

BELEAGUERED IN PEKING

THE BOXER'S WAR
AGAINST THE FOREIGNER

by

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With a New Foreword by Gareth Powell

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Chapter I

RIOT AT MARCO POLO BRIDGE—MEN WOUNDED BY CAPTAIN NOR-REGAARD—DR. COLTMAN ACCOMPANIES GOVERNOR HU AS SPECIAL COMMISSIONER TO INVESTIGATE—ANTI-FOREIGN FEELING EXPRESSED BY GENERALS OF TUNG FU'S ARMY—A BARGAIN WITH PRINCE TUAN.



The author in Chinese dress.

IN the autumn of 1898 in the month of October, very shortly after the famous *coup d'état* of the Empress Dowager of China, an event occurred which may have been the influence that shaped after-events, or it may be that this occurrence was but the premature explosion of a mine being prepared by the Empress and her evil advisers, intended to shake the civilized world at a later date. I refer to the riot at Lukouch'iao, known to the English-speaking world as Marco Polo bridge, from its having been accurately described by that early traveler.

This place had curiously enough been chosen as the northern terminus of the Hangkow-Peking railway, although ten miles west of Peking, and the road consequently is generally known as the Lu Han railway.

The political history of the struggle between the Russian, French and British diplomats in Peking, with reference to obtaining the concession for, and the financing of, this road, is very interesting, and would fill a book of its own; but there is no reason why it should enter into this narrative more than to state that finally the Belgians, acting for Russia and France, obtained the concession to build and finance this greatest trunk line of China.

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To connect this line with the existing Peking-Tientsin railway, a short track was laid from Fengtai, the second station south of Peking, to Lukouch'iao, and a fine iron bridge built over the Hum Ho or Muddy river, a few hundred yards west of the original stone Marco Polo bridge. This short connecting line is but three miles in length, and is the property of the Peking-Tientsin railway.

With this prelude, allow me to proceed with the event with which I was somewhat closely identified, and am able to speak of with knowledge and accuracy.

On October 23 I was called to Fengtai to amputate the leg of a poor coolie, who had been run over by the express train from Tientsin; and after the operation partook of tiffin at the residence of A. G. Cox, resident engineer of the Peking section of the Peking-Tientsin railway. His other guests were Major Radcliffe, of



MARBLE BRIDGE LEADING TO "FORBIDDEN CITY"

A beautiful bridge, which would be a credit to any city, Marco Polo, the great traveler, nearly a thousand years ago described a similar bridge, thus showing how old Chinese civilization is compared with our own.

the Indian army service, on what is known as language-leave in China, and C. W. Campbell, official interpreter of the British legation.

During the meal the newly completed iron bridge was spoken of by Mr. Cox, and we were all invited to accompany him after tiffin on a trolley to inspect the bridge. This I was unable to do, as a professional engagement in Peking in the afternoon at four o'clock prevented.

The next morning I received the following telegram, which should have been delivered the night before; but owing to the closing of the city gates no attempt was made to deliver it:

"Coltman, Peking:—Come to Fengtai at once. Cox and Norregard both seriously wounded in riot at Lukouch'iao.

"KNOWLES."

I immediately rode in my cart to Machiapu, the Peking terminus of the Peking-Tientsin railway, and wired down to Fengtai for an engine to come and take me down.

In an hour's time I reached Fengtai, and went at once to the residence of Mr. Cox, to find both himself and Captain Norregard, the resident engineer and builder of the bridge at Lukouch'iao, with bandages about their heads, and a general appearance of having been roughly used. Their story of the riot was told me while I removed the dressings, applied by my assistant, a native medical student of the railway hospital at Fengtai, the day before.

Mr. Cox stated that he and his two guests had gone shortly after tiffin on a trolley to Captain Norregard's residence, near the bridge, and having added Norregard to their party, proceeded on foot to the bridge. Near the eastern entrance stood a party of Kansu soldiers, numbering fifty or more, who, upon the approach of the foreigners, saluted them with offensive epithets, in which the well-known "yang kwei tzu" or "foreign devil" was frequently repeated.

Mr. Campbell, who spoke Chinese fluently, remonstrated with the men, and endeavored to have them stand aside and allow the party to cross the bridge; but they obstinately barred the entrance, and warned the foreigners back.

At this juncture a military official of low rank appeared on the track, and Campbell appealed to him to quiet the men, and to allow them to inspect the bridge. This officer replied that the men were not of his company and he had no power over them; but Campbell, knowing well the Chinese nature, at once told him that they should consider him responsible for any trouble, whether he was their particular officer or not.

Upon this the officer ordered the men to open a passage for the foreigners, which they promptly did, and the party of four crossed the bridge. The officer, after they had entered the bridge, left the men and disappeared. They remained a quarter of an hour on the farther side of the bridge and then returned.

As they again neared the eastern side, they saw the same gang of ruffians awaiting them, with stones in their hands, and, upon their arriving within range, were saluted with a volley of stones, many of which took effect. They valiantly charged upon the men, and Cox, being rather severely hit, and spying out the man who had struck him, chased him right into the crowd and knocked him down with a terrific blow. As Cox stands six feet four, and is a remarkably muscular man, this fellow's punishment was severe.

The mob, however, turned upon Cox, who was separated from his companions some thirty odd feet, and, surrounding him, bore him by sheer weight and number to the ground, not, however, before he had placed several of them *hors du combat*.

At this moment Captain Norregard received a severe stone cut just above his eyes, which severed a small artery and covered his face with blood. Not knowing how dangerously he was wounded, and believing Mr. Cox to be in danger of his life, Norregard drew his revolver and fired two shots into the mob. The effect was instantaneous. The brutal cowards dropped Cox at

once, and ran away like sheep toward their encampment, half a mile distant.

After tying a handkerchief around his head, and assisting Cox to get up, the party hastily ran to the residence of Norregaard and brought Mrs. Norregaard and her eight-year-old son to the trolley, upon which the whole party returned to Fengtai.

Cox then sent a command out by wire for all the engineers working on the Lu Han railway to give up their posts and retire with him to Tientsin to await the settlement of the riot by the Chinese officials, as well as to obtain some guaranty of future good conduct on the part of the government troops, who were yet to arrive from the southwest.

After dressing the wounds of these two gentlemen they took the train for Tientsin, and the writer returned to Peking.

The next day, or two days after the riot, I received a message from Hu Chih-fen, the governor of Peking, requesting me to call upon him at Imbeck's hotel at once. I