

Peking After the Siege

the lot of you in, in Peking. I wish you could view our line of march from Tientsin here. The thermometer would have stood at a hundred degrees in the shade if there had been any shade, but there wasn't, not so much as a bamboo pole. We came through fields of tall, thin corn where not a breath of air could penetrate. Nobody but the Japs, who are made of leather and india rubber and triple-plated steel, could endure it. The men dropped one after another and we left a goodly number of exhausted horses along our path. Then, imagining you were on the eve of expiring, we forced our way into the Legation through that filthy sewage canal and made our bow in—in what? It makes me swear to think of it. It looked like a lawn party. There was Sir Claude in immaculate tennis flannels, and Mr. Conger faultlessly arrayed, and ladies fair robed in fresh muslins. I felt so besmeared and beslimed I crept away, when whom should I run up against but my friend Miles. If the beggar hadn't gained twenty pounds! Horse meat must be fattening. I had saved some brandy in a flask to revive him if he were at his last gasp, but he laughed and said you had whole casks of it on the grounds, that it might have been better for the men if there had been less of it.