



Young Ladies of Central Asia.

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BEYOND Bukhara and Samarkand, Central Asia, lies Tashkent; and from Tashkent eastward stretches an ancient silk caravan road to Cathay. It winds across steppes, mountains, and the Chino-Russian boundary until it runs past the glamorous Central Asian metropolis of Kuldja (or Ningyuan) in Sinkiang, whose bazaar is a riot of color and whose community is an amazing mixture of tongues.

Here, in the winter, old-style Russians in gay troikas race to and from all-night parties; solemn processions of Mongol lamas parade through the streets on horseback; and long-robed Chinese and Turki merchants shout and gesticulate in the crowded market places.

In summer lumbering oxcarts replace racing troikas and, from the streets which have become dust ponds, clouds of fine sand swirl aloft to hover over the city like a pall. Then life in Kuldja becomes unbearable and the populace, by horse, wagon, and on foot, packs off for the mountains.

And so it was that, after spending seven winter and spring months in the snows and dust of Kuldja, a traveler found himself in mid-June two days by horse south of the city, half lost in the mountains and searching for the famous Tekes valley.

His trail was winding up the bottom of a deep ravine. The steep slopes were bare of trees, but covered with an unbelievably rank growth of grass and weeds. This vegetation formed walls of the narrow trail, cutting off his view of everything save a thin band of sky above and a short patch of trail before and behind.

Suddenly a horseman emerged from the overgrowth onto the trail in front. He was a Kalmuck, a nomad from one of the Central Asian tribes of Mongols; his dark skin, high cheekbones, and brimless, domed felt hat made that certain. Apparently he had been watching the traveler from some vantage point and was accosting him for a purpose.

Kalmuck Points the Trail.

They rode together up the trail for a short distance without speaking. Among nomads silence is a prelude to greeting. It is a fine point in their social etiquette.

"Where are you going?" As he turned back in his saddle to speak, his expression was decidedly unfriendly.

"To the Tekes valley," was the reply.

"What is your business in the Tekes?"

"I visit Sayjan Beg, the chieftain of the Kirghiz."

The man drew rein and swung his horse around, his face a complete transformation. Where before had been sullen distrust, there was now smiling friendliness.

"This trail does not lead to the Tekes," he explained. "If you follow it you will be lost in the mountains and have to spend the night in the open." Then he gave elaborate

directions for retracing steps and picking up the right trail.

"And carry greetings from the Kalmucks to the chief of the highland Kirghiz," he called as they parted.

Following his directions, at the first fork beyond an old sheep corral, the stranger dismounted to examine the muddy trail. It was even as he had described; there were many tiny tracks made by a flock of goats which had recently passed up the slope to the right. From there the trail led over a series of hogbacks until suddenly it came out on the crest of the last ridge.

Below lay the goal the traveler had been aiming at for three years—the Tekes, the valley of valleys, the nomad paradise of Central Asia.

Above the opposite valley wall, the foothills of the Celestial mountains leveled off to a great plain which stretched away to meet the snow line. On that undulating plateau were those far-famed highlands which the traveler had come to see.

Paradise for the Nomads.

Even in distant Istanbul one hears tales of how the nomads migrate to these Tekes highlands, bringing with them their flocks and herds to spend the summer months in a veritable earthly paradise for Mohammedans, drinking the famous mare's milk, feasting on mutton, sporting, loving, and marrying.

Far across the valley in one of the recesses could be seen a scattering of brown huts amid a black splotch of trees. It fitted the description given by Kuldja friends; it must be the winter quarters of the nomads, the home of Sayjan Beg, chieftain of the Kirghiz. The horseman seized the bridle rein and picked his way down the perilous zigzag trail.

"So you are a real American!" exclaimed Sayjan Beg, the Kirghiz chieftain.

He was seated cross-legged on a sedir (deep Turkish couch) reading the introduction the visitor had handed him.

The visitor had to explain to him his coming to the Tekes. His Tatar cousins had been fellow students at Robert college, in Istanbul. While at the school they had captured his fancy with tales of their home city, Kuldja, and the Tekes valley. When the boys returned home, they had given him a warm invitation to visit them.

