THE OLD ST. GEORGE.

It's Rise, It's Decline, It's Fall, It's Revival, And It's Ghost

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By D. W. H.

"Then gently scan your fellow man,
Still gentler, sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin' wrang,
To step aside is human."
—Burns.

The modest-looking red-brick structure that stands sandwiched between the Victoria Theatre on the east and the majestic Hotel Driard on the west has a history which if told would, I think, interest the many readers of The Colonist. It was built in 1862 by a Mons. Bendixen, who came here in the spring of that year, accompanied by his wife, a tall, heavily built French woman. M. Bendixen, who was a Belgian, purchased the lot on which the structure stands at a pretty stiff figure. A boom was on at the time and owners could scarcely open their mouths wide enough when setting a price on their properties. The building was originally of two stories, and was called the St. George. It should not be confounded with the St. George Hotel, now the Delmonico, which John J. Jacobs conducted in the middle 70's. The original St. George was very comfortable, and at first was well conducted. Seattle at that time was a mere village of 400 or 500 inhabitants, and Portland had a population of about 2,000. Victoria's census showed 2,020 white inhabitants in 1860. So the St. George might easily be the best hotel north of San Francisco and then not be anything to boast of. Take them for all in all, however, the Bendixens were very accommodating and when the woman was not in one of her queer moods things sailed along smoothly and guests went and came in considerable numbers. But the business proved unprofitable, and as times grew bad the temper of Mme. Bendixen grew more and more disagreeable until visitors to the city, having been previously warned, were loth to come within the range of her tongue and so went elsewhere for accommodation and refreshments. Coarse and almost repellant as the Madame had grown, there were people in Victoria who could call to mind the time when, seven or eight years before, she was one of the handsomest and daintiest of the smart set of San Francisco. I saw her often driving in an open carriage along Montgomery street the observed of all observers and by long odds the most magnificently appareled and the most beautiful woman in that gay and dissipated metropolis. How she had changed in the interval between 1854 and 1862 will be understood when I say that I did not for a long time recognize in the fat, grisly-looking, boisterous hostess of the St. George the delicate and refined-appearing young California beauty. It is true that her associations at first were with the very worst class of California society. She was at one time the 'cher amie' of the notorious "Judge" McGowan, whose exploits while on Fraser river have been told in a previous chapter. When she broke with that wicked person the Madame took a small cottage on Pike street and announced that she would shortly be married. I cannot recall the name of the man of her choice. Perhaps it was Bendixen; but I think the name was an English one. However, she continued to occupy the cottage referred to and was most exemplary in her conduct and regular in attendance at church. I really believe she tried hard to be good, and had she been left to her own devices that she would have succeeded in becoming an excellent wife, if not a mother. But the gang of ruffians with whom she had formerly consorted would not let her rest. Their hands were ever outstretched to drag her back into the path of sin which she had forsaken. She resisted all overtures and became a mark for their venom and insults. She applied to the police for protection, but the force were the tools of the thugs that then controlled politics at San Francisco, and she received no assistance from that quarter. One evening while walking along the principal thoroughfare nitric acid was sprinkled on her dress and the garment was ruined. On another occasion her fiance was assulted and terribly beaten by two men whom he could not identify. The most scandalous stories were circulated about her, but those acts only increased her religious fervor and tended to confirm her in a desire to reform.

