

War of Civilizations--- Unbiased View of China

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(Editor's Note: George Lynch, the war correspondent, who is becoming widely known through his graphic and daring criticisms of the Chinese embargo, first achieved prominence some five years ago, when he penetrated through the desert wastes of western Australia. After this feat the London Chronicle engaged him to act as its war correspondent during the Spanish-American war. He was at the front in the advance on Santiago, and witnessed the final surrender of the Spanish generalissimo. After the peace protocol Mr. Lynch was sent to France to report the Dreyfus trial. While thus engaged he was called out on the "field of honor" by one of the most rabid anti-Dreyfusards, and overcame his opponent. Shortly before the outbreak of the Boer war Mr. Lynch was dispatched to South Africa by the Illustrated London News. He was at the front and sent the earliest reports of Elandsbaagte, Retfontein and Nekson's Nek. At this last engagement he was wounded and thenceforth shared the fate of those shut up in Ladysmith. After he had fully recovered he undertook to run the Boer lines alone, penetrating ten miles beyond Ladysmith, only to fall into the hands of a detached Boer outpost. As a prisoner of war he was sent to Pretoria. He was released, after the escape of Winston Churchill, in recognition of his impartial reports of the whole situation. While in Pretoria Mr. Lynch, like so many others, contracted enteric fever, which was aggravated by a return of malignant malaria contracted in Cuba. He had scarcely recovered when the troubles arose in China, and his services were once more demanded at the front.)

In firing on the Taku forts without any declaration of war the allies entered on a career of "nigger" treatment which they pursued in their march from the sea to Peking, and which they have since pursued by means of punitive expeditions through the surrounding country. The murder of Baron von Ketteler and the attack on the legations were absolutely inexcusable, although there are people who aver that Baron von Ketteler's conduct as a minister of a foreign court in insisting on having some Boxers executed was, to say the least of it, extremely unusual and provocative at a time of critical and turbulent unrest. But the attack on the legations, horrible as it was, has been avenged tenfold. The conduct of a great portion of the allied troops has been so utterly disgraceful to western civilization that it is a most disagreeable task to a historian to refer to it, and it is absolutely impossible to go into a description of details. To an impartial observer, if the term "barbarian" was to be applied to either side, it might just as fittingly be applied to the invaders as to the invaded.

In this desperate "war without wounded" there were hundreds killed on the Chinese side for one killed on the European, and the horrible tortures and deaths inflicted on the missionaries found their counterpart in the treatment of Chinese women and children by certain sections of the allied troops. As an instance of similar horrors the bayonets of a company of Russian infantry (and throughout the campaign the Russian soldiers invariably carried their bayonets fixed) were stained by the blood of an infant which they had tossed from one to the other. In the burden of dead bodies which the river Pei Ho carried from Peking to the sea were to be seen numbers of the forms of young girls.

Vandalism of the Finest.

In civilized warfare there is generally some little respect shown for the priests and places of worship of the conquered people, but here there were none whatever. Houses were stabled in the temples and the art heirlooms of thousands of years of the nation's life to be found therein, were mutilated and destroyed where they were not stolen. In a street which has been named Gaslee street, where I lived in Peking, for a whole week was to be seen day by day carts passing backward and forward laden with books which they were bringing to a huge fire in a yard outside the palace wall, where they were consumed. Thousands of books were thus treated, so that the whole street was littered with their fluttering leaves to such an extent that I could not get my little Chinese pony to pass there without getting off and leading him, he shied to such an extent at the fluttering papers. Day after day this literary holocaust continued. When the wind was in the direction of my house a fine black snow kept perpetually falling and covered the roofs and courtyards with these ashes of dead thoughts. Hundreds of the books were written in the quaint characters which showed that they belonged to and were written by Lama priests; many of them had probably found their way there from the bleak steppes of far Tibet.

They were printed with those wooden blocks by which these barbarians practiced the art of printing for centuries before the time of Caxton. Many of them also were in manuscript, which must have meant years of labor, and hand-painted pictures illustrating some were occasionally to be found. They were all alike consigned to the same funeral pyre and thousands of volumes of unascertained, but perhaps of considerable value were thus lost to the world forever. As the bleak, cold winds from over the plains swept down the deserted street at nights and moaned dolorously through the ruined houses, rattling doors and flapping paper windows, it lifted these torn book leaves and swirled them round in a fantastic dance of death until one could almost imagine one heard the lamentations of the ghosts of their long-dead authors—priests, hermits and scholars—mourning over the ashes of their life work.

When some men remonstrated at this

piece of western vandalism the reply was made that the Chinese had burned the Hamelin library in order to set fire to the British legation.

