IN DISGUISE THROUGH RUSSIAN MANCHURIA

Mr. Gerrare, the writer of this article in the London Daily Mail, was commissioned by the editor of "Baedeker's Guides" to prepare a work on Siberia and Manchuria, only to discover that the Russian authorities forbid the presence in Manchuria of English and Japanese visitors, though Germans, French and Americans have free access. Mr. Gerrare was not to be daunted, and disguised in various ways made an interesting scamper through Russia's new Conquest.

English people take greater interest in Siberia since it affords a shorter way to the Far East, so when I undertook to do Baedeker's Guide to Russia for English travelers, I determined to get the best information concerning the new route.

Little was known of the Manchurian section of the line, and soon after I made inquiries concerning it here. I received a hint that it would be well for me to communicate with the Russian embassy if I thought of visiting Manchuria. Tracing this suggestion to its source, I found that it came from one of the many well-paid secret agents of Russia who move in London society.

I had nothing to fear. My object was innocent. Russian officials would help me to attain it. The always courteous M. Lessar, now Russia' minister at Pekin, informed he that "an application should be made to the Russian minister for foreign affairs through the British ambassador at the Imperial court."

After all, that seemed to be merely a matter of form; but when, in May last, I left London for Vladivostok, I took a personal recommendation to our ambassador in St. Petersburg.

MERE FORMALITIES.

One sunny forenoon I went to the palace quay. The English embassy was stately and somnolent. His excellency slept; his private secretary had not yet risen. None of the secretaries or attaches had arrived. I was too early; it wanted a few minutes of mid-day. I called later. His excellency had gone fly-fishing. Many times during the next ten days I repaired to his official residence, but not once was I fortunate enough to see Sir Charles Scott. A secretary fixed up an oppointment a week ahead; but when the day and hour arrived his excellency was too busy to receive. That was my luck. In summer the town is uninhabitable. All who can get away to the islands, the country, or the suburbs. There is no darkness; the "white nights" are delightful. It is then the people live. In the day they make their rooms dark and sleep.

The Russian ministers cannot escape so easily; the business of the state must be carried on. Promptly at 11 o'clock one morning I sent in my card to the minister of ways and communications. Five minutes later I was sitting alone with Prince Hilkov, chatting about guide-books, Russian railways, sport and photography.

As to Manchuria, the minister had little to say. The lines were not occupied and had not been handed over to his department. But his son was in Manchuria. He hoped that I would see him when there. And his nephew was in either Harbin or Vladivostok; if I could find him he would be pleased to help me. So would the chief engineer—and every one else. A letter asking all employes of the department to assist me would be sent to my hotel that same day. Two hours later I received it.

The secretaries of our legation were quite capable of making the formal application I desired. They did so, but expressed themselves as not sanguine as to the result. However, I could go as far as Irkutsk.

I went to Irkutsk. I went further. I reached Vladivostock, on the far-away Pacific, and from the day I left Moscow no one had even asked to see my passport.

By taking the river route I skirted Manchuria, but did not enter the country. That journey inclined me to return by the railway route. I sought the required permission of the local authorities, and was by each referred to some one else, or discreetly refused. It seemed that I was not to be allowed to enter Manchuria. When I mentioned my difficulties to any one, the common exclamation was, "Then you must be an Englishman!" All there knew that only to the English and Japanese is permission to enter Manchuria absolutely refused.

To be passed through the territory two things were necessary: the flat of the military authority and a frank over the line by some credited official of the Eastern-Chinese railway. From the minor officials I could not beg, buy, or cheat any paper whatever, try how I would. Nor were those persons whom I persuaded to act for me more successful.

UNCROWNED KING OF MANCHURIA.

I had received a circular letter of introduction to fellow-members of the Anglo-Russian Literary society resident in Siberia. That letter was of more value to me than many passports and all official recommendations. Russians are proverbially hospitable, and these Russians were favorably disposed to England, and they never failed to do all that they could, and sometimes did more that they ought, to forward my interests. For instance, it was from them I obtained an introduction to Chief Engineer Yugovich, who is practicaly the uncrowned king of Manchuria. I took a long journey to see him, expecting much, for he is personally acquainted with Mr. Cazalet, the president of the society, is said to favor the English, and was himself educated at King's College, London. Mr. Yugovich can build railways and he can talk; but I could not get even a railway pass from him. He would not stretch a point, but simply referred me to the governor-general at Khabarovsk, two days distant by rail.

