"Valley of the Nile of the Great West"

The route of Captain Bonneville's march was generally along the bank of the Platte river. Frequently he was compelled, because of the steep bluffs which bounded it, to make inland detours. On the second of June, 1832, Captain Bonneville and party reached the Platte river, about twenty-five miles below Grand Island. The captain measured the stream at that point, found it to be 2,200 yards wide and from three to six feet deep, the bottom full of quicksand.

On the 11th of the same month the party arrived at the forks of the Platte, but finding it impossible to cross on account of the quicksand, they traveled for two days along the south branch, trying to discover a safe fording place. At last they camped, took off the bodies of the wagons, covered them with buffalo hides, and, smearing them with tallow and ashes, they turned them into boats. In these they ferried themselves and their effects across the stream, which was 600 yards wide, with a very swift current.

After successfully crossing the river the line of march was toward the North Fork, a distance of nine miles from their ford.

In 1847 the Platte valley became the highway of the Mormons in their wonderful exodus from Illinois to Utah and three years later the trails made by that remarkable sect were followed by the rush of pioneers to the newly discovered gold fields of California.

Twelve years later the beautiful valley was traversed by a greater rush of adventurers than ever before in its history. In the summer of 1859 Green Russel and his adventurous companions discovered gold on a tributary of the Platte.

The old Overland route was famed for its picturesque scenery, but as the weary traveler slowly trod the dangerous trail he was too often in constant dread of attacks by the bloodthirsty savages to allow his mind to dwell upon the details of the magnificent landscape. Today, however, as the same route is practically shed with iron, the tourist, from the windows of his car on the Union Pacific, may safely contemplate the historic valley. Its beautiful towns and hamlets, its cultivated plains, its water courses, its skyward-reaching peaks may be seen in a security which would have passed the very dreams of a pioneer.

The scenery is sufficiently wild to please the most exacting, even today, for its isolated buttes, rocky bluffs, lightning-splintered gorges, foaming torrents, fantastically formed boulders and towering mountains brook no change at the hands of puny man, and are as firm as the rock itself. Under a sky that nowhere else seems to be of such an intensely cerulean hue, the charm of the region is intensified.

Gateway to the Mountains.

Before any European ever looked upon it, the Platte valley was for centuries, in all probability, a gateway to the mountains. The prehistoric mound-builders, perhaps, traveled its lonely course and on through the portals of the great continental divide to the southern sea. The rude, primitive savage of North America, with whom the hairy mammoth and primeval elephant were contemporary, in a geological epoch, whose distance in the misty past appalls, traversed the silent trail across the continent.

The whole region watered by the Platte was regarded as a veritable desert, never to be brought under the domain of agriculture, but forever doomed to hopeless sterility.

This hitherto unknown and uninhabited territory is now transformed into a region where people are living in comfort and affluence and enjoying a degree of civilization second to none in the world. This could not have happened had it not been for that potent factor in developing this great area, the Union Pacific Railroad.

The Platte river is very shallow, and for that reason was called by the Otoes, whose country embraced the region at its mouth, the Ne-bras-ka, and rechristened the Platte by the French trappers, a term synonymous to that given by the Indians.

This river, nearly three-quarters of a century ago, was called by Washington Irving: "The most magnificent and most useless of streams. Abstraction made of its defects, nothing can be more pleasing than the prospective which it presents to the eye. Its islands have the appearance of a labyrinth of groves floating on the waters. Their extraordinary position gives an air of youth and loveliness to the whole scene. If to this be added the undulations of the river, the waving of the verdure, the alternations of light and shade, the succession of these islands varying in form and beauty, and the purity of the atmosphere, some idea may be formed of the pleasing sensations which the traveler experiences on beholding a scene that seems to have started fresh from the hands of the Creator."

RAWHIDE CREEK, PLATTE VALLEY, ON THE UNION PACIFIC NEAR LEXINGTON.

"Valley of the Nile of America."

It goes without question that the valley of the Platte embraces the most fertile section of the United States. So fertile is this large area of country that it has been frequently designated as the "Valley of the Nile of America." For more than 300 miles the Union Pacific follows the Platte, entering the valley in the western part of Douglas county and running along its surface to the city of North Platte, where it crosses and follows the south branch to Julesburg, on the line between Nebraska and Colorado.

Unlike the valley of most of the streams in this and other states, the valley of the Platte ranges from five to twenty miles wide, every acre of which is agricultural land, capable of being cultivated. In its native state the land is covered with luxuriant grass of the blue-stem variety, which is both grain and fodder for all kinds of live stock. There during the winter cattle and horses from the distant ranges gather, and, without grain, fatten and come out in as good condition in the spring as though stall fed.