I boarded at that time in a house at the corner of Pike and Clay streets kept by an Irish maiden lady named Miss Rennington, scarcely a stone's throw from the little cottage of the penitent woman. Our quarters were very comfortable and the boarders were all nice, quiet people and in every respect desirable acquaintances. Miss Rennington was related to the very best people in Ireland. She had a crest and corresponded regularly with friends whose letters also bore crests. She was a perfect lady, well educated and refined. Her old father, who was about 85, and quite helpless, occupied a room in the house and it was pleasant to notice the tender care with which the daughter always looked after the old gentleman's comfort. What he had been in early life we never heard. But he probably filled an important government position in the closing years of the eighteenth and opening years of the nineteenth century. I think that he belonged to the loyalists and assisted in putting down the rebellion of '98. He was well read and very intelligent and was a gentleman of culture. In warm weather the windows of our house were left open to admit the cool air. One morning, before daybreak, the household was awakened by an overpowering stench which seemed to invade every nook and cranny of the establishment and sickened all who came within the radius of its powerful influence. For about half-an-hour the horrid odor penetrated the bedrooms and men and women were fain to run into the street to avoid the noxious fumes. The sun was well up before the smell was overcome by the purer air of heaven. We learned later on that the gang had set off a Chinese stink-pot beneath the floor of the cottage with the object of driving the woman out. The unfortunate female remained within, and although she was nearly asphyxiated held her ground. A few nights later the neighborhood was shaken by a violent concussion which caused much alarm. The firebells were rung and we all turned out to ascertain the cause of the shock. It was found that an infernal machine had been fired beneath the cottage, shattering it and lifting it from its foundations and, of course, frightening the poor inmate who was trying so hard to be good. We all dressed and ran to the scene, where we found the unfortunate woman standing in her night apparel, unhurt but badly frightened and sobbing amid the wreck of her home and goods. As she stood wringing her hands and in dislocated English bewailing her hard fate Miss Rennington walked up to her and placing a hand on her arm spoke a few words in French. The woman shook her head and tried to throw off the lady's hand. Miss Rennington grasped the arm tighter and again spoke to her in her native tongue. The poor thing reluctantly yielded at last and Miss Rennington, drawing a shawl from her own shoulders, threw it over the back of the woman and led her towards the boarding place. The boarders followed at a respectful distance. The ladies were greatly scandalized and when they saw the two disappear within the door their indignation was vigorously outspoken. In the morning at breakfast Miss Rennington appeared looking pleasant and apparently quite unconcerned. She was received with chill silence by the ladies and with a constrained air by the gentlemen. No one spoke for about five minutes when a Mrs. Coe, who was admittedly the leader and mouth-piece of the social set in the house, broke the silence by addressing the landlady in severe tones,

"Is it true, Miss Rennington, that you have given shelter to —to—to—"

"Yes," broke in the landlady, "it is perfectly true that I have given shelter to one of God's creatures—a poor, persecuted woman, whose house was wrecked by a gang of scoundrels last night and who I found weeping amongst the ruins of her home."

"But, while you looked out for her comfort did you have no regard for the feelings of your boarders—especially your lady boarders?"

"Mrs. Coe," said Miss Rennington, "if your character is of so unstable a nature that it cannot withstand the temporary presence here of the wretched woman, be so good as to leave the house as soon as you can get other quarters."

As the noble woman spoke she drew her tall figure up to its full height and her bright blue eyes seemed to flash and kindle as with a holy fire. She gazed along the table and after a short pause continued. "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." No one spoke after that. The back of the objectors was broken and the meal was finished in deep silence. Only the boarder who sat next to me ejaculated, sotto voce, "Ould Ireland forever." The woman left the house in the afternoon and the incident was soon forgotten, except, perhaps, by Mrs. Coe and the victim. Among the ruins of the house the police picked up a letter, evidently written the night before the explosion by the occupant. It came into the hands of the press and was printed. Here it is:

"August 17.

"My dear friend,—I suppose that you are very suprise not to see me any days, but — as been very bad for me an he says if I go and see you the most worst will me happen. He is very jealous and sorry why you like me. I am been sick by his conduct and want you to come to see me soon. Suppose you do not never come I be more sicker than ever, for I want you to marry me soon or it will be very bad for me both. My silk dress he be spoil with some drug he throw on it and I am very sorry. Come an soon and see me.

"Your loving friend,
"LENNY."

Upon the partial destruction of the cottage "Lenny" moved away and the next time I saw her she was hostess of the St. George in this city, and instead of the shrinking, timid, handsome girl of several years before she had developed into a fat, bold and quarrelsome middle-aged woman.

The St. George remained in the hands of the Bendixens for three or four years. Evil times descended upon the province and ravens croaked in the grass-grown streets. In 1862 I cut down thistles that grew in the gutter on Government near Yates street—the principal business thoroughfare, and in warm weather, as late as 1871, I was accustomed to sit in a chair on the same sidewalk near the same corner and read newspapers and books without fear of interruption—the passers-by were so few. There was no pound law then and cows and horses roamed the principal streets and fed on the grass that grew on either side. The inhabitants were supplied with water in fitful quantities from Harris' Pond and Spring Ridge through wooden pipes and by carts which delivered the water in buckets at the doors and sold it at so many pails for a dollar.

