

# The Special Correspondent

## CHAPTER XXVI.—(Continued.)

I will go back to Popof. Impossible. I seem to be nailed to the floor of the van. My head swims.

It is true we are running toward the abyss? No; I am mad. Faruskiar and his accomplices would be hurled over as well. They would share our fate. They would perish with us.

But there are shouts in front of the train. The screams of people being killed. There is no doubt now. The driver and the stoker are being strangled. I feel the speed of the train begin to slacken.

I understand. One of the ruffians knows how to work the train, and he is slowing it to enable them to jump off and avoid the catastrophe.

I begin to master my terror. Staggering like a drunken man, I crawl to Kinko's case. There, in a few words, I tell him what has passed, and I exclaim: "We are lost!"

"No—perhaps—" he replies.

Before I can move, Kinko is out of his box. He rushes toward the front door; he climbs on the tender.

"Come along! Come along," he shouts.

I do not know how I have done it, but here I am at his side on the foot plate, my feet in the blood of the driver and stoker, who have been thrown off on to the line.

Faruskiar and his companions are no longer here. But before they went one of them has taken off the brakes, jammed down the regulator to full speed, thrown fresh coals into the fire box, and the train is running with frightful velocity. In a few minutes we shall reach the Tjion viaduct.

Kinko, energetic and resolute, is as cool as a cucumber. But in vain he tries to move the regulator, to shut off the steam, to put on the brake. These valves and levers, what shall we do with them?

"I must tell Popof!" I shout.

"And what can he do? No, there is only one way."

"And what is that?"

"Rouse up the fire," says Kinko, calmly; "shut down the safety valves, and blow up the engine."

And was that the only way—a desperate way—of stopping the train before it reached the viaduct?

Kinko scattered the coal on to the fire bars. He turned on the greatest possible draught, the air roared across the furnace, the pressure goes up, up, amid the heaving of the motion, the bellowing of the boiler, the beating of the pistons. We are going a hundred kilometers an hour.

"Get back!" shouts Kinko, above the roar. "Get back into the van!"

"And you, Kinko?"

"Get back, I tell you!"

I see him hang on to the valves and put his whole weight on the levers.

"Go!" he shouts.

I am off over the tender. I am through the van. I awake Popof, shouting with all my strength:

"Get back! Get back!"

A few passengers suddenly waking from sleep begin to run from the front car.

Suddenly there is an explosion and a shock. The train at first jumps back. Then it continues to move for about half a kilometer.

It stops.

Popof, the major, Caterna, most of the passengers are out on the line in an instant.

A network of scaffolding appears confusedly in the darkness above the piers which were to carry the viaduct across the Tjion valley.

Two hundred yards further the train would have been lost in the abyss.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

And I, who wanted "incident," who feared the weariness of a monotonous voyage of six thousand kilometers, in the course of which I should not meet with an impression or emotion worth clothing in type!

I have made another muddle of it, I admit. My lord Faruskiar, of whom I had made a hero—by telegraph—for the readers of the Twentieth Century.

We are, as I have said, two hundred yards from the valley of the Tjion, so deep and wide as to require a viaduct from three hundred and fifty to four hundred feet long. The floor of the valley is scattered over with rocks and a hundred feet down. If the train had been hurled to the bottom of that chasm not one of us would have escaped alive. This memorable catastrophe—most interesting from a reporter's point of view—would have claimed a hundred victims. But thanks to the coolness, energy and devotion of the young Roumanian, we have escaped this terrible disaster.

Ah! No! Kinko has paid with his life for the safety of his fellow passengers.

Amid the confusion my first care was to visit the luggage van, which had remained uninjured. Evidently, if Kinko had survived the explosion, he would have got back into his box and waited till I put myself in communication with him.

Alas! The coffer is empty—empty as that of a company which has suspended payment. Kinko has been the victim of his sacrifice.

And so there has been a hero among our traveling companions, and he was not Faruskiar, this abominable bandit hidden beneath the skin of a manager, whose name I have so stupidly published over the four corners of the globe. It was this Roumanian, this humble, this little, this poor fellow, whose sweetheart will wait for him in vain, and whom she

will never again see. Well, I will do him justice. I will tell what he has done. As to his secret, I shall be sorry if I keep it. If he defrauded the Grand Transasiatic it is thanks to that fraud that a whole train has been saved. We were lost; we should have perished in the most horrible of deaths if Kinko had not been there.