Since the destruction of the Alexandrine library there has been no such wholesale holocaust of unreplaceable literary treasures as in the burning of the Hamelin. But it must be recollected that this was not done by the educated Chinese, but by an infuriated mob of Boxers, whose European equivalent would be found in the incendiaries of the Palace of Versailles, or the members of the commune. It must be borne in mind that this was done by a mob who, however ignorant and infatuated, were mainly actuated by a fanatical patriotism which, in a way, might be considered not to be so far off the idea which animated the inhabitants of Warsaw to put the torch to their city. But one seeks in vain for any such excuse for the destruction of these thousands of books which remained by the orders of the generals who commanded the armies of western civilization. If positions had been reversed, and that it was the case that a part of the Bodleian library at Oxford or the Congressional Library at Washington had been destroyed, would we not have considered those who had destroyed the remainder as unworthy to be considered civilized?

Plundered and Plunderers.

It was a strange position on the morning of the day after the allies had entered Peking. The rich city lay at the mercy of its plunderers. It was almost deserted by its immense population except a few of the very lowest class, who had nothing in the way of worldly goods to lose, and who seemed to hold their lives cheap. They still held on and lived amid the ruins of their homes. Yet some Boxers lingered about and lurked in the ruins, who had an awkward way of shooting from behind corners or through windows, so that there was a certain amount of risk of going far afield to loot, but there was great reward awaiting the enterprising. As late as two weeks after the relief of the legations, in the principal street near the Peitang cathedral, two French soldiers were shot dead close beside me, and although we immediately rushed in through the ruins in the direction from which the shots came, could find no trace of the men who had fired them. The Japanese intelligence department knew where every building containing treasure was located, and they lost no time after their arrival in taking possession of the most valuable. Out of the buildings of the board of revenue alone they took several million taels in Sycee. The silver was almost invariably found in this form, and almost every evening for about a week after the occupation I would receive a visit, in the Chinese house which I occupied, from Russian soldiers, who would tramp in heavily with their high topped boots stuffed with silver and their blouses above their belts bulged out with it also, who had come, offering it for sale at almost any price. The \$75 shoes were being freely offered for \$10 to \$15, but the difficulty was that there were very few people in the happy position of having a



OMAHA GUARDS GATLING GUN SECTION IN ACTION.

supply of ready cash with which to purchase. The proprietor of the Hotel de Peking realized a large fortune by immediately securing a financial backing from his bankers, which enabled him to purchase a large quantity of silver which had been taken possession of by the French and other soldiers. It was curious what a redistribution of wealth went on in Peking for the first month. The rich pawnshops, fur stores and jewelry shops that were broken open by the allied troops were completely gone through by the lowest class of Chinese rabble almost invariably the night after they had been opened. For a week or more after the relief the laws of meum and tuum were in abeyance.

"This House is Occupied."

One's possessions were only secure as long as one could keep them within sight. The night of my arrival my pony was annexed by some Russian Cossacks, and I had to wait till the following night to make reprisal by taking one of theirs.

This one was an excellent pony, except that he had the awkward habit of wanting to fall into line whenever I happened to be near a Cossack regiment. Going along Hatanen street one day I saw a complacent looking Chinaman, sleek, well-fed and bland in expression, riding along on a beautiful Chinese pony.

On the end of a stick he carried a banner with the strange device, "This house is occupied." It was one of the little flags that used to be hung over doors of some of the houses in the attempt to prevent their being looted. Judging by his expression he seemed

to think that it also afforded him and his pony absolute security and protection. But he was immediately undeceived. An English-speaking soldier was plodding along through the dust beside him and watching that pony contemptively. It was evident that he came to the conclusion that there was no reason why he should trudge along on foot while the Chinaman went a-horse-back.

Notwithstanding the difference in language he immediately made it clear to the Chinaman, whose place he took on the pony, leaving him to walk along instead, no longer with the same bland, self-satisfied smile on his face, but still carrying the banner with the strange device, "This house is occupied."

Although practically the entire city of Peking outside the walls of the imperial palace was plundered, yet there was practically little looting done in the palace itself, and none in the private apartments of the emperor and empress dowager.

An Orgy of Looting.

The day of the march of the allies through the palace some "souvenirs" were taken. For about a quarter of an hour a perfect orgy of looting took place in a dark store-room filled with camphored chests and boxes; jade vases were stuffed into bulging pockets and a Frenchman was to be seen pressing his knee on top of a high, richly wrought golden vase until he pressed it, concertina-like, so as to make it fit inside his tunic.