A bathtub was a luxury that only the rich possessed and in the St. George hotel there was no bathroom. Quoth the Madame:

"What's the use? Suppose I have bathroom, nobody cannot get no water for bath. Lucky to get enough to drink and face and hand to wash. The rest have to wait for more water to come."

This was an argument that none cared to dispute. The hard times finally drove the Bendixens from the hotel. Bendixen went to San Francisco and the Madame to Cariboo, where she remained I am informed until she died at an advanced age. She must have been 70. She acknowledged to 44. Why do women nearly always prevaricate about their ages? or if they do not prevaricate what possible objection can they have to telling how old they are? I was conversing with a most estimable woman awhile ago and in the course of conversation I mentioned a circumstance that happened in 1864. "Oh!" said the lady, "that was before my time. I was too small to remember what took place then, for I was a very small child." She forgot that in 1866, she being then a young lady with her "hair done up," I escorted her to the old Victoria Theatre where a concert was held.

After the Bendixens went away the St. George remained closed for some time. It was opened by different proprietors at various times, but all met with disaster. Messieurs Sosthenes Driard and Mr. Hartnagle were the proprietors of the Colonial Hotel, on Government street, just where the Senate saloon and a boot and shoe store now are. There was a billiard-room in the rear, which one night in 1875 took fire and was destroyed, together with the hotel and the brick building now occupied by Fletcher Bros.' music house. Driard and Hartnagle shortly afterwards purchased the St. George, changed the name to Hotel Driard and added another story and a Mansard roof. Some years later when railway construction began on the Mainland, the Driard became the headquarters of the engineers and contractors, and their friends and of land speculators, and the owners must have scooped in a "barrel of money." Shortly before this period Mr. L. Redon joined the firm. Mr. Driard, after a hard day's work, was in the habit every summer evening of sitting in an arm-chair on the sidewalk in front of the hotel and falling asleep. His snores were of the most vigorous and sonorous kind and his slumber was often prolonged into the chilly hours of the night. One evening, having fallen asleep as was his custom, when his nap was at an end he tried to rise, but to his surprise and alarm he found it impossible to move. He felt as if he had been nailed to the chair, and struggle as he might there was no breaking loose. In his distress he called for assistance and when helped into the hotel it was found that the old man was paralyzed. From that night to the hour of his death poor Driard was a sufferer, and although he managed to potter about it was with extreme difficulty and pain. When he died every one felt that a good man had passed away.

Mr. Hartnagel's death was about as affecting. He was a famous caterer—the best, perhaps, that ever came to the Pacific coast. Meals provided by him were the talk of the continent. Everywhere you might be, if you met a man who had visited Victoria he would always ask after Mr. Hartnagel and tell you how he enjoyed the food while putting up at his hostelry.

Many people will call to mind Capt Morse of the steamship Dakota, which vessel carried the mails between Victoria and San Francisco for many years. Morse, who was a bluff, hearty Easterner, was very popular and when it became known that he had been promoted to the command of an Australian liner and that he was about to visit this port for the last time, it was arranged to tender him a farewell banquet at the Driard. This was early in the eighties. The committee selected the Driard as the place for holding the banquet and Mr. Hartnagel prepared the menu, of which the committee approved. This was on Tuesday, and Mr. Hartnagel was apparently in the best of health. Preparations for the great event went actively forward. On Thursday Mr. Hartnagel was taken ill. On Friday he died. On Sunday he was buried, and on the Monday following we eighteen admirers of Capt. Morse partook of the delicious banquet for which the amiable old gentleman had provided the menu.

It was the hour of two one morning in the summer of 1882 when an alarm was sounded that the extensive stables of the late Wm. G. Bowman, which occupied the site where the Colonist building now stands, were on fire. The flames spread with great rapidity, and crossing the street encircled the Driard House in their fiery embrace. The Mansard roof caught first and the fire ate its way downward until the building was destroyed, causing a heavy loss to the owners, Redon and Hartnagel. When the hotel was rebuilt the Mansard roof, a realistic fire-trap, was not replaced and the old building presents the same general features it possessed when reconstructed after the fire. The palatial structure on the corner of View and Broad streets was erected about thirteen years ago and is now owned and conducted by Mr. A. Hartnagel, son of the first proprietor of that name.