When once broken up and put under a state of cultivation, this vast stretch of land bears the most abundant crops. Corn, of course, is the banner crop, yielding from fifty to seventy-five bushels per acre. However, small grains, such as wheat, oats, barley, rye and flax are never-failing crops and have yielded so prolifically in the past that farmers have frequently paid for their land out of the profits of their year's tilling of the soil.

During the past few years the farmers in the Platte valley have devoted considerable attention to the cultivation of sugar beets. At this time this industry has reached such prodigious proportions that it bids fair to monopolize the beet sugar manufacturing of the world. Large factories have been erected at Fremont, Norfolk, Ames, Grand Island and a number of other points. Experts who have investigated the growing of sugar beets declare that the valley is especially adapted to their culture and that they can be raised more successfully here than in any other section of the United States. The soil contains the elements to produce beets of enormous size, and in addition to this, the beets raised here contain more saccharine matter by one-fifth than those raised in California and other beet-growing sections. This year there are not less than 10,000 acres planted to sugar beets, and the crop in the valley is estimated to be sufficient to net the growers several millions of dollars.

An industry that is still in its infancy is the raising of alfalfa. This crop is grown all the way on the line of the Union Pacific from Omaha to Cheyenne, a distance of 500 miles, and is a most profitable one. Farmers who have turned their attention to raising this grass state that they can raise from four to five crops a year, each crop averaging three tons to the acre. As the market value ranges from $6 to $8 per ton, it is only a matter of computation to ascertain the profit to be made off each acre of land.

The peculiar feature about alfalfa is the fact that it grows as well and yields nearly as much to the acre upon the benches above the river as down in the valley. This, no doubt, is due to the fact that the long fibrous roots seek water and will go down to a depth of twenty and thirty feet seeking moisture.

Chinese Officials Behind the Boxers

(Copyrighted, 1900, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

SHANGHAI, Aug. 25.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—American women stripped naked and clubbed to death by Chinese mobs!

Our missionaries massacred in cold blood in the very courts of the Chinese governors, who are supposed to protect them!

White men, women and children thrown into the flames of their burning homes!

The hearts and heads of American girls torn from their bodies by Chinese ruffians and sent as trophies of patriotism to their rulers!

The highest officials of the Celestial empire, including its cruel and tyrannical head, the old dowager, secretly inciting the people to riot, arson and murder!

These are some of the incidents which have been happening and which are still happening in China—insignificant incidents which the powers are proposing to wink at for a bit or so of territory or a money indemnity.

There is no doubt but the officials have been behind the Boxers from the beginning of their organization. There is evidence that the society is backed by a grand council composed of government officials and Buddhist priests, who hold their meetings in the monasteries throughout the empire and in the very back rooms of the government offices themselves. These men have their printing establishments and are sending out placards, cartoons and insurrectionary songs throughout the provinces. They have, I am told, organized the country just as our politicians organize for a presidential campaign, and have their runners working up clubs in the various districts. They have the support of men of influence in every province, and a number of the governors are said to have taken the oath of the order.

The positions of Prince Tuan, Governor Yu of Shan Tung and General Tung Fu Shang are well known; they are with the Boxers. Just where Li Hung Chang, Chang Chi Tung, Sheng and others stand is uncertain, but they, like the most of the officials, are merely the tools of the old empress dowager and dance as she pulls the string.

A Story of the Empress Dowager.

The empress dowager will probably now deny all connection with the Boxers, but there is no doubt that she is at the bottom of the great growth of the society. I heard last night of an interview which she had with a censor named Wang shortly before the outbreak of the war. Censors are appointed by the Chinese government to move around secretly through the different provinces and report on all that is going on. They are imperial spies, whose business it is to keep track of the wrong-doings of officials and to gather information as to the feelings of the people concerning them and the government.

This man Wang had been spying about through Chihli and the empress dowager sent for him. When he appeared she said: "What do you think of the Boxers in Chihli? Are they well organized and can they be depended upon to join the troops in fighting the foreign devils when the time comes?"

To this Wang replied: "I am certain of it, your majesty. The members of the society are taught to protect to the death your heavenly dynasty and to wipe the devils from the face of the earth. As for myself and all of my family, we have joined the society and had I the power I would gladly lead the van of the avenging army."

