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Side Lights on the Foreign Farmer

Written for The Western Home Monthly by D. B. Bogle

Continued from October

I HAD been to town one day this spring and was returning home as evening was drawing on, pretty tired and feeling the cold wind. Half a mile from home, as I passed Mike's place, I saw him hurrying down to meet me.

"Anything new in town?" he said, as he came at earshot, in a quite excited way.

"No," I said, "I did not hear a single thing that could be called news to-day."

"No battles, or riots or murders?" he asked.

"Not that I heard of. Why?"

"Well there is something new here," he said. "A naked man came here out of the bush. He says he is being pursued as a spy by returned soldiers, and if they catch him they'll kill him."

"He's crazy," I replied.

"That's what I think," said Mike.

"Spells. But we wonder something might have happened. Sometimes I think he might have done something and got away and hid his prison clothes, and be putting this on. I take him in. I lose half a day, I cannot leave him with my wife and children."

"I must here explain. There was some sort of riot in Winnipeg last winter, and it happened that a most substantial citizen of the nearest foreign town had been set upon and beaten and robbed of his money, fortunately only some \$26. He had been bundled off to the hospital, and it had been quite some time before he was even listened to. Eventually he managed to communicate by long distance, and ask for money, of which he had abundance. Naturally he was asked what had happened. He just reached the word "riot" when the phone was shut off. Nor was he permitted to communicate with his home again. This was very stupid, because what he was not allowed to say made a story a thousand times worse than anything he could have invented. For 50 miles around terror and anxiety spread. Many were secretly preparing to pack up and go. "O" said one of them to me, "Do you never feel a longing for your own country, a place where you will not feel a stranger."

I turned my horse into Mike's yard, and said I would have a look at the wanderer.

"He was huddled in the bed under blankets and robes. A very strained and anxious looking individual he looked indeed. He spoke cultivated English. His story was a highly remarkable one and slightly incoherent. What I made out of it was this. He was a school teacher, and had been in Winnipeg at the teachers' convention. He had been on the train returning with his friend, Mr. B—ski, also a school teacher, and they were talking over their schools when he saw a man, who had been listening from behind, point him out to a lot of returned soldiers in the car as a spy. His tone was anguished with horror at

the thought of his being taken for a spy. If his condition had not been so tragical I would have burst out laughing. He then heard much loud talking, "many cross words," and the breath of the soldiers was heavy with whisky. How potent is truth. Here was a small fragment of objective reality. He saw that he was going to be killed so he unobtrusively got off the train, leaving some \$60 worth of purchases behind him. He took refuge with a farmer some distance from the line and worked with him a day or two, but a stranger came and pointed out to the farmer that he was a dangerous spy and must be killed. Quite naturally he left that locality at once.

He boarded another train, and there were the returned soldiers again, seeking his life. He shammed sick, and went out on the car platform, but the conductor drove him in, so he finally barricaded himself in the lavatory and journeyed with returned soldiers banging at the door at intervals—seeking his blood of course.

When the train began to slow down for the town, where he personally knew the mayor and some well-known citizens, he slung his boots round his neck and escaped through the lavatory window. How he performed this acrobatic feat I know not. I never tried to leave a train by that route. I should not have thought it possible.

I asked him why, if he knew the mayor and other responsible citizens, he did not go to them for protection. He said he was doing so, but as he neared the depot, he saw it was crowded with returned soldiers, so he took to his heels and ran.

Some trip he had made, 15 miles across the roughest kind of bush, and across three rivers. At the first river he came to the returned soldiers were very close behind him, so he stripped off his clothes and swam for it. Having crossed he kept on going. He first appeared in this Adamic simplicity of costume to a farmer's wife, whom he scared into fits. She gave him, however, an old pair of overalls and a chunk of bread. He was in dire need of both, especially the overalls. This, of course, I discovered afterwards. The wanderings of this Ukrainian Odysseus ceased at Mike's farm where he now was.

Mike and I went outside, and walked over towards his brother, who was bringing in the horses.

"Mike," I said, "The man is bugs."

"I think so, spells, yet sometimes he might be putting it on," he said.

"This is no case for us," I went on.

"We cannot take the responsibility. We must hand him over to King George."

"What do you mean, King George?"

I would not want to see him go to prison," he said.

"He won't go to prison," I said. "Don't you know that that is what we first

Continued on Page 23



Being buried is expensive business in China. Photo shows a Chinese funeral in the of the big cities of China. Huge figures all dolled up in fancy Oriental regalia head the cortege.