I went back to the line, my heart heavy, my eyes full of tears.

Assuredly Faruskiar's scheme, in the execution of which he had executed his rival, Ki-Tsang, had been cleverly contrived in utilizing this branch line leading to the unfinished viaduct. Nothing was easier than to switch off the train if an accomplice was at the points. And as soon as the signal was given that we were on the branch all he had to do was to gain the footplate, kill the driver and stoker, slow the train and get off, leaving the steam on full to work up to full speed.

And now there could be no doubt that the scoundrel, worthy the most refined tortures that Chinese practice could devise, were hastening down into the Tjion valley. There, amid the wreck of the train, they expected to find the fifteen millions of gold and precious stones, and this treasure they could carry off without fear of surprise when the night enabled them to consummate this fearful crime. Well, they have been robbed, these robbers, and I hope they will pay for their crime with their lives, at the least. I alone know what has passed, but I will tell the story, for poor Kinko is no more.

Yes, my mind is made up. I will speak as soon as I have seen Zineca Klorik. The poor girl must be told with consideration. The death of her betrothed must not come upon her like a thunderclap. Yes, to-morrow, as soon as we are at Pekin.

After all, if I do not say anything about Kinko, I may at least denounce Faruskiar and Ghangir and the four Mongols. I can say that I saw them go through the van, that I followed them, that I found they were talking on the gangway, that I heard the screams of the driver and stoker as they were strangled on the footplate, and that I then returned to the cars, shouting, "Back! Back!" or whatever it was.

We are now standing at the head of the train, Major Noltitz, the German baron, Caterna, Ephrinnell, Pan Chao, Popof—about twenty travelers in all. The Chinese guard, faithful to their trust, are still near the treasure, which not one of them has abandoned. The rear guard has brought along the tail lamps, and by their powerful light we can see in what a state the engine is.

If the train, which was then running at an enormous velocity, had not stopped suddenly and thus brought about its destruction it was because the boiler had exploded at the top and on the side. The wheels being undamaged, the engine had run far enough to come gradually to a standstill of itself, and thus the passengers had been saved a violent shock.

Of the boiler and its accessories only a few shapeless fragments remained. The funnel had gone, the dome, the steam chest; nothing but torn plates, broken, twisted tubes, split cylinders, and loose connecting rods—gaping wounds in the corpse of steel.

And not only had the engine been destroyed, but the tender had been rendered useless. Its tank had been cracked and its load of coals scattered over the line. The luggage van, curious to relate, had miraculously escaped without injury.

"It is only too evident," said one of the passengers, "that our driver and stoker have perished in the explosion."

"Poor fellows!" said Popof. "But I wonder how the train could have got on the Nankin branch without being noticed?"

"The night was very dark," said Ephrinnell, "and the driver could not see the points."

"That is the only explanation possible," said Popof, "for he would have tried to stop the train, and, on the contrary, we were traveling at tremendous speed."

"But," said Pan Chao, "how does it happen the Nankin branch was open when the Tjion viaduct is not finished? Had the switch been interfered with?"

"Undoubtedly," said Popof, "and probably out of carelessness."

Up to now Major Noltitz had taken no part in the discussion. Now he interrupted Popof, and in a voice heard by all, he asked:

"Where is Faruskiar?"

They all looked about and tried to discover what had become of the manager of the Transasiatic.

"And where is his friend Ghangir?" asked the major. There was no reply.

"And where are the four Mongols who were in the rear van?" asked Major Noltitz.

And none of them presented themselves.

"Well, then," said Major Noltitz, "the rascal who sent us on to the Nankin line, who would have hurled us into the Tjion valley, to walk off with the imperial treasure, is Faruskiar."

"What!" said Popof. "The manager of the company, who so courageously drove off the bandits and killed their chief, Ki-Tsang, with his own hand?"

Then I entered on the scene.

"The major is not mistaken. It was Faruskiar who laid this trap for us."

And amid the general stupefaction I told them what I knew, and what good fortune had enabled me to ascertain. I told them how I had overheard the

plan of Faruskiar and his Mongols, when it was too late to stop it, but I was silent regarding the intervention of Kinko. The moment had not come, and I would do him justice in due time.

Now that all danger had disappeared, we must take immediate measures for running back the cars on to the Pekin line.

"The best thing to do is to go to the nearest station, that of Fuen-Choo, and telegraph to Tai-Youan for them to send on a relief engine," I suggested.