In the summer of 1863, when the steamer Eliza Anderson was the only boat that ran betwen Victoria and Olympia, there arrived a man and a girl who registered at the St. George. I do not remember the names they gave, but let us say that the man registered as Stowell and the girl as Cowell. They were both young, the girl not more than 15. Separate apartments were assigned them and whatever else may be said about Mme. Bendixen she was always kind to her sex. A certain something about the pair aroused the hostess' suspicions, and taking advantage of the man's absence from the house for a short time she questioned the girl, who frankly admitted that she had crossed the Straits for the purpose of marrying her escort. How long had she known him? queried the Madame. About a month. Did she know anything about him or his affairs? No, except that he was a bookkeeper and came often to her father's house. Did her parents object to the marriage? Yes, they thought her too young and no clergyman at Seattle would marry them without her father's consent. So they had come on to Victoria and her lover was then gone to get a license and a clergyman.

In an hour or so the man returned without license or clergyman. Madame's suspicions grew stronger and she kept a close watch upon them. When the hour for retiring came she took the girl to the room, tucked her in the bed, kissed her good-night, and on coming out slyly locked the door of the apartment and took the key away. An hour or two later, the lights being out, Mr. Slyboots stole into the passage and felt his way softly on tiptoe towards the room within which the girl was locked. His chagrin was great and his anger ill-concealed when he came downstairs again and asked for the key of No. —. Then Mme. Bendixen poured the phials of her wrath upon him. In broken English she raked him fore and aft. Called him canaille, rascaile, cochon, scoundrel, villain, and asked him why he did not return with a clergyman.

The fellow pleaded that he could not find one.

"Zat ees one lie—what ze Anglish call infa-mous lie. You no want to find one! You no want to marry ze girl! You dare not so do!"

"Why do I not dare?"

"Because—shall I you tell? Because you has got a wife alreaty."

The man reeled as if hit with a bullet.

"How—how—did you know that?" he asked.

"Yes—well I will tell you so you'll forget not. A little bird he did whisper it in my ear, an' he tell me not to by any means tell you hees name."

"It's a lie—a d— lie," said the man.

"No, ees not a lie," screamed the woman with her arms on her hips in true female scolding attitude. "It ees true as ze gospel book. I read it in your trace. I ze you sneak, sneak along ze passage in your feets viz out ze boots. I watch you all ze afternoon and ze little girl, too. She is innocent as what you call it? a—a—lamb, ees it? Well, you no ze her any more to-night and in ze mornin' her fazzer maybe will come and carry her away. You are one great rascaile, and get out, quick. You hear?"

The man, thoroughly cowed, grasped his bag and made off with a herd of "sacre cochons" squealing in his ears.

In the morning the "fazzer" of the girl did arrive in a tug from the Sound and lost no time in taking possession of his daughter and settling the bill. It turned out that the random "guess" of the hostess of the St. George was right. The man had a wife in California and did not propose to marry his intended victim. It is to be hoped that she profited by her narrow escape.

What if I should tell my readers in confidence that a ghost once "walked" through the corridors of the old St. George. Out of the Bendixen's hands the place went first into those of E. C. Holden, a bluecoat boy, who, after keeping it for a year or two, gave it up in despair. A woman who announced herself as a spiritualist appeared one day at the hotel and was accommodated with a room. She engaged the dining-room, which is now the office of the Driard, for a lecture and a good many attended. Among other things she announced that if a book were placed in her hands, without opening it she would tell the page on which any quotation that might be made by one of the company from the pages of the volume would be found. With a copy of Shakespeare she was very successful. With the New Testament, which she seemed to know by heart, she was infallible. A gentleman present happened to have in his pocket a small edition of Lindley Murray, and handing it to her asked her to parse a certain phrase which was given as an exercise in the book. "She was "stumped" at once: she floundered and at last abandoned the attempt. My impression has always been that the woman had a phenomenal memory and that once having read a book she remembered everything it contained. Her language convinced me that she had never looked inside a grammar and the result showed spirits were called up and messages received from passed-away friends of some that I was right. After the book test, present; but the tests were not deemed satisfactory and the medium retired under somewhat of a cloud. But that night strange things happened at the St. George. Rappings were heard on the walls and doors; bells were heard ringing in parts of the building where no bells were supposed to be, and sepulchral voices resounded in the passages. The landlord and landlady turned out in their robes de nuit to investigate, when the noises suddenly ceased. They turned in and the noises were heard again. They buried their heads beneath the blankets to shut out the din when a strong hand plucked away the covering. They ran into the hall in time to see a very tall, white figure glide along the passage and disappear at the head of the stairs. They ran to the spot and lying on the floor they discovered a sheet. They proceeded at once to the medium's room and pounded on the door without getting any response for some minutes. When at last the door was opened by the woman she yawned as if half asleep. The landlady pushed her way inside and proceeding to the bed found that it was just one sheet short of the complement and that sheet she held in her hand! The next morning the medium quitted the house and ghosts never again walked at the St. George.