Governor-General Grodekov received me affably—he thought I was an American, said that he had heard of me, affected an interest in my work, admitted a guide-book was needed, and appreciated fully that without the Manchurian section it would be incomplete and misleading. If I had any paper that showed what it was I wanted to do, it would save him taking a long note. I had that paper, an open letter of introduction from members of the Anglo-Russian society to an engineer in Manchuria. He borrowed it, promising that it should be returned that same day and I left expecting that the long-tried-for permit would come at last. Instead, I received the letter back, and scribbled upon the reverse of my own card was a curt refusal. He could not sanction my proposed journey through Manchuria. I returned to Vladivostock. There I learned, but not from them, that the signatories to the letter had received a telegram from the governor-geneal directing them to attend to their own business and not concern themselves with foreigners who wished to go into Manchuria. I asked no more favors of Russian friends, and never will.

NO ENGLISH ADMITTED.

I wired to St. Petersburg to learn the result of the application made by our ambassador. The answer to an "urgent" telegram arrived within a fortnight:

"Authorities, while granting you every assistance on Trans-Baikal Railway, refuse you permission to travel in Manchuria."

This answer was equivalent to refusing an application to see over Kensington Palace by granting permission to pass through the gardens by the Broad Walk!

I wired again, also "urgent:"

"Baedeker's business necessitates visiting Manchuria, therefore must await permit here. As foreigners are now entering the country, hope you may soon obtain for Englishmen the same privilege granted to Americans and others."

In due course came the reply:

"Application again refused."

I was disgusted. In Vladivostock I met Russian, French, German, and American commercial travelers who had been passed through Manchuria. I saw on their way thither Russian peasants in topboots and mujiks in bastshoes; tweed-coated clerks, shopmen, and tourists; real gipsies in faded fancy costumes; officers' wives in European gowns, American girls in sailor hats and shirt waists, bare footed village women and maids from Little Russia swathed in pleated shawls. I saw, too, the English officer, Colonel Powell, who has been turned out of Manchuria.

I resolved to obtain false papers, adopt a disguise, and attempt to sneak through the territory closed to us only.

By doing this I placed myself outside the pale and forfeited all right to protection from our government if detected.

Detection at best meant the absolute failure of the scheme. There would be no opportunity accorded for a second attempt.

I went away suddenly, leaving in a guise which none suspected and one which would have excited the risibility of my acquaintances. I left by train for the frontier, prepared to live the part of the persecuted character in modern farce, if that were necessary to success.

The Manchurian frontier is a day's journey by rail from Vladvostock, and on the way there I made the acquaintance of two fellow travelers likely to be of use in crossing.

The first was the wife of a working engineer on the line, the other an elderly Russian who was starting a mineral water manufactory near Harbin. These were the only civilian passengers who had been in Manchuria before, and both had first-class passes for the Manchurian train. The gentleman offered to look after the lady's baggage, also after mine, when we reached the terminus at Grodekoy, and this left me free to hide from the frontier guards.

The other passengers were Russians seeking fortune in the new territory, which all believe to be a veritable Eldorado, or were artisans and laborers engaged to work upon the railway. The remainder, by far the largest number, were soldiers on their way to reinforce the expedition against the bandits on the frontier.

Manchuria, before the Russian occupation last year, was overrun with Chinese squatters, unlicensed gold-diggers free community men, and robber bands. The Russian troops have been busily engaged capturing these men. Some bands they have exterminated; others they have taken and settled on reserved land, after executing the leaders. Some have been driven from the country, some are still hiding in the mountains, and at this particular date a band had suddenly appeared on Russian territory within a few miles of Vladivostok, and were being surrounded by quite an army of Russian troops.

RESERVED FOR THE FEW.

The last Siberian village is about thirteen miles from the frontier. There our troubles began. The train consisted of a guard's van and a few open trucks. On one of these our baggage was piled, and upon this, with other favored ones, I clambered, having what was called a "ladies' place." The other passengers got where they could, some standing on the buffers between the trucks and holding on for dear life while we shunted back and forth by the zig-zag line leading from the valley to the higher plateau of Manchuria. At Pogranichnaia this train was cleared and the passengers waited a couple of hours for another to be made up for the journey west. The station was a miserable building amid railway sidings, with only a rough outline of the space intended for the construction of a platform. Among the goods piled near the line it was easy to remain unobserved in the darkness until the train was ready to start. At the last moment, with the assistance of a brakeman, I got up into a covered wagon and made myself as comfortable as I could upon a heap of some one else's luggage. By feigning sleep when the conductor came for tickets I escaped his immediate attention, and the next morning a little condescension on my part and the gift of a rouble stayed fruther questioning.