One or two plunderers were stopped and made to give up their treasures, who attracted attention by the abnormal developments of their figures. It was not until about a fortnight after this triumphal march that the private apartments of the emperor and empress were visited. Through the courtesy of General Wilson I was afforded an opportunity of being one of the first to see them. He made me promise that I would not take anything, and I gave my word not to take anything—except photographs.

Picture of the "Son of Heaven."

If these walls could speak, what a strange story they would have to tell of the tragic struggle that quietly went on within them; the imperial radical, the nominal despot of 400,000,000 people, engaged in struggling against all the forces of conservatism focused in the person of the empress dowager. When an imperial despot turns reformer he is apt to go too fast, and this was the fault committed by the young emperor. Still, there is something extremely pathetic in the unsuccessful efforts made by this delicate, sad-faced young man, and the pathos is accentuated when, from an eastern standpoint, we consider the ban that he is under from not having given birth to a male heir, the greatest misfortune that can afflict a Chinese household, from the highest to the lowest. The greatest pride in the life of the poorest coolie in the land—a boy child—was denied to the Son of Heaven. It is a curious thing that when the emperor left the palace he did not take the imperial concubines with him. The hurry of his desperate flight, which only took place the day we were actually in Peking, was probably the reason. They remained behind, and remain there to the present day.

Although many things have been looted from the palace, and the apartments of the emperor and the empress dowager entered, yet the seclusion of the women of the palace has never been invaded, nor have they yet been seen by western eyes. On the day of my visit with General Wilson he was curious to see them. He told the old controller of the palace to open their apartments. But he replied that it was impossible. The general insisted, and explained to him that he had to see them, that he, the controller, could not help himself in the face of the arms of the American soldiers. Still the old man refused and protested, and finally put it to General

Wilson that he would most certainly lose his head on the return of the emperor if he were to gratify his curiosity in this matter. It was only at this that General Wilson ceased to press him, and allowed him to keep his head.

The imperial ladies of the palace have therefore enjoyed the distinction of being about the only mystery of China which has remained unseen by the eyes of the invaders. Nearly all the Pekinese ladies seemed to have disappeared before we arrived. On the first day or two a few were occasionally to be seen escaping in carts, or glimpses of them were to be caught painfully toddling along on their tiny feet, supported on either side by their maids or being carried on their backs. Any of those that remained had a bad time of it if found by the soldiery.

There was one instance of a Manchu girl who was discovered in her house by a correspondent. No one could understand how she came to be left behind. He found her in the inside room of a house, where she was absolutely alone and deserted. The corpse of a Chinese gentleman was lying in the yard. She was a Manchu lady, and, like many of her race, extremely beautiful. Her trousers and coat were of richly embroidered silk, her black hair was ornamented with jewelled combs and rows of pearl ornaments of peculiarly involved pattern, and the coil of her hair was carried over a delicately carved stick of white jade, somewhat in the shape of a flat paper knife.

She was terrified at his approach, and he had great difficulty in persuading her of his harmless intentions. After much trouble he managed to get an old man and his wife from the neighborhood to come in and occupy the house with a view to protecting her, and he got them to supply her with cooler clothes in place of the rich ones which she wore and to take off her pearl ornaments, which would offer too strong a temptation to any marauding soldiers who might perchance visit the house.

For over a month, by some wonderful chance, she succeeded in living there undisturbed, and was supplied by the correspondent with food and necessities. Her gratitude for his services was unbounded, and, although there was no communication by means of language between them, she expressed her feelings in many pretty ways. When occasionally he came to see her in the evenings, she would sing to him in a high falsetto voice, which was more agreeable in the intention it displayed than in the actual performance.

One day he began to make a sketch of her and the universal instinct of her sex was shown by her running away to change her coolie clothes and to come out in all the glory of the gorgeous habiliments of the Manchu lady. One evening, after a couple of days' interval, he came to see her, found the house deserted, and neither she nor the old man or woman anywhere to be seen, and was left blankly to speculate on what had become of them.

Germans Add to Desolation.

No one knows where the hundreds of thousands of the inhabitants of Peking disappeared to, and it will never be known what hardships these poor people, outcast and homeless, must have had to endure during the rigors of this trying winter in the bleak plains that surround Peking. They were just beginning to come back to what were, in the majority of cases, the ruins of their homes, when the Germans, late for the first march for the relief, came up to enter upon their campaign of revenge, start their so-called punitive expeditions, and spread fresh terror into the already horror-stricken people.

Even with the offer of high wages it was almost impossible to obtain servants. I managed with great difficulty to secure two. One I called Sapollo because he didn't wash clothes, or anything else, and the other,

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ANOTHER SIGN OF SPRING.