SCIENTIFIC MISCELLANY

Powellized Wood, Wireless Automatic Signals.

A METALLURGICAL MARVEL

How Fever Kills. A Novel Life-Saver. Voice Pictures. Gaseous Projectiles. The Sea's Pendulum.

Filling the pores with sugar has somewhat surprising effects upon wood. The process, as devised by W. Powell of Liverpool, consists in immersing the wood in heated sugar solution for some hours, the time varying with the wood, and then drying in an oven. No previous seasoning is necessary. The spongy fibre is converted into a compact ligneous substance, and it acquires greatly increased durability and strength, resistence to changes of temperature and moisture, and even to fire. A special advantage is that the softer and cheaper—and even defective—woods can be made to serve many purposes in place of expensive hard woods. The sugar does not dissolve out, and it does not promote fermentation and the growth of destructive organisms, but it produces some remarkable chemical or physical transformation in a manner not yet understood.

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In the new fire-alarm system of Emile Guarini of Brussels, automatic signals are given by wireless telegraphy. The rise of the mercury in a thermometer acts upon a relay and sets in motion a wheel, which makes and breaks the electric circuit by a series of contacts. Impulses are thus sent through an induction coil and the usual transmitting apparatus. The receiver at the enginehouse includes air and earth conductors, coherer, battery and Morse instrument. The same receiver can serve many transmitter, and, as the contacts on the wheel can be varied, the exact location of the fire can be indicated.

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So little as 3 to 5 parts of vanadium per 1,000 doubles the resistance of steel to fracture, and gives extraordinary hardness, with the peculiar property of acquiring maximum hardness by annealing. When a working tool of vanadium steel becomes heated, its cutting power increases. A suggested explanation is that the extreme avidity of vanadium for oxygen causes the reduction of every trace of the iron oxide that greatly weakens even the best prepared steels.

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A rise of body temperature from the normal 98.4 deg. F. to 107 deg. brings speedy death. Drs. Halliburton and Mott find that cell-globulin coagulates at the latter temperature, the fatal results of high fever seeming to be due to coagulation of this proteid in the cells of the nerve-centres and other parts of the body.

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The electric life-saving hook of J. McKenna, a Scotchman, is a long pole with a hook and an electric lamp at the outer end. The light is made to glow when a body is being sought in the water at night.

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The study of "voice figures" has been for years the novel hobby of Mrs. Watts Hughes, who has entertained Londoners with the curious results. Singing into an "eidophone"— a simple instrument consisting of tube, receiver and flexible membrane—each note sets up vibrations that cause tiny seeds, lycopodium and other dust, and even "color paste," to dance into definite and constant patterns. Shapes include snakes, spirals, stars and wheels. On one occasion a beautiful daisy appeared, and she strove for weeks to learn its secret, at last finding the precise inflection of the particular note that yields it, so that she has since produced at will daisies of great beauty, even with successive rows of petals and petals delicately veined. Other notes give pansies. Others picture sea-monsters, serpentine figures receding into infinity; and still others form trees, even with falling fruit, a foreground of rocks and the sea behind.

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Cannon and other explosive discharges appear to have a hitherto overlooked projectile, which has been pointed out by Berthplot, the distinguished French chemist. In addition to the well-known smoke rings, dense and cohesive masses of gas are thrown out, and this gaseous projectile bursts like a shell on meeting the necessary resistance. Some of the phenomena of Mount Pelee and even of the tunnel disaster in Paris may be explained in this way. Burning clouds asphyxiated all living creatures on their route while persons not exactly on the line escaped, and the gas bomb from the tunnel passed harmlessly over many people to suffocate others 300 yards away from the actual fire.

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Most marvelous of all rocking stones is that of the island of Cephalonia off the coast of Greece. A great rock, about a rod square, is in perpetual motion in the edge of the sea, alternately touching the land and receding about 20 times a minute. The regular beats of this rock are unaffected by calms or by tempestuous seas that break completely over it. The weight of ten persons did not perceptibly change its rate, and when an English captain atttempted to drag it away the oscillations snapped his chains.

