

## Young Folks' Department.

## AN ADVENTURE IN CENTRAL ASIA.

BY DAVID KER.

There are many deserts in Tartary, but none more grim and dreary than the great waste of "Kara Koum" (Black Sand), which stretches across the whole northwest of Central Asia. Day after day you go wearily on over the endless level, with your head aching and your skin dry and feverish, seeing nothing but the burning sky above and the burning sand below, where the only thing to show that you have not wandered from the right track is a stray mound of earth here and there, out of which peer the whitened bones of horses and camels, and sometimes even of men, who have died here before you.

But if you do happen to meet a man, you must be on your guard, for in these wild regions the old joke about "catching a Tartar" often comes true in grim earnest. When one of these flat-faced, bullet-headed fellows comes trotting up to you on his wiry little horse, looking cunning at you from under the high cap of black sheep-skin that is slouched over his small, narrow, rat-like eyes, you had better keep your hand on your revolver and your eye upon him until he has answered your challenge of, "Aman ust?" (is it peace?) with, "Insh Allah, aman ust" (please God it is peace).

Why this pleasant place should be called "Black Sand" it is hard to say, for both it and its two great brothers, the "Ak Koum" (White Sand), to the east, and the "Kis'i Koum" (Red Sand), to the south, are all of one color, and that color a pale yellow. But it can look "black" enough sometimes in another way, as I know to my cost. In the driest and loneliest part of it, just as the water is beginning to run low in your skin bag, you come upon a deep, winding furrow in the parched earth, which was a rushing river ages ago, and you think of the cool, clear water that the thirsty sands have drunk up, until you yourself grow thirstier and more dismal than ever.

We were just midway across the desert, and the red sun was sinking over the great waste of lifeless sand, when there suddenly arose between us and it what seemed at first sight like a cloud of withered leaves. But a second glance showed it to be a host of wide-winged living things, moving swiftly and unswerving, in ranked order, like an army arrayed for battle. But for their amazing numbers one might have taken them for an ordinary flight of grasshoppers; but I had seen such a sight too often not to recognize the destroying march of the locust.

Onward they went to lay waste the rich lands of the south, their vast shadow darkening half the sky, and the whir of their countless wings sounding amid the ghastly silence like the hissing and grinding of some mighty engine. Although thousands passed every moment, it was fully fifteen minutes before the last of the host had gone by.

Then my Tartar servant pointed his brown, bony hand after the shadowy mass, and said, solemnly, "Master we shall have a storm."

"Why do you think so?" asked I, somewhat surprised, for the sky was clear and cloudless as ever.

"The locusts have gone by in their armies, even such as those that the Prophet Amram Ben Amram" (Moses the son of Amram) "brought up against Egypt; and where they come, the blast of the desert is never far behind. Destruction always follows the destroyer."

The terrible emphasis of the man's tone and manner showed that he was thorough in earnest; and if he spoke truly, the thought of encountering a desert whirlwind in this perilous spot, where there was enough loose sand to bury a whole army, was anything but pleasant. But what could we do? To go back was as dangerous as to go forward, and to stand still was worse than either; so on we went.

Two hours passed, however, without any sign of danger, and I was just beginning to hope that the Tartar might have been mistaken after all, when the camels, which were harnessed three abreast to my light covered wagon, suddenly stopped short, and began to snuff the air uneasily.

I saw a look of anxiety cloud the Tartar's stern face, instantly reflecting upon that of our Kirghiz driver, whose sharp white teeth, hooked nose, and great black hollow eyes

looked quite unearthly in the fitful moonlight.

The camels snuffed again, more quickly and restlessly than before, and then crouched down side by side, with their long necks laid flat on the ground.

"Tebbad!" (sand-storm) shouted the Kirghiz, throwing himself down behind them, and muffling his head in his sheep-skin cloak.

The words were hardly spoken, when a gray dimness rushed down suddenly over the whole sky, and my Tartar and I had barely time to fling ourselves down into bottom of the wagon, when there came a rush and a roar, and all around was one whirl of flying sand and charging storm, which, closely as our shawls were pulled over our faces, seemed to deafen, blind, and strangle us all in one moment.

It seemed many hours to us (though in reality it was less than one) while we lay there, half stifled, but not daring to put forth our heads, listening to the howl of the storm and the sharp "purr, purr" of the whirling sand against the sides of our rocking wagon. But at last the hideous uproar died away, and we ventured to peep forth.

A strange sight awaited us. Far as the eye could reach, the smooth sand was billowed like the waves of a stormy sea. Our wagon looked as if steeped in lime, and the lower half of it was hidden altogether. Of the camels nothing could be seen but their humps; and as the Kirghiz started up, throwing off a whirlwind of dust on every side, he seemed to have risen bodily through the earth.

