then, recovering his senses, Gaspard turned with: "The dogs; call Brock! Quick!"

"Brock and I are here with the team," Gaspard explained to the puzzled man who stared at his son in wonderment.

Then the Cree burst into the room, followed by Brock, who wrung the chest of the lost Lecroix. The shack now, was burning in earnest. Slipping on capote and mittens, and carrying his rifle and some blankets, Pierre Lecroix followed his rescuers to the waiting sled.

"Marche! Flash!" called Brock to the lead-dog, and they headed up the river shore.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Changeable

Most of us live in fear of being thought changeable. We act as though we were baseball umpires and didn't dare to change our minds even after a bad decision. The sensible program is to change your mind as often as you get new facts enough to justify it.—Grove Patterson, in the Mobile Register.

When musing on companions gone, we doubly feel ourselves alone.—Scott

RELIGION in MONGOLIA



Mongolian Lamas Conducting Religious Ceremony With Aid of Prayer Flags.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

THE religion of the Lamaism, a debased form of Buddhism, colors all life in Mongolia. Its rites seem strange to the Westerner.

Fanatical devotees may be met performing the "falling worship"—that is to say, throwing themselves flat on their faces and marking the places of their next prostration with their foreheads—a very exhausting form of piety, which soon wears out hands and clothes unless (as generally happens) wooden sandals are fitted to the hands and sheepskin pads to the knees.

Even little children may be seen turning prayer-wheels filled with written prayers, the idea being that any devout believer who turns the wheel acquires as much merit by so doing as if he had repeated all the prayers thus set in motion.

One of the greatest festivals of the Lama church is the Devil Dance, which takes place each spring and represents the chasing out of the Spirit of Evil. The dance is simply a series of posturings of men and boys in rich costumes and fearsome animal masks, accompanied by an impressive chant.

But a far more interesting survival of the primitive nature cult is known as the Midsummer Festival. It attracts crowds of pilgrims.

The richer and more prosperous visitors arrive in camel carts, with an impressive train of outriders, and camp in their own tents. Some families come in bullock wagons, which, with a few nuts fixed over them, make admirable shelters for their stay.

But by far the greatest number appear on horseback, solitary or in companies, men and women, respectable characters and notorious thieves. Lamas and laymen, dressed—some well, some poorly, but nearly all gaudily—in yellow, blue, red, white, or green.

Assemble at the Sacred Mount.

On the day of the ceremony the monastery is astir before dawn. The monks of various grades assemble soon after cockcrow, gorgeous in purple hieratic gowns, red waistcoats, scarlet or golden togas.

The "Living Buddha" appears in his fringed orange felt helmet, the abbots in their fat lacquer hats the lesser Lamas in silk or gold brocade skull caps, the lay officials in the old Manchu hats topped with colored buttons to denote their rank.

The whole company rides out of the monastery gate on ponies well-groomed for the occasion and crosses the steppe to the obo, or sacred mount. Such elevations, crowned by piles of stones with a flagstaff and fluttering prayer banners in the center, are landmarks all over Mongolia.

Having ascended the hill, the priests gather round the stone cairn, which has been previously decorated with leaves and branches. A tent is set up near by for the "Living Buddha," the high Lama, and the civil officials. Lesser dignitaries squat upon the ground in a circle.

Then the weird service begins, accompanied by all the strange paraphernalia of the Lama cult—huge bronze trumpets six feet long, flutes made from sea shells, and libation cups from human skulls.

By this time a group of white tents has been erected in the meadow for the feast. The largest serves as a reception hall, inside a broad transverse bench has been prepared for the guests of honor, whose places are marked by double cushions covered with priceless old silk carpets from the treasury of the monastery. Two choirs of singers in bright robes kneel on either side of the broad entrance and chant a welcome.

Soon the feast begins. A cup made of the precious "zabla" wood, which will make water boil and has the power to detect poison, is placed before each distinguished visitor, with smaller cups for the "airak" and "kumiss"—liquors made from fermented milk.

The principal meat dish is mutton. Sheep are served whole on large platters, the four legs arranged around the rump, the skull on top.

As a kneeling attendant passes each dish to a guest, the Lama host makes a cross on the skull, which is then taken away. A second serving Lama, acting as butler for the occasion, then cuts up the meat. The rumps and tails are given to those when the monks especially delight to honor.

After the feast there is a wrestling match. Dressed in a costume with stiff vest and short skirt, not unlike the garb of a Roman soldier, two champions face each other in the center of an open space. One is obviously a horseman, to judge by his bowed legs. His length of arm and breadth of chest show him to be a redoubtable opponent. The adversary is a gigantic Lama belonging to the "tsang" (community of the "Living Buddha") of the neighborhood. Three rounds constitute the match, and according to the rules neither wrestler may grip the other, but each must try to throw his opponent by laying hold of his belt.

The first bout is adjudged to the Lama and great enthusiasm; the second goes to the horseman, and the third, which the crowd watches in a fever of excitement, is also won by him after a hard struggle.

Then the proud champion, much cheered, rises to his full height, expands his mighty chest, and approaches the entrance to the grandstand tent in big jumps, as etiquette requires. Here he kneels before the Lama, who distributes the prizes.

Apart from the amusements, there is also much visiting done at these fairs, which afford almost the only opportunities that neighbors, who live miles apart, have of becoming acquainted with one another. This applies especially to the womenfolk whose lives of household drudgery are dull and lonely, while the men are away on the steppes rounding up the herds.

How the People Are Attired.

The festivals also afford them a coveted opportunity to show off their finery. The dress of both sexes is much alike, as far as shape is concerned. The main difference is that the men gird themselves with a belt while the women allow their long garments to hang loose from shoulder to heel; hence the common word for woman in Mongol is "beltless."

The outer robe of both sexes is a wide, roomy, coat, which reaches to the ground, with sleeves so ample that the arms can be withdrawn from them and reintroduced without touching the buttons.

But the most remarkable features of Mongol costumes are the hair ornaments and head-dresses of the women. Even a poor girl, once she marries, wears a profusion of silver ornaments on her head. The precise nature and shape of these varies with the tribes. One at least has a most ludicrous coiffure for its matrons, which projects so high that the cap, imperatively demanded by etiquette, is tied on above the ornaments quite clear of the head. Others adopt curtains of red corns or turquoise or strings of pearls reaching often to the waist.

When the wearers take their stand together in the picturesque veranda of some temple, the effect is most striking.

At the close of the festival, which may last two or three days, the crowds depart to their homes, sometimes hundreds of miles distant.

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