

A STRANGER'S STORY.

A TERRIBLE DRAGON THAT CAME ALL THE WAY FROM CHINA.

The Startling Experience of an American Who Spent Twenty Years in the Celestial Kingdom—A National Holiday That Brought a Myth.

Frequenters of the pretty knoll near Eighty-sixth street remember a statue of Washington that stands there, bearing a Latin inscription that declares the original personage to have been "The Father of His Country."

Near this statue on a bench one fine evening during the past week sat an elderly and highly respectable old man. His was the only settee on which a seat remained, and perforce I took a place by his side. Before long my neighbor manifested a disposition to be companionable, and we soon struck up a conversation.

We exchanged compliments upon the weather, and he commented upon the naval parade that he said he had witnessed from the same point. This led the conversation into foreign channels, and my companion told the following strange story:

"I went out to China as supercargo on one of A. A. Low's ships and remained 20 years in the middle kingdom. I made a careful study of the people and grew to admire their thrift and energy, but I never could overcome the feeling of distrust born of experience. They were always sly and secretive.

"Vindictive to the utmost degree, they would stop at nothing calculated to injure an enemy or to avenge a real or fancied wrong. I became a convert to the Buddhist faith through the ministrations of a fine old bonze who joined me at a tea garden nearly every night and poured the doctrines of that pure and beautiful faith into my ears with a persistency that ultimately won my heart.

"He spoke exquisite pigeon English, but the fervency of his exhortations would have done him credit at any quarterly meeting. I was educated in the fear of Tao and of his representatives in the Flowery Kingdom. I was especially warned against the ambitions of this life, and the nobility of charity was constantly impressed upon me. So firm did this sly old bonze implant the philanthropy he preached in my bosom that I regularly supported him and gave him every piece of cash that remained after discharging my monthly score with my almond eyed landlady. I never dreamed that I was being 'worked.'

"I bought experience as I bought religion, with my hard earned money. When it gave out, the sleek old bonze, who had not enjoyed a square meal for months before he met me, but was not as fat and hearty as one of Rabelais' gullygut friars, told me with tears in his eyes that he had been ordered on a mission to faraway Thibet.

"This is only prefatory to the curious incident that occurred to me in my own yard on the night of the 4th of July. I am now about to tell you exactly what happened, and I assure you it fills me with terror."

The old man's face was now turned fully toward me. He had twisted round in his seat, and one of his feet had tucked itself away under him. He was very pale and cast suspicious, timid glances down the hillside behind him. Judged by the look in his eyes he unmistakably saw somebody approaching, but I could not see a single moving object.

"On July 8, being desirous to celebrate

the national holiday in a patriotic manner, I visited a large fireworks depot down town. It was late to make purchases, for most of the best goods had been sold. I bought a lot of red lights, a box of fire-crackers and a few yards of punk. I like the smell of punk. It carries me back to Canton.

"In rummaging about among the odd corners of the shop I found a very oddly decorated porcelain cup, much like a marmalade jar in shape and size. It bore an inscription that I at once recognized as sacred to the worship of Buddha. It bore every semblance to a sacred light, burned only in the temples. I sought to be informed why it had found its way hither, but all I could learn was that it had come in a case of goods—doubtless inserted by mistake.

"No value was placed upon it, and I readily secured the precious trophy for a quarter of a dollar. I carried the valued piece home, sending the crackers to my grandchildren. I confided the secret of my great find to nobody. Oh, that I had not been so selfish! Beware of secretiveness, my friend. I acquired it in China. It is a relic of barbarism.

"Yes, I was determined to be alone, and when midnight had struck in St. Agnes' church."

I knew that the clock in St. Agnes' didn't strike the hours, but did not interrupt him. He also drew his other foot up on the bench.

"I went into my yard behind my house, and placing the porcelain jar in the center of the grass plot I lighted it.