Sayjan Beg was strangely cast for a nomad chieftain, small, thin-boned, and delicate; yet, as one came to know him, his littleness was forgotten and one was conscious only of his wiry strength and vitality. He had unbounded nervous energy and a regal manner, coupled with a quick, decisive way of uttering commands. One suspected Russian blood somewhere in his strain, for his skin was much lighter than that of the Kirghiz about him.

Chief's Head Always Covered.

Perched on his head was the embroidered velvet Moslem cap, for he considers it a breach of etiquette to be seen with uncovered head, either indoors or out. Buttoned tight

about his neck was a clean, white Russian shirt, while the rest of his costume was made up of a corduroy coat, Russian riding breeches, and knee boots of excellent black leather obviously imported from Soviet Russia.

Tribal headquarters were soon crowded with Kirghiz. News passed swiftly around the village that a stranger who had lived in Istanbul was visiting the chief; so the more important tribesmen had come to pay their respects to both the chieftain and his guest. Sayjan Beg and the visitor were sitting on sedirs opposite each other, while the on-lookers sat Turkish fashion on the floor or stood about, leaning against the walls.

On this first evening and subsequently, sitting cross-legged around camp fires, the guest found the nomads had rather old-fashioned ideas about geography. To them the world is flat and no amount of explaining can alter their conceptions. The earth is surrounded by "the great sea," while the sun circles about the earth.

They have heard of Russia, China, Iran (Persia), Turkey, Kashmir, Hindustan, Tibet, Afghanistan, and the mysterious far-away England. But America means nothing to most of them; in fact, the guest was invariably taken for a Russian unless he explicitly told them that he was a Ferengi—an Asian word of ancient origin derived from the word "Frank" and used to denote all western Europeans.

Dwellers in the Valley.

During a lull in his cross-examination by the circle of nomads, he questioned the chief about the different peoples living in the valley.

"There are two main races here in the Tekes, nomadic Turks and Mongols," he said. "We Turks are represented by the Kirghiz and Kazaks, two great tribes whose customs, language, and religion (Mohammedan Sunni) are almost identical; in fact, in the time of Genghis Khan we undoubtedly were one tribe.

"However, we now have distinctions: our dialects are slightly different; the Kirghiz women wear a unique headdress, and through the years we Kirghiz have been more successful in amassing wealth. We come from Issyk-kul (Warm Lake), across the border in Russian Kirghizistan, while the Kazaks have migrated from the dry steppes of Kazakhstan, in southern Siberia.

"The Kalmucks, or Mongols, in the other end of the valley have lived for centuries, with only a few interruptions," he continued, "a law unto themselves, with their Tibetan religion, Mongolian language, and unspeakable customs. They have always dispensed their own civil and, to a large extent, criminal justice."

Indians of the Jungle

First as Rubber Makers

Savages of South America had rubber shoes, bottles and balls before Columbus was born. An Indian in the jungle tapped a rubber tree and from the milk or latex made what he wanted directly. He simply let the latex coagulate or dry on a form, states a writer in the New York Times.

European technicians developed more complex methods not because they were ignorant but because latex does coagulate spontaneously at times. In fact, this tree-milk is much like blood. It clots. So for generations European and American manufacturers had to make their rubber goods from crude rubber or huge clots of latex. Such a clot can no more be brought back to its original state than dried blood. Hence the necessity of chewing or kneading crude rubber in powerful masticating mills and manipulating it in machines of a dozen different kinds before it is possible to produce a satisfactory rubber shoe or hot water bottle.

In spite of this expensive and troublesome kneading and chewing of crude rubber, the finished articles are not quite so good in some respects as those made by savages in the Amazon forests. Our rubber products are well made, but the Indians are tougher and stronger.