Twelve of us, including Pan Chao, Caterna and myself, volunteered to accompany Major Noltitz. But by common accord we advised Popof not to abandon the train, assuring him that we would do all that was necessary at Fuen-Choo.

Then, armed with daggers and revolvers—it was one o'clock in the morning—we went along the line to the junction, walking as fast as the very dark night permitted.

In less than two hours we arrived at Fuen-Choo station without adventure. Evidently Faruskiar had cleared off. The Chinese police would have to deal with the bandit and his accomplices. Would they catch him? I hoped so, but I doubted it.

At the station Pan Chao explained matters to the station master, who telegraphed for an engine to be sent from Tai-Youan to the Nankin line.

At three o'clock, just at daybreak, we returned to wait for the engine at the junction. Three-quarters of an hour afterward its whistle announced its approach and it stopped at the bifurcation of the lines. We climbed up on to the tender, and half an hour later had rejoined the train.

The dawn had come on sufficiently for us to be able to see over a considerable distance. Without saying anything to anybody, I went in search of the body of my poor Kinko. And I could not find it among the wreck.

As the engine could not reach the front of the train, owing to there being only a single line, and no turning table, it was decided to couple it on in the rear and run backward to the junction. In this way the box, alas! without the Roumanian in it, was in the last carriage. We started, and in half an hour we were on the main line again.

Everything ends in this world below, even a voyage of six thousand kilometers on the Grand Transasiatic; and after a run of thirteen days, hour after hour, our train stopped at the gates of the capital of the Celestial Empire.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Pekin!" shouted Popof. "All change here."

It was four o'clock in the afternoon. For people fatigued with three hundred and twelve hours of traveling, it was no time for running about the town—what do I say?—the four towns, inclosed one within the other. Besides I had plenty of time. I was going to stop some weeks in this capital.

The important thing was to find a hotel in which one could live passably.

From information received I was led to believe that the Hotel of Ten Thousand Dreams, near the railway station, might be sufficiently in accord with western notions.

As to Mademoiselle Klorik, I will postpone my visit till to-morrow. I will call on her before the box arrives, and even then I shall be too soon, for I shall take her the news of Kinko's death.

Half an hour afterward we are installed at the Hotel of Ten Thousand Dreams. There we are served with a dinner in Chinese style. The repast being over—toward the second watch—we lay ourselves on beds that are too narrow, in rooms with little comfort, and sleep not the sleep of the just, but the sleep of the exhausted—and that is just as good.

I did not wake before ten o'clock, and I might have slept all the morning if the thought had not occurred to me that I had a duty to fulfill. And what a duty. To call in the Avenue Cha-Coua before the delivery of the unhappy case to Mademoiselle Zineca Klorik.

Ah! If Kinko had not succumbed, I should have returned to the railway station—I should have assisted in the unloading of the precious package. I would have watched it on the cart, and I would have accompanied it to the Avenue Cha-Coua; I would even have helped in carrying him up to Mademoiselle Zineca Klorik. And what a double explosion of joy there would have been, when Kinko jumped through the panel to fall into the arms of the fair Roumanian! But no! When the box arrives it will be empty—empty as a heart from which all the blood has escaped.

(To be continued.)

## III Luck Averted.

"My dear," said Mrs. Spenders by way of preliminary, "would you consider an opal unlucky?"

"I would if I got a bill for one and had to pay it," began her husband sternly.

"Oh," she interrupted, "I'm so glad I ordered a diamond instead!"—Catholic Standard and Times.

## No Speeding.

Larry—Yez same to be takin' yer toime wid thim hammer awn nails.

Denny—Yis, O'm workin' by th' day. O'll not be olke a chauffeur.

Larry—Yez won't?

Denny—No, O'll niver be arrested for fast droivin'!

## Up in the Air.

"Why don't you turn your pen to higher themes?" asked the well-meaning friend.

"I'd like to," replied the funny man, "but there doesn't seem to be any demand for skyscraper jokes at present."

## Not So Enjoyable.

Friend—Your wedding breakfast was a delightful affair. Mr. Honeymoon (with a sigh)—Yes, but we've had others since.

## COLLEGE HONORS—THE FINAL AWARD.



Can you guess who will get it?—Chicago Tribune.

## GREAT RUSSIAN WATERWAY.

Czar's Government Planning for Baltic-Black Sea Ship Canal.

