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Peking under the allies

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^a 17th Bengal Lancers, late A.D.C. to General Sir A. Gaselee, G.C.I.E., K.C.B.

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The details of such a regional survey and its elaboration in and by a museum-collection will involve the prolonged inquiry and consideration of the society, and are not likely to be settled speedily; while beyond these again arises the further question—that of how far, as in Perth, small type collections are necessary to illustrate nature and life outside our immediate region, our little world. Here once more our local studies, our small regional treasures and interests, lead us up to the largest problems of culture, to the interpretation of the world.

The planning and experimental realisation of such a combination of regional and general outlooks has long seemed to me the very problem of problems; for in this the work of a naturalists' society meets and combines with that of a geographical one, and this whether we look first to the scientific completeness of our survey of the world, or to educational and practical usefulness in it. Enough, however, at present merely to indicate this as an approaching problem: its urgency will appear in due time. A society like the present, with its membership including alike the child-naturalist and his teachers, the workman and his industrial chief, the ordinary citizen and his leader in church and in state, cannot fail to reach it; sooner indeed than can the scientific societies of more specialised task and membership. For by the very multiplicity of our interests, the comprehensiveness of our work, we must look at nature and life together.

PEKING UNDER THE ALLIES.

By Captain RICHARD STEEL, 17th Bengal Lancers, late A.D.C. to
General Sir A. Gaselee, G.C.I.E., K.C.B.

THE year 1900 was so full of rapidly succeeding sensations, and, moreover, the attention of Englishmen was so centred in the struggle in South Africa, that what is without doubt the most stirring of modern events, has excited but a passing interest. A few illustrations in the *Graphic*, a series of able articles in the *Times*, a book or two hastily compiled to catch the public interest before it waned, serve to record the unveiling of the most sacred mysteries of the most exclusive and conservative empire of the world.

A tragic comedy. Such a motley crowd of players—Cossack and Sikh, Mandarin and Zouave. Scene—the Forbidden City.

Could any bill be more attractive? It is indeed difficult to do justice to the play as I saw it, to give even a small idea of the surpassing interest of its scenes.

Every one is more or less familiar with the dramatic story of the siege and the relief of the Legations; it is with the conditions of our life in the capital of China during its occupation by the West that I propose to deal in this paper.

Each day in August 1900 brought increasing order out of the chaos which followed the flight of the Chinese Court, troops—British, Ameri-

can, German, Russian, French, and Japanese—poured into Peking, and it soon became evident that an allied occupation of the city and its surroundings during the winter was imperative. With the advent of such a force, conditions of life in Peking became suddenly revolutionised. The city, according to agreement among the allied commanders, was divided into sections, each section ruled by its Power with that Power's own peculiar idiosyncrasies. Thus a walk in one quarter would recall the paternal care displayed for the citizen in Frankfort, while another, in its

Outside the Emperor's Quarters.

cheery disregard for sanitary questions, would call up as vividly the joys of a spring in Florence. Later on, a central committee, composed of representatives from each contingent, under the presidency of General von Gayl, the German second in command, and financed by Li Hung Chang, controlled the police, lighting, and sanitary arrangements of the city. Peking and its neighbourhood, under this administration, enjoyed such a measure of security to life and property as they had never before experienced. Soon it became possible to visit every corner of the vast capital, and, with the establishment of regular routine, officers and others found time to explore thoroughly the many places of interest which up

to that time had remained closed to the hated foreigner. The "Forbidden City" was naturally the chief attraction. Its pink walls had been kept inviolate, posts furnished by the Americans and Japanese guarding its four entrance gates.

On certain days in the week there assembled at the southern entrance a cosmopolitan crowd of officers of all nations, armed with "tickets to view," granted by their respective commanders. An American sergeant with a couple of privates, a pair of Chinese officials with that bored air which stamps the professional guide, accompanied the party.

The Outer Throne Room or Audience Hall.

A visit to the Forbidden City was like undoing an interesting parcel. First the brown paper—an outer court, next an inner wrapping—another and a finer court, a few folds of tissue paper and cotton wool—the outer halls of audience and pavilions. At last—the entrance to the "Son of Heaven's" quarters. What an air of desolate grandeur hung over all!

Weeds and even bushes forcing apart the carved marble balustrades of the terraces which rise tier after tier to support the various pavilions and halls. Dust an inch thick on the Peacock Throne, pigeons innumerable cooing under the carved, gilt cornices, fitting here and there in the sombre halls, perched on the wonderful gilt wood-carving which is

lavished everywhere. The Emperor's bedroom is a dark and gloomy chamber, his bed a queer recess covered with a blue satin coverlet. Quaint doors, in unexpected corners, carved screens, priceless gems of Chinese art, contrast strangely with shoddy importations from the West. Clocks everywhere, a piano, a complicated harmonium, even a gramophone lurk in dark corners. A clockwork toy jostles a solid gold elephant a foot high, sparkling with gems, the masterpiece of some Canton jeweller. Scrolls of exquisite design, many of which are reputed to be the work of the Emperor himself, hang, covered with wise saws of

The Summer Palace.

old-time philosophers, on every wall. The Empress-Dowager's apartments adjoin those of the Emperor, and are lighter, airier, and open on to beautiful flagged courtyards. The women's quarters were sacred from the curious eye of the sightseer, and so, with a visit to a dark and gloomy temple shrouded in fir-trees, the tour of the palace ended at the north gate.