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Stationary clouds to the leeward of mountain ridges have been little observed, the best known example being the "Helm Bar" often seen over the Cross Fell range in northwestern England. On a recent visit to the Blue Ridge in North Carolina, W. M. Davis noticed a similar cloud, which held its place—continually forming and dissolving—for more than an hour.

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Melamenchytraeus solifugus is a singular earthworm lately noticed on Mt. St. Elias, Alaska. By night it swarms on the snow of the Malaspina glacier, but when the sun shines it burrows to a depth of 18 inches or more under the surface.

Shere Ali Khan, the Afghan Ameer who had defied the British government in 1878, was dead. His successor, the treacherous Yakoub, had shown a disposition to treat with us, but, in spite of this, our army was still busy fighting the unruly tribes in the immediate vicinity of their encampments. The Shinwaris and Kujlanis showed such pugnaciousness under the leadership of Asmatullah Khan that Sir Samuel Browne, in command of the British forces in the Khyber Valley, resolved to punish him and his followers severely.

Asmatullah was a sly old dog and a very slippery customer. It was therefore necessary to try and surprise him if possible. He was known to be hiding in a village a few miles from Jellalabad on the other side of the River Cabul which swept along at the foot of our encampment. A large force of infantry was to march along our bank of the river and overlap the village in question, and to intercept the rebel chief if he should attempt to cross the water, while a strong cavalry contingent forded the stream below our camp and hustled him out of his snug quarters. These proceedings were to take place at night. It was an expedition wherein the special correspondent was not required, and we of the Fourth Estate with the army were notified to this effect. Still, I resolved to see, if possible, something of the movement, and had made up my mind to accompany the tag end of the cavalry under the cover of night.

It was the evening of the last day in March of 1879. I had been invited to dine with Major Roddy, attached to a famous Pathan regiment, who was in charge of the deserted encampment. A remarkable man was the Major. He had risen from the ranks, and was one of the very few soldiers who had twice won the most-coveted of all decorations—the Victoria Cross. He was a grand old warrior, who had fought all through the Mutiny and in a score of frontier fights. His short-cropped hair and moustache were as white as the snow on the Safeh Khob, the mountain that dominated the valley, but his eyes were as blue and as bright as the waters of the Cabul. And for hours I sat in his mess tent smoking and chatting, listening to stories of the old Mutiny days, and watching those keen eyes sparkle as the soldier fought his battles over again.

"Why, Major," said I, on looking at my watch, "it's nearly one o'clock, and the cavalry have already started. I must be off. Good-night."

"Another peg before you go," insisted the Major.

At last I stood out in the open, in the midst of the deserted encampment. It was a brilliant moonlight night, and the bell tents of the absent troops looked as silent and as white as the stones of a cemetery. I stood gazing for some moments at the peaceful scene, and once or twice strained my ears to glean, if possible, the slightest sign of the army which had so recently quitted the camp, and was still stealing through the night. But no, the dead quietude was not broken even by a breath of air. I lit another cigarette and quietly sauntered towards my tent on the Cabul road, which ran parallel to the river.

Presently my attention was arrested by the distant beating of hoofs on the road. Suddenly, this ceased. Then, eddying round the tents, came a troop of riderless horses. Several galloped by me, making for their deserted lines and took up their billets. They seemed blown and distressed. I stood for a short time quite dazed by the sudden apparition. I rubbed my eyes. Was I dreaming, or could it have been that last peg the genial Major had insisted upon? Some twenty horses were now whinnying in the lines that but a moment before were as deserted as the rest of the camp. It was no fantasy on my part. Those horses were solid enough, and very much of this world. I hurried to my tent to awaken my servant. What could have happened? My bearer and I hastened along the road towards the ford. En route I met Major Princeps, who was carrying a lantern.

"There's some trouble at the ford," said he. "If we turn down here to the left we shall be just upon it."