We had to change trains every few hours, and it was not long before I saw the train cleared of passengers unprovided with tickets. Taose who would not get off when told were pushed or kicked off by the conductors and brakesmen. The Chinese were most pertinacious, and as Chinamen appear to be very much like each other and some had tickets while others had not, those thrown off the trucks clambered on only to be thrown off again if observed. One would succeed where the dozen failed. These left behind ran after the train; some caught it at the next stopping place, and boarded it, there to meet with the same fate as before, or, perchance, to be the lucky ones who escaped notice.

COSSACK TICKET INSPECTOR.

The quickest and most effectual way of clearing the train was to employ some of the Cossack guards armed with the short heavy flails they call whips, or a yard of telegraph wire. The brakesmen and conductors accompanied the Cossacks to point out to them the passengers who had not satisfied them of their right to travel. They also generally carried a short length of wire with which to persuade the passenger to leave the truck.

A pass did not necessarily give one the right to travel by this particular train. It had to be submitted to the person in charge of the depot where the train was made up, and countersigned by him before it was valid. He never failed to sign a document given by a head engineer, but as I never had a railway pass at all the vagaries of the stationmasters did not worry me.

Beating one's way as a vagrant was wearisome work. My luggage consisting of a large Chinese patchment covered box, in which my English portmanteau and bag were packed, a Chinese basket of provisions, with the always needed tea kettle tied thereto, and a roll of Mongolian felt in which to sleep—would be carried to the line by coolies and left there until a train was made up. Usually this consisted of from a dozen to forty open trucks fully loaded with rails, sleepers, railway material and provisions. The trains mostly started at dark and ran through the night, to be broken up and rearranged at the first siding reached after dawn broke. The first thing to do was to find a possible place on one of the trucks, then, when no one was looking, to carry my box there, fetch the other luggage, and if I got all on to the truck without being discovered in the act, subsequent proceedings were simple and generally successful.

BY FIRE BOX TO TSITSIKAR.

Having hidden on the truck and made yourself a small as possible, you were invariably found by one of the brakesmen. If no one was looking and you were almost inconspicuous, the gift of a rouble note would close his eyes to your presence. When there was any risk of the stationmaster noticing your presence, you took the risk and kept the money until the train was out in the wilds, when the brakesman would visit you in a friendly way.

Occasionally brakesmen and the depot hands would unite to thwart irregular passengers, and as the stationmasters all have a guard of Cossacks at their service, resistance is useless. In those cases I found it best to obey. I would remain as near the train as I could! probably by one of the fires the vagabond travellers light everywhere to boil their kettles. When the guards had passed, I would lift my luggage back on to a truck, conceal it there if possible, and wait for the train to start. I would then jump on as it was moving, and find a hiding-place for myself. The fire-box of a locomotive boiler on its way to Tsitsikar housed me comfortably for two nights. I never saw anyone thrown from a truck while the train was in motion, but sometimes Cossacks would clear a wagon at the last minute and detain would-be passengers, while allowing their effects to go on. This never happened to me. In fact, I soon became so used to "beating" my way that I continued to practise it after leaving Manchuria.

THE EMPRESS OF JAPAN.

In the matter of the emancipation of Japanese women it is not generally known that the lady who has done more than anybody else for her sex in the land of the chrysanthemum is the present Japanese empress. Her influence has been exerted in small things as in large. She has entirely revolutionized the education of girls and the corner stone will be put on the system early next year by the opening of a university for women in Tokio. It was she who, in the early seventies, by her example, put an end to the old custom of married women blackening their teeth. From the western point of view the least commendable innovation for which her majesty has been responsible is the introduction of European dress in place of the faultless costume of Japan. Still there is every reason for this, the contention being that a Japanese lady is treated more respectfully by her husband when she is in European dress than when retaining her national costume.—London Chronicle.

LESSONS OF A DRY YEAR.