We ourselves had fared little better. In spite of all my wrappings, my skin was as gritty as a match box from head to foot, and the Tartar's sallow visage looked like a half-washed potato. The warm genial air had suddenly become chilly as a grave, for the Siberian hurricanes had brought with it cold memories of frozen seas, and leagues of snowy moorland, and half seen icebergs drifting wearily through the polar night; and the pale grayish-yellow sand of the Kara Koum, which by its very nature cannot absorb heat, is one of the coldest surfaces in the world.

How we escaped being buried alive outright I was at first quite at a loss to imagine, but the explanation was simple enough. Most fortunately for ourselves, we had halted on the brow of a ridge where the sand lay thin and light, and where the sweep of the wind was too furious to let the drifts gather thickly round us. Had we met the storm in the hollows below, we should all have been dead men, and I still count that night's work one of the narrowest of my many escapes from death.

## SCIENCE NOTES.

Light haired people, it is said, have about one-third more hairs on the head, and are less liable to become bald, than those with dark hair.

A mine of mercury—consisting of the sulphuret and chloride, with drops of metallic mercury, in a gangue of quartz—which appears to have been worked in ancient times has been re-discovered at Schupplastana, near Belgrade in Servia.

The continual advances in the science of organic chemistry is marked by the successful attacks which chemists are making on alkaloid plant principles. A. Ladenburg has succeeded in preparing artificially a substance extracted from pepper, known as piperidine. The artificial substance and the real are indistinguishable, being chemically identical.

M. Pages, in the course of his experiments in photographing the movements of horses, has been struck by the observation that the foot of the animal, being half the time at rest on the ground, must during the other half of the time be in much more rapid motion than the animal itself. He estimates that in the gallop the foot reaches a velocity of 60 metres or about 200 feet a second.

It is generally conceded that Russia possesses more precious stones than any other nation, a majority of which were procured at the expense of blood. The jewels in the cathedral at Moscow are valued at twelve millions of dollars. The throne of Russia is completely covered with plates of gold, and contains fifteen hundred rubies and eight thousand turquoise, besides many other rare and costly gems. The throne of the Omar, known as the diamond throne, is truly a marvel.

## PERSONAL.

Mr. J. H. Parnell, brother of the Irish leader, has lately planted 500 acres more in rebores on his Georgia farm, making a total of 1,800 acres in that fruit.

The Dean of Winchester is about to restore the marble covered sarcophagus of William Rufus to its ancient place before the high altar in the Cathedral.

Mr. A. Cusson, a wholesale merchant of Montreal, has caused the arrest of ten young men for forgery in issuing bogus notes of invitation to a party at his house.

Mr. Albert Milland, a well-known French journalist and composer, is soon to become the husband of Madame Judic. It is generally known that Madame Judic is a widow.

M. DeLessaps declares confidently that the Panama Canal will be completed within the next three years. Few persons share his confidence, although his words have the weight of authority.

At a garden party which is to be given at Dublin in May by the Earl and the Countess of Aberdeen the ladies invited will appear in male's fancy dresses, and the gentlemen in Irish tweed suits.

Mrs. Garfield has offered her Cleveland house for rent, and will hereafter live at Mentor, the former Garfield homestead, where some \$40,000 has been expended in beautifying the house and grounds.

The death is recorded of Captain James Maurice Shipton, R. N., who served under Nelson, Duncan, Cornwallis, Napier and Sydney Smith. He received the medal for the taking of Fort Trinite at Martinique.

There will be an important sale of pictures at London in June and July. These pictures, numbering more than four hundred most of them fine examples, are now in the collection of the Duke of Marlborough. Teniers is particularly conspicuous in this collection. Perhaps no single canvas in it has greater value than Carlo Dolci's "Mater Dolorosa."

It turns out that Mr. Edgar Fawcett is the author of the anonymous story published in Philadelphia some time ago under the title of "The Bunting Bell." The publishers offered a prize of \$1,000 to anybody guessing the author. So many people suspected Fawcett, owing to the turgid style, that the purse has been divided up and the guessers will only realize 12½ cents apiece.

Bella Lockwood, of course, has taken a hand in the low-neck discussion, and seeks to create additional bustle by adding the trained skirt to the tabooed articles. She has written a letter to Miss Cleveland, in which she declares that "while the trained skirt is untidy, extravagant and in crowded assemblies positively vulgar, it is also undoubtedly in its origin a badge of servility."

With Sir Henry Taylor, who died in England March 23, in his eighty-seventh year, a living epitome of the nineteenth century has passed away. He had seen the reigns of the Third and Fourth Georges and William IV., as well as the whole of Victoria's; also the rise and fall of the first Napoleon, his Bourbon successors, and the Third Empire; Scott, Byron, and Shelley, Lamb, Coleridge, and the Lake Poets, together with Dickens and Thackeray, Irving and Prescott, were of his era; he was a well-grown lad at the time of our almost forgotten war of 1812, and had witnessed a complete reconstruction of the political map of Europe.