As the empress dowager heard this she nodded her head in approval. Then, after thinking a moment, she remarked:

"Ah, it is a grand society, but I am afraid that with no experienced men at its head the Boxers may act rashly and get us into trouble with the 'yang kuei tze' (foreign devils) before everything is ready. You must have some responsible leaders in Chihli and Shan Tung to control them." With this the audience terminated, but the next day, by imperial orders, Wang was given a high position in Pekin. He was elevated from a sixth grade official to a fourth grade metropolitan post, and that one of great importance.

Although since the Tien Tsin massacre Chinese officials have been forbidden to refer to foreigners as devils, in the above interview the empress herself is said to have done so, speaking contemptuously of them as "Yang kuei tze."

Why the Chinese Favor the Russians.

The bulk of the missionaries come from Great Britain and the United States and the massacres are another evidence that the higher officials rather despise us Anglo-Saxons and are looking for the Russians to help them out of their troubles. They evidently did not think Russia would be involved in the war, for before its outbreak the relations between Russia and China were very close. Indeed, it is now whispered that Russia will receive Manchuria in the settlement of peace and that there is an understanding to this effect with the Chinese leaders.

I heard a story here which illustrates the real feeling of the empress dowager and her party as to England and America. It was descriptive of a meeting of the grand council in Pekin when France was demanding a share of southern China. General Yung Lu advised that the government ask Great Britain to interfere, saying that the United States and Japan would join with Great Britain if Russia and France threatened reprisals. To this Kang Yi replied:

"We don't want anything to do with Great Britain, Japan and the United States. We have a score to settle with the English for the sack of the Yuen-ming-yuen (summer) palace. We want to get even with Japan for the seizure of Formosa, and we want to punish the United States for treating the Chinese who go there and to the Philippines no better than dogs. As to Russia, we have nothing against it. It is our friend, and if France joins with it, although we have a grudge against France, we will be just that much stronger. I am for keeping in the closest friendship with Russia. If it is with us we can defy the world. If we have only Russia to help us Great Britain will cower into the background."

This speech was applauded by Prince Ching, Prince Tuan, Chao Shu Ch'ao and the rest of the council, including the empress dowager, who nodded her old head vigorously in approval.

The Benedict Arnold of China.

The sympathy of Li Hung Chang with Russia is well known throughout the empire. It is whispered by some of the Chinese that he is in the pay of the Russian government, and he has even been accused of being false to China. An evidence of this was displayed some months ago in a Chinese school near Chefoo. The school was taught by an American girl, and it had among its students many sons of mandarins and influential Chinese, representing some of the best families of the empire. The teacher has her own method of instruction, and in her English classes she often tells stories to fix the meaning of new words in the minds of her pupils. A few weeks before the war broke out the word traitor came up. She described what "traitor" meant, illustrating it by Benedict Arnold. A day or so after this she asked her scholars if they could define the word traitor and give an example of the same. One bright boy, the son of a mandarin, at once raised his hand. He was told to speak and he said:

"A traitor is a man who sells his own honor and that of his own country for gold, and the greatest example of a traitor that we know of here is Li Hung Chang."

"Yes," broke in another boy, excitedly, "he has sold out our country to the Russians."

And a third said:

"I wish I were near him that I might kill him."

These boys probably represented the feelings of their fathers.

Why Officials Oppose Missionaries.

The high officials of China realize that the missionaries are their enemies. They know their corrupt methods cannot endure with the western civilization, and they fear to lose their jobs. They have been at the bottom of nearly every riot of the past. They pretend to be the friends of the foreigners, but the blue books of the empire sold in the government shops are full of all sorts of lies written to stir up the common people against the missionaries.

In some such books are descriptions of how the foreigners scoop out the eyes of Chinese for medicine and photographic materials. The Chinese think that their eyes have different qualities from ours, and that the missionaries are here as eye collectors. In one of the anti-missionary cartoons distributed some time ago two bloodthirsty villains in foreign clothes are pictured in the act of cutting out the eyes of a dead Chinaman, while another missionary stands by and gloats over a saucerful of eyes he has just captured.

How One Chinese Saved His Eyes.

I have a translation of a tract which was circulated all over China, entitled "The Death Blow to Corrupt Doctrines."