The recent appointment of a commission to examine the question of constructing a canal to unite the Baltic and Black Seas revives interest in this tremendous project, which is no less than digging a canal equal in length to most of the so-called canals on Mars. It is by all odds the greatest canal scheme of modern times, and while it presents difficulties, such as passing the Cataracts of the Dnieper River, which have a total fall of 107 feet, it is not considered by any means impracticable.

While the canal is primarily a strategic work, for Russia has a large fleet in the Black Sea which is rusting from inertia, it is just as important commercially, for, as no other agency



ROUTE OF PROPOSED CANAL.

could, it will open up trade in the interior of the Tsar's European domains, and by its tolls be not only self-supporting but source of revenue to the government.

## Longest Canal in World.

From Riga, on the Baltic, to Kherzon, at the entrance to the Black Sea, is only 800 miles in a straight line, but the canal, as mapped by Mr. Ruckteschell, who, it is said, will possibly be intrusted with its building, will be almost twice as long, or between 1,410 and 1,468 miles, according to the route selected. When completed it will be the longest canal in the world, but in spite of these superlatives, its cost will, comparatively speaking, not be great. An American syndicate has offered to construct the work for \$315,000,000, or for about three-fifths the bid made by a Russian syndicate.

These bids were made a year ago on the favorite route mentioned. Since then, however, a scheme has been prepared by a Belgian engineer, Comte Gustave Defosse, in which J. King & Co., of London, are interested. The details of this proposal have not yet been made public, but they are said to apply to a waterway about 400 miles shorter and having a uniform depth of 28 feet and a breadth on the surface of 208 feet, and at bottom of 114 feet. If this plan is followed, the engineer states the canal can be com-



BLACK SEA AND SURROUNDING TERRITORY.

her Mediterranean squadron, there is a general impression that Russia would by means characteristic be able to send her Black Sea fleet past the Dardanelles if a European war were forced upon her and made such a coup desirable.

The canal from the Baltic to the Black Sea would bring St. Petersburg 3,000 miles nearer the Far East, and what is more to the point, would bring it so much nearer Egypt and India. It is no secret that notwithstanding the disastrous outcome of the war in the Far East, Russia will strike for an outlet on the Indian Ocean.

pleted in about six years. With a speed of eight knots, the passage would occupy about five days.

The original plan, which, in view of the rapidly increasing size of vessels, is more accommodating, was for a waterway 31½ feet deep, 140 feet wide at bottom and 268 feet wide at surface. Included in this plan is a broad, well-paved roadway, built at the side of the canal for its whole length. As Russia is not famed for its good roads, this improvement will be of almost as much importance as the canal itself.

Apart from the extensive works to be built at the cataracts and the actual digging of only twelve miles through a country presenting no great difficulty to the operation, the canal building will very largely be the simple work of dredging a deep channel in the rivers and the existing canal and the widening of the latter.

No one familiar with Russia's humiliating position on the Black Sea need be told that the subject is an old one and a recognized necessity, for while the Tsar has been permitted to build a powerful fleet of warships on the Black Sea, treaties and conventions extending back almost a century, or since 1809, have closed the gates of the Dardanelles upon them.

The Black Sea fleet, which consists of about 150 ships, has been "locked" in the Black Sea principally through British action, although Russia is a party to most of the treaties, recognizing the fact that it is some consolation to know that no other force, not even a British fleet, may pass through the straits, "the key to the Tsar's home," as Napoleon described it.

During the last year, however, Russia has felt the need of her caged fleet, which, if it could have been dispatched to the Far East at an opportune time, might have changed the history of the war. At present the Black Sea fleet can only be used to menace the "sick man of the East," whom most of the powers do not desire disturbed, for fear of the awful contention for th "remains" if the Turk were driven out of Europe.

While Great Britain is distributing her fleets has always made due allowance for the ineffective character of the Black Sea fleet, and consequently has been able to retail the size of

her Mediterranean squadron, there is a general impression that Russia would by means characteristic be able to send her Black Sea fleet past the Dardanelles if a European war were forced upon her and made such a coup desirable.

The canal from the Baltic to the Black Sea would bring St. Petersburg 3,000 miles nearer the Far East, and what is more to the point, would bring it so much nearer Egypt and India. It is no secret that notwithstanding the disastrous outcome of the war in the Far East, Russia will strike for an outlet on the Indian Ocean.

Some men go to war and bleed for their country and some others stay at home and bleed their country.