Whenever a season presents abnormal conditions which seriously affect agriculture it will be found to inculcate valuable lessons which form, to some small degree at least, "the silver lining" of the cloud. The season that is past is no exception to this general rule, and in the period of agricultural meditation which the winter usually provides for the farmer it would be no bad idea to devote some little thought to this point, not in the way of regret or repining, for this is useless, but for the sake of guidance it will furnish in the future. In a very large portion of the West the past season has been unusually dry. It was not so bad in the outcome as was at one time feared, because misfortunes, like the bumblebee, are usually biggest when born. Ill luck or mischance is hardly ever as disastrous as it seems it is going to be. Still, it was bad enough in this instance, and, while it would be a long task to extract from it all the teachings that it legitimately contains, a reference to one or two of the more obvious ones may not be amiss. The corn crop, for example, was affected all the way from almost complete annihilation to little or not at all. In many instances it was never permitted to mature, but was cut up for fodder; in others a good normal crop was obtained. It would be too much to say that these extremes were to be found in the same locality, but it is a fact that in the same section some men had a quarter of a crop, some had half a crop, some had 75 per cent., and some represented themselves as never having had a better crop. Practically this wide range occurred in the same locality, and under conditions that were practically identical as to moisture. We don't pretend to know all the elements that constitute the "why," and yet there must have been reasons. We suspect, however, that in many cases the difference depended very largely upon difference in thoroughness in the methods of the farmer. In the preparation of the land, for instance, it is easy to see that if a field were ploughed and left full of clods when the planter was put on, the results of adverse conditions in that field would probably be very different from what they would be in a field that had been thoroughly harrowed after ploughing, and had been reduced to perfect tilth, and on which the harrow had been kept running after planting until the corn became too large to make it safe to run it longer. In the first instance the adverse conditions would be very likely to destroy the field, and the owner might be thankful if he got a little fodder from it, whereas, in the second case, the corn would have the advantage of having been given the best possible chance, so far as preparation of the ground was concerned, that the season permitted. Pursuing the subject, there follows the after cultivation. As everybody knows who pays any attention to methods of corn culture, there are such methods as tend to conserve all the moisture that the land does get, while there are others that seem specially devised to rid the soil of its moisture by evaporation just as rapidly as possible. In a season like that that has just closed, one can readily see that with the same rainfall, occurring at the same time, one field with the former treatment might produce well, while the other that had been subjected to the latter might fail utterly.

What is here said is intended to be suggestive merely, but if during the winter farmers who have had one degree of success with their crop will give the subject a little careful comparative study, in connection with the condition of a neighbor who had a different degree of success, the reason for the difference will probably be found, and may be stored away as one of the lessons which the experience of a dry season furnishes. We all like to have a scapegoat for the things that befall us. If we have failed this year it is easy and to some degree comforting, perhaps, to say that it was the drouth that caused it. Well, so in a sense it was, and yet in many cases the failure might not have been so complete, or might, perhaps, not even have occurred at all if we had not ourselves in some way contributed to it.—Metropolitan and Rural Home.

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MORE ROYALTY TO VISIT US.

The Crown Prince of Japan, Yeshi Hits and his bride, Princess Ladi are both very anxious to come to America and a visit from them as a consequence may be expected in the very near future. Arrangements are now said to be under way.

Queen Margheuta, of Italy, widow of King Hambert, is another of the distinguished royal personages who are expected to honor us with a visit. She will probably travel incognito while in this country. Here is her latest picture.

Preparations for a visit of the King and Queen of Italy are now being quietly made at Washington. Senator Frye recently introduced a resolution authorizing the President to invite them.

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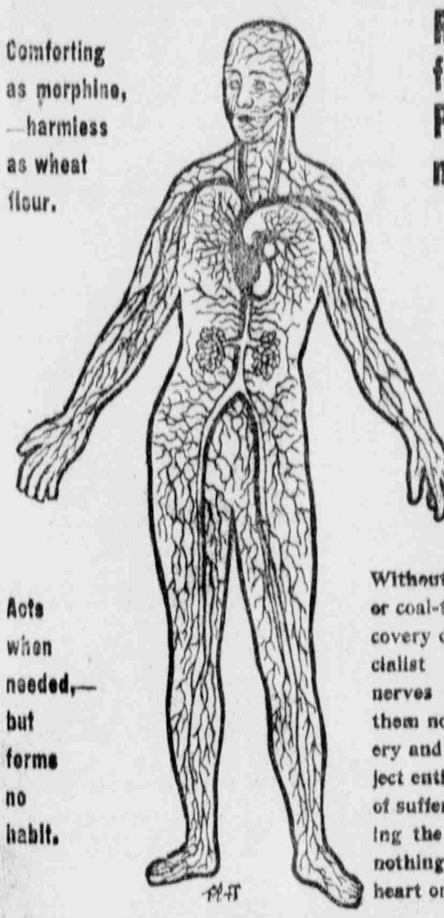

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