The letter shows how and why the eyes are stolen, stating that the foreigners are enabled to extract silver from lead by means of them, and also that when spread over a glass they will record the magic pictures (photographs) which the Christians prize. In this work there is an extract from the public records showing how one Chinese scholar cheated a missionary and saved his eyes. It is as follows:

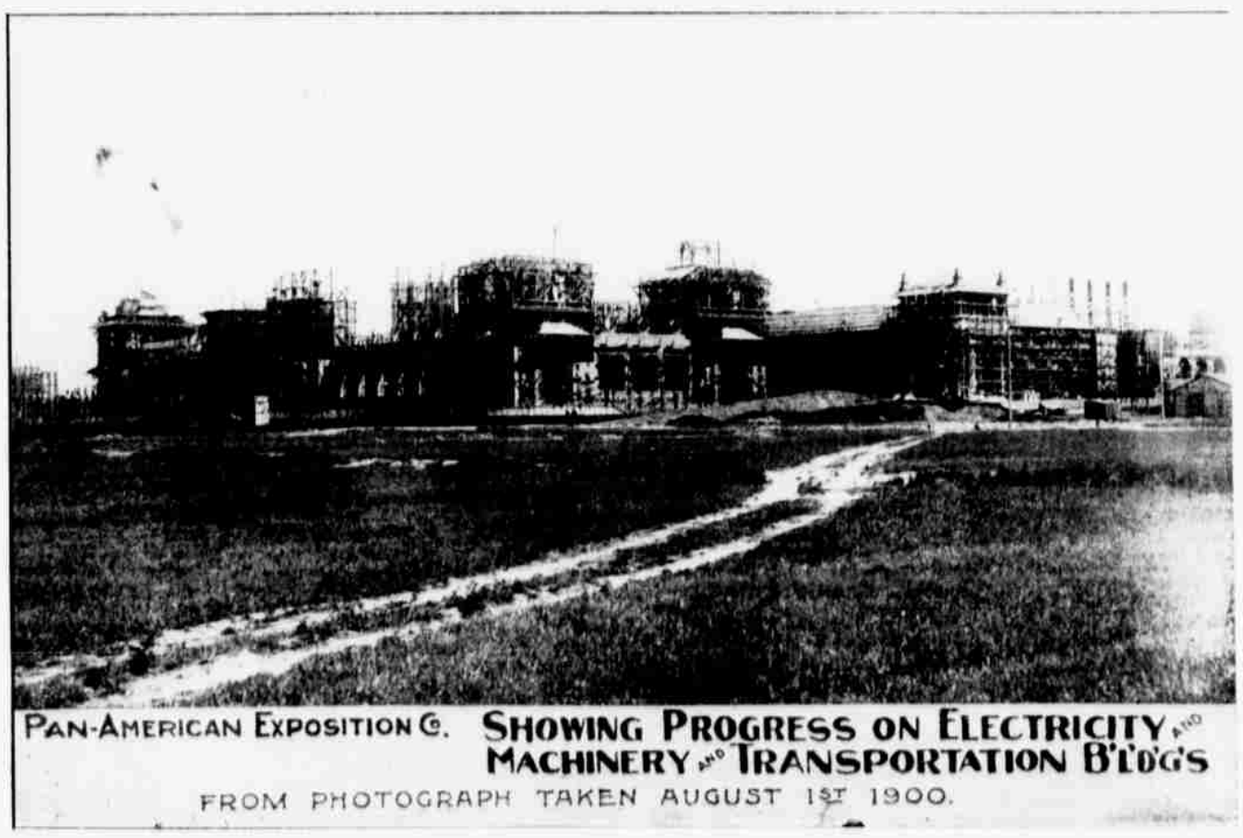
"In the reign of the Emperor Wan Lie a foreigner named Pa Ta Li came into Che Kiang and began to persuade men to join the Christian sect, and great numbers were ensnared by him. Now, there was a certain military undergraduate, named Wang Wen Mu, an athlete, who, hearing that when any one who joined this sect died they secretly took out his eyes, had a desire to test the matter. So for some days he ate nothing, and word was sent to the priest that he was about to die. The priest came and, sure enough, he had a little knife in his hand. Coming forward, he was about to cut out Wang's eyes, when he, springing up suddenly, beat him and drove him out of his house and cut off his head and destroyed his image of Jesus. When this affair came to be known in the capital the emperor rewarded him liberally."

Some Boxer Superstitions.

Another story the Boxers are spreading is that the foreigners have a magic medicine which, if rubbed on the palm of the hand and held up before the face of a Chinese, will hypnotize him and make him the slave of the foreigner. They say that this medicine is made out of the eyes of infants and young children and that the missionaries steal them for that purpose. I have often seen when going through an interior Chinese town a Chinese mother put her hand over the eyes of her child or hide its head in a shawl until I had passed out of sight. The massacre at Tien Tsin in 1870, in which more than a score of the French Sisters of Charity were treated almost as badly as our missionary girls are being treated now, was caused by a rumor that these nuns were kidnaping children for their eyes.

It is on the crushed-eye theory that the Chinaman does not like to be photographed. When his face is recorded on the photo-

(Continued on Eighth Page.)



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