First Aid — By — Roger B. Whitman to the Ailing House

GIVING AN OLD HOUSE A NEW APPEARANCE

NOT far from where I live, there is a house fifty or sixty years old. It is very well built, quite large, and on a prominent location; but few people gave it a second glance. The main part of the house and its extensions are well designed and in proportion. That it was not a show place was due to the jig-saw work all over it, to its ugly and useless tower, and the ornaments on its large and ungainly porch.

In its day that house was the last word in architecture, and was very greatly admired. But with the change in styles, it grew out of date, and became known locally as the "old-fashioned house on the hill."

Not long ago the house was bought by an architect who saw its many virtues. Within a month he completely altered its appearance by a few comparatively simple changes. For one thing the tower was taken off, and the roof given simpler lines. The great porch also came off, and was replaced by a new porch with a roof that, while amply strong, is much lighter in appearance than the old one was. The new porch columns are delicate and in proportion to the roof that they

support. The porch railings are also finer.

All of the jig-saw work, the elaborate moldings, and the fancy ornaments were stripped off, and where needed, were replaced with parts of much simpler design. Those old ornaments were only attachments. They had no part in the structure of the house, so that there was no loss of strength. As it stands today, the house is one of the best-looking in the neighborhood. The old-time residents are still marveling at the change, and at the slight effort with which it was gained.

There are houses of that kind in almost every old neighborhood. As a general thing, they are strongly built, and if there is no demand for them, it is only because of their old-fashioned appearance. With no great effort or expense, any of these houses can be brought into line with modern design. The ornamental work is no more than an attachment, and can be stripped off. Moldings, porch columns, steps, entrances and other parts of excellent design, can be had in stock at a lumber yard. The result is a stout and well built house, modern in appearance, and usually sufficiently increased in value by the operation to more than pay for the change.

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Bedtime Story

By Thornton W. Burgess

BILLY MINK IS DISCOVERED

AFTER the rats left the big barn Billy Mink found it less easy to get plenty to eat. There were mice in the big barn, and for several days Billy managed to catch enough of these to keep from going hungry. But mice can get into places too small for Billy to follow, and those that were left soon learned to keep out of his way.

Then, Billy's thoughts turned to the hens in the henhouse. He had not intended to kill any of those hens because he knew that as soon as he did, the farmer who owned them would hunt for him, and then he would have to move on. He was so comfortably located that he was not anxious to move on. But one must eat, and now that the rats had disappeared and the mice had learned to keep out of his way, Billy's thoughts turned to those hens.

It was the very night after the

fire which the rats had started in the back shed of the farmhouse that Billy made up his mind to have a chicken dinner. He slipped under the henhouse and up through a hole in the corner which he already knew about. All the hens were roosting high fast asleep, with their heads under their wings.

Had Reddy Fox been in Billy Mink's place he would have been somewhat puzzled as to how he should catch one of those hens. But Billy wasn't puzzled. Not a bit of it. You see, Billy can climb almost like a squirrel. Reddy Fox would have had to jump, and probably would have awakened and frightened the whole flock. Billy Mink simply climbed up to one of the roosts, stole along it to the nearest hen, and with one quick snap of his stout little jaws he killed that hen without even waking her.

Now, had Billy's cousin, Shadow the Weasel, been in his place, he would have gone right on killing those hens from sheer love of killing. But Billy Mink killed that hen simply because he must have something to eat, and one hen was more than enough to furnish him a dinner. When he had finished his dinner he went back to his snug bed under the big woodpile.

Of course, when the farmer came out to feed the hens in the morning he discovered what had happened. He didn't know who had killed that hen, but he knew that it must have been some one very small to have got into the henhouse. He hunted about until he found the hole in the dark corner. He knew that that hole had been made by a rat, and at first he thought it must have been rats that killed that hen, and this increased his anger.

That afternoon he happened to look out of the barn door toward the woodpile and he was just in time to see a slim, brown form whisk out of sight under the wood.

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed the farmer. "Now I know who the thief is. There is a mink in that woodpile. He is the fellow who killed that hen last night. I think, Mr. Mink, we'll make you pay for that hen with your brown coat."

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GABBY GERTIE



"When a man doesn't want a girl any longer it's usually because he likes them short."