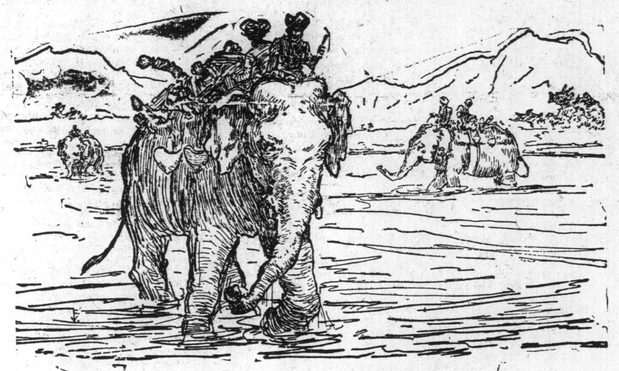
We turned down the bank. The sparkling river gleamed up at us.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Major, "look, there is a freshet. I have never seen the river so full."

Suddenly, close upon us, as if they had come out of the earth, were a few horses and two or three troopers who had been hidden by the contour of the bank. They were all wet and bedraggled. Princeps recognized one of the men to be Major Spottiswoode. The little party halted and the officer told his story, and a ghastly one it was. When the cavalry started, about 1 a.m., a haze hung close to the river. The native guides, who were familiar with the ford, led the way. The orders were not to lose the line of direction and to keep in touch as much as possible with those ahead. The Bengal Lancers were the first troopers to take to the river. Then some baggage mules followed. The men of the 10th Hussars came next. The ford was practically a double one, for the first led through comparatively shallow water to an island about a third of the way across the river. When the men of the 10th had reached the island the Lancers were landing on the main shore. The baggage mules were apparently on the second ford and making headway, but the mist at this time hid from the sight of the advance of the Hussars all but those mules nearest them. When the squadron of seventy horsemen, in half sections, took to the water, to the consternation of the advance section they found the mules in their immediate front swimming. Two by two the horses plunged in, and instead of striking the ford they found themselves struggling in rapid water fifteen feet deep. A panic ran through the sections, and the men, wildly endeavoring to bring their horses on to the ford, were swept down stream. The troopers were in heavy marching order, and the horses well provided with fodder. A freshet had swollen the river owing to the melting of the snows higher up towards Cabul. In the throes of the strong current men and horses were swiftly carried to some rapids belting the river. Here the horses, struggling for a footing among the rocks, kicked to death many of their riders as they desperately clung to the frantic animals. A few only, after being swept over into the calmer depths below the fall, were able to disengage themselves from their horses and swim to shore. And these who now stood dripping and shivering in front of us were some of those survivors.

At dawn search parties commenced their work, assisted by the elephants of Wilson's heavy battery. I shall hardly forget crossing that morning to the island. The river was still much swollen. Once or twice I thought I should reel from the saddle, so rapid was the current; but I steadily kept my eyes on some point on the shore, and never once did I dare look over the waters. We picked up nineteen bodies, and the elephants carried them in batches of fours and fives to the main shore; and never were the dead borne with more funeral solemnity to their last bivouac than by these stately animals. My dear friend and comrade in many campaigns, the late Rev. Arthur Male, read the burial service over nineteen of the unfortunate troopers that evening, and for many days Chopin's beautiful march weirdly broke the stillness of the night as the remaining dead of the unfortunate 10th, over forty bodies, were recovered from the treacherous river and laid at rest.

The first phase of the campaign was practically over. The Ameer Yacoub had come into the British lines to treat for peace. The historic document, which was at least two feet long, was sealed and packed ready for transit to the Viceroy at Simla. On the evening of the auspicious day of the signing of the Treaty of Gundamak I had called on Sir Louis Cavaghari, and found him in his tent in shirt and trousers kneeling on the floor busily engaged, with the assistance of a piece of red wax and a candle stuck in an empty beer bottle, in the act of sealing up the agreement in a paper scroll. On my apologizing and turning to withdraw he told me to be seated, that I should find a cheroot on the table, and that coffee would be in shortly.



The elephants carried them in batches of four.

"What's this curious piece of bamboo?" said I, picking up a reed six inches long lying on the table.

"Don't you see that it is pared and split at one end?" said the Major. "That's the pen with which the Ameer signed his name to this precious document."

"And this is your pen, I presume?" and I took up a well-nibbed holder with a J nib in it.

"No, that belongs to the witness to the transaction, my secretary, Mr. Jenkins. Mine is the quill here," taking one which was stuck behind his ear, and with which he had been addressing the important packet.

"Oh, what interesting trophies!" cried I; "they ought to be sent to a museum."