The Summer Palace, which lies some seven miles north of Peking, and is connected with the city by a road paved with huge blocks of granite, became quite a holiday resort for those wearied with the gayness of the metropolis.

The Russians were the first to occupy the palace, and are credited

with having removed the wonderful works of art with which it was filled. Certain it is that upon the arrival of their successors, the British and Italians, very little that was movable remained in the hundreds of rooms scattered on the borders of the lake. The severity of the winter was greatly mitigated by the splendid sunshine of each day. Though the thermometer would register a few degrees below zero in the shade, and the ice lay a foot thick over the lake, a stay at the Summer Palace in January was delightful. Officers of all nationalities rode out for the

The Emperor of China's Throne.

day to enjoy the hospitality of the British and Italian detachments, and join them in duck-shooting or skating on the perfect ice of the lake.

The Emperor's steam yacht lying frozen in, and stripped by the Chinese of all movable mechanism, formed an incongruous foreground to the picturesque summer-houses and high-arched marble bridges which border the water.

The marble barge, an absurd caricature of a penny steamboat, made a capital lunching-place, and the incongruity of it all was considerably heightened by the tinkling mandoline of some Italian soldiers barracked near.

During the long winter international courtesies were many, and disagreeable incidents few and unimportant, a striking indication that the old order is giving place to new as far as the relations of the Powers is concerned. A spice of excitement would be added now and again by the formation of small punitive expeditions, which, from time to time, became necessary to deal with bands of ex-Imperial soldiers and reputed Boxers which infested the neighbourhood.

The advent of Prince Ching and Li Hung Chang excited many rumours as to the possible return of the Court. Luckily, these astute

Li Hung Chang visiting Sir A. Gaselee and General Barrow.

statesmen failed in their endeavours to promote the same discord among the allied commanders that they succeeded in sowing in the diplomatic body.

With the reconstruction of the Peking-Tientsin railway line, and the opening of sea communication by the melting of the ice on the coast-line, a crowd of traffic poured into the capital. The troops were gradually withdrawn, and the city handed back to the Chinese authorities, and one of the most interesting occupations in the history of the world came to an end.

Amongst other photographs which I was fortunate enough to secure

is one which I expect will be of great interest to readers of this journal—a unique group for which the late Li Hung Chang, Sir Alfred Gaselee, and General Barrow, our Chief of the Staff, were good enough to give me an opportunity.

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

AFRICA.

French Expedition to Central Africa.—At the beginning of February news was received of the death of the Vicomte du Bourg de Boyas, the leader of an expedition across Africa from east to west. The death of the explorer was apparently due to fever, and occurred in the Gold Coast Colony when he was on his way home. Previously nothing had been heard of the expedition since the middle of last September, when news came of its safe arrival at Nimule, a British post in the Uganda Protectorate. During the greater part of 1901, the expedition was conducting investigations in Southern Abyssinia. Thence the party journeyed to the north end of Lake Rudolf, and from this district by a new route to the Nile. The equipment of the expedition was exceedingly complete, and it is anticipated that the results will be proportionately rich; a circumstance which makes the death of the leader all the more tragic, especially occurring at the moment it did.

AUSTRALASIA.

Tidal Wave in the Pacific.—On January 13 a terrible hurricane broke over the Society Islands and the Tecunotú group, and was accompanied by a tidal wave which entirely devastated the islands, and destroyed great numbers of people. The islands rise scarcely twenty feet above sea-level, and it is stated that the wall of water which swept their surface reached a height of forty feet. Those of the inhabitants who escaped with their lives did so by climbing to the tops of the highest trees, but many of these were overturned by the water. It is estimated that thousands of natives lost their lives.

Recent Dust-Storms in Australia.—Two correspondents in *Nature* for January 1st draw attention to recent dust-storms in New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania. In the two former places heavy dust fell, evidently brought from the west. Further, persons who had crossed Sydney Harbour reported that the wavelets between the steamer and the sun showed streaks of brilliant metallic blue colour. The water, where undisturbed, was covered by a slight scum, which might be either settled dust or a layer of mineral oil, but appeared more like the former. The colour had not the iridescent appearance caused by oil, as it was a uniform pale blue and only showed on the back of the wavelets.

The phenomenon was perhaps an exaggerated example of the blue colour of water caused by finely divided mineral matter seen in glacier waters and those of the hot lakes of New Zealand, where the water has silica in suspension.

At the same time in Tasmania heavy rain fell, charged with brown, earthy matter, which had evidently come, in the form of fine dust, from the interior of Australia, and had been whirled along in the upper regions of the atmosphere.

Fire-Walking in Fiji.—An interesting account is given in *Nature* of a fire-walking ceremony on the island of M'Benga, near Suva, by members of the Nga