"The flame was of a dull grayish hue, and as I stood gazing in wonderment and reverence a huge monster began to rise out of the box like a pharaoh serpent. It slowly stretched itself along the grass. I was filled with terror. It was a dragon! The emblem of the middle kingdom! Don't be startled at what I tell you, but it has been my companion ever since. It is right behind you now, coming across the grass.

"You see, I know the ways of the Chinese—even of Chinese dragons—and they have to be conciliated; but, bless your heart, I don't trust them. Why, I haven't slept a moment since this dragon became a part of my life. I have no faith in him because he is a Chinese dragon.

"I was even deceived about the character of the porcelain jar. Between us, it was one of the horrible dragon pots, made to be sent to traitors by the prime minister. Its receipt means death. The submissive Celestial arranges his affairs, lights the fire, lays down, shuts his eyes, and—well, the dragon devours him."

"Now, may I ask a question," said I.

"Oh, yes! You do not doubt me?"

"Certainly not, but why do you bring your dragon over here among children? It isn't safe. There might be an accident."

"You are quite right," was the rejoinder, and he completed the sentence with all the cunning of his kind. "But he must have his swim in the river."

A large, muscular man, whom I had not before observed, made his appearance at this moment, and addressing my companion familiarly said:

"Come, baron. Call the dragon, and we will go home."

Taking the newcomer aside, I asked:

"He has told you the story also?"

"Oh, yes. He tells it to me once a day."

"And you live?"

"At the Bloomingdale Insane asylum."

In this life a man can console himself for a great sorrow by confiding it to others, and I am glad to have lightened the burden of the "baron's" blighted life by hearing his tale and stroking the neck of his mythical dragon.—Julius Chambers in New York Recorder.

Bjarni, the Discoverer of America.

All impartial historians give to the Norsemen the honor of being the discoverers of America. However, but few of them ever give the name of the real discoverer. According to the most authentic records, monks from Ireland discovered Iceland about the year 725 A. D. About 135 years later the Norsemen (knowing nothing of the discovery made by the Irish monks) also ran afoul of the little boreal island. In the year 874 these enterprising sons of the vikings had planted a colony on the island which soon became a flourishing settlement. In the year 983 Eric the Red discovered the east coast of Greenland and skirted along it for many miles. In 985 one Bjarni, who was making a trip in his vessel from Norway to Iceland, was driven from his course and finally found himself, vessel and crew in a harbor on the coast of what is now Nova Scotia.

These facts, being indisputable, should accord to Bjarni the individual honor of being the discoverer of the western continent. But the Scandinavian historians, when pressing their claims of being the true discoverers of America, seldom mention Bjarni, seeming to prefer conferring the honor upon one Leif, a son of Eric the Red, otherwise known as Leif Ericson. This man Leif seems to have deliberately left Iceland with the avowed intention of planting a colony in the new southwest—this some five years after the fateful voyage of Bjarni, who was the real pathfinder to the new world. Ericson's colony was landed at what is now Rhode Island (known in Norse history as "Vinland"), and was maintained for many years, according to some writers, until finally wiped out by the plague.—St. Louis Republic.

Women Should Keep an Account.

Whether a woman is poor or rich, it behooves her to acquire methodical business habits, keeping her little accounts accurately and knowing to a cent just what she does with her money, whether she has 10 cents or \$10 to expend on her own little personal wants.

An allowance is the first step toward this end, if at the same time it is impressed upon her that every sum spent should be set down with unfailing regularity. In black and white one notes how much more easily the money can be spent, how quickly it goes and just what foolish little things have lured it from our pockets.

Without setting down each item it is ten chances to one that you will conclude you must have lost some money when you cannot see how that \$10 bill went when you only bought such a very few things.

The neat little figures are a genuine restraint, besides instilling a habit and system that will be of great value if fortune ever smiles, and a great estate comes to your hands, and still greater if economy is a necessity, and the dollar has to be forced into doing duty for two.

Unless the accounts are kept accurately and cash made to balance every evening you had better not attempt any bookkeeping at all, for slipshod methods are worse than none and only confuse everything rather than help matters.—Baltimore Herald.

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