"Put them in yours if you have one," good-naturedly responded the Major. "And here is something else that might also interest you—the silk bag in which the Ameer's note arrived in the British camp offering to treat."

With the greatest promptitude and satisfaction I pocketed the lot.

"Major, this is really too good of you! In fact, now I hardly like to ask the favor for which I called upon you."

"Never mind that," smiled Cavagnari—"go ahead. What is it?"

"I have only just heard that a special mission is about to proceed to Cabul, of which you will be the chief. Can I go with you?" I boldly blurted.

"Certainly, regarding myself, I shall be delighted to see you with us, and you have my consent. All that you have to do is to wire to Lord Lytton as a matter of form."

The answer came. The Viceroy could not give me permission, for another European with the party would entail the augmentation of the escort, which was to be as small as possible so as not to create any suspicion of our peaceful intentions among the fanatical element in Cabul. In fact, at that period it was a question whether it was wise to send Cavagnari at all. The subsequent disaster to the ill-fated mission proved how badly advised the Viceroy was. Any way, I was very much disgusted at the time, though a few months after I was glad that Lord Lytton had not acceded to my request. For Cavagnari, his white comrades, and gallant native escort were all ruthlessly butchered by the Afghans. Only one or two natives returned to India to tell the story of the fate of their unfortunate comrades.

The life of a war correspondent is full of vicissitudes, entailing journeys of considerable magnitude. H. M. Stanley, vegetating in Madrid, received a message from Gordon Bennett of the New York Herald asking him to go and find Livingstone. Archibald was hobnobbing with King Theebaw in Mandalay when a telegram requested him to hurry off to Isanduahla in Zululand. I was in my tent under the rose-trees of Gundamak when there came a curt message from the Graphic: "Go to Sydney and do the Exhibition." It simply meant to me that I had to hasten down one side of the globe (almost from top to bottom) without stopping if I wished to be in the capital of New South Wales at the opening ceremony. I shook hands for the last time with the gallant Cavaguari, and commenced my journey towards the Indian plains.

Finding the steamer for Australia would not leave Bombay till a later date than I expected, I thought I would break my journey at Colonel Smyter's command half way to the Indo-Afghan frontier. Archibald Forbes had given me an introduction to this officer, than whom he thought there was no better soldier in her Majesty's service. But my journey to his advanced position was fraught with adventure, and my acquaintance with the heroic Smyter was, to say the least of it, by no means encouraging. I had left the British camp outside Jellalabad without having notified my intentions to headquarters, since there might be some difficulty on the road which had to be passed before I should arrive at Smyter's command, and the anxiety of the officials for my safety might have delayed my departure until a convoy should have been made up. My bearer was a Mussulman, a man of fine courage and alertness; but my syce was a Hindoo, who had a marked weakness for the safety of his own dusky skin.

So the syce I mounted on my baggage camel, and Whewas Khan, my bearer, and myself would alternately share the smart little tat, or mountain pony my good friend Forbes had picked up for me at the beginning of the campaign.

Cholera had broken out severely in the Punjab, and was stealing up through the Afghan passes, proving a more ruthless enemy to the British soldier and his dusky brethren in arms than the most fanatical of the Afghan tribesmen. One afternoon we had left on the rocky plains of Chadeh a bivouac called Baribak. The heat was intense—some 114 degrees in the shade during the day, and at night the thermometer stood at 106 degrees, and remained at that till dawn, when the mercury immediately rose again with the sun. The stones littering the route were so baked with the sun's rays that it would have been difficult to have taken one up and to have placed it in one's pocket without fear of burning one's fingers.

My poor pony suffered much from his blistered feet, his temper being what I should imagine that of a performing bear's to be when dancing on hot tiles. Limping along painfully throughout the afternoon, towards sunset we approached the rocky eminences near Basawul, which were supposed to overshadow Smyter's encampment.

The rocks glowed like huge live coals in the fierce glint of the dying sun. The air was so thick and nauseating with the stench of dead camels that one could hardly breathe. As the sun dropped behind the horizon, blood-red flashes of fire like gigantic rubies studded the plain in our immediate front, and to our disgust we found the departing light was glinting on the metal casing of biscuit tins and the debris of a deserted camp. Black night settled over the valley, and with it came a depression of spirits on our little party that was difficult to throw off. It was indeed an unfortunate situation, and a dangerous one, too,

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I greedily drained the peg.