Almost every visitor in Paris who has ridden out toward the Bois has seen the old man in the little carriage drawn by sheep pottering along in the avenue du Bois de Boulogne. These sheep are two fine fat South Downs, but the occupant is a cripple named Dr. De Roroy. He has been by turns a soldier, a traveller, a politician, a journalist and a man of letters. A nephew of the Abbe Lamennais, he was for a while private secretary of Lamartine, also an intimate friend of the Marquis of Haris, at whose place in the Bois he frequently met Prince Napoleon. During the war he volunteered to carry important despatches out of Paris for the government of the Defense Nationale. He started alone in a balloon, which was caught in a hurricane, carried into Switzerland, and came down in the midst of the Mer de Glace glacier, where his legs were so frost bitten that they had to be amputated. Besides his legs, he lost his fortune by the war.

## MIRTH.

Pompous physician to patient's Wife: "Why, did you delay sending for me until he was out of his mind?" Wife: "Oh doctor, while he was in his right mind he wouldn't let me send for you."

"There's my hand," he exclaimed in a moment of courage and candour, "and my heart is in it!" She glanced at the empty palm extended towards her, and wickedly replied, "Just as I supposed—you have no heart."

Cornus Bookworthy, Sr., (to Mr. Ruaker De Vere, art critic).—"Now that's what I call a fine picture; shows remarkable talent. My daughter painted that, sir, and I would not take \$200 for it. Why, the paint on it cost \$150."

An aged Christian woman was asked, "Are you never troubled by the devil, that you are always so cheerful?" "Oh, yes, he often comes to the door, but I never bid him come in, or give him a stool to sit on."

"Oh," exclaimed Miss Dabell, what a clever man that Mr. Fogg is. He is really quite a physiognomist. I was telling him last evening that I had become quite proficient in painting, and he said: "I am sure of it, madame; your face shows it." Chorus of familiars "Indeed!"

The ladies were talking about their old silver and the newer designs, when Mrs. Oldblossom said: "I use nothing upon my table but hammered ware." And just then, as a crash of resounding china came from the kitchen, she added, "And there's the artist hammering some of it."

"Ephrum, what makes so many cat tails grow in dis heah pon'?" "Well, dey grows up from kittens dat people has drowned in de pon', of course. Pss like you wimmon folk dean know nuffin 'bout agriculturalah."

"Uncle James," said a Toronto young lady who was spending a few days in the country, "is that chicken by the gate a Brahmin?" "No," replied Uncle James, "he's a Leghorn." "Why to be sure," said the young lady. "How stupid of me! I can see the horns on his ankles."

"Gentlemen of the jury," said an Irish lawyer, "it will be for you to say whether the defendant shall be allowed to come into court with unblushing footstep, with a cloak of hypocrisy in his mouth, and draw three bullocks out of my client's pocket with impunity."

A couple of young men went out fishing the other day, and, on returning, were going past a farmhouse and felt hungry. They shouted to the farmer's daughters, "Girls, have you any buttermilk?" The reply was gently waited back to their ears, "Yes, but we keep it for our own calves."

Architect to Mr. de Newvo Ritch, who is considering the front elevation of a projected residence: "If you do not like those towers, Mr. Ritch, we can have them eliminated." Mr. de Newvo Ritch: "They're real han'some as they be; but, if 'eliminated' on 'em would make 'em han'somer, let's have 'em 'eliminated'."

A Parisian who had been dining not wisely but too well went to a reception at a friend's house. He displayed an oppressive amount of gallantry. "What expressive eyes he has!" said a lady to the mistress of the house. "Yes," replied the hostess—"one of them expresses too much burgundy and the other too much champagne."

There was quite a row at a recent meeting in a Richmond chapel vestry between Uncle Mose and Deacon Gabe Snodgrass. "You is the biggest black rascal in Austin," said Deacon Snodgrass. "You is a heap bigger one," returned Mose, placing his hand on the ivory handle of his umbrella. "Bredderen," interposed Larson Blodsoe, "you talks as if dar was nobody else present 'ceptin' yerself."

A popular dancing master in the Isle of Wight, who had taught the young Tennyson, was one day crossing to the mainland in the same steamer with their mother. After a little talk, during which the professor of the "light fantastic" referred in somewhat dismal tones to the cocoons of her husband's poems, this true artist shook his head for a space, and at last gave utterance to his sad thought. "Ah, madam," exclaimed he to the much wondering Mrs. Tennyson, "he may be a very fine poet, but I grieve to say that anyone with an eye can see that his deportment was shamefully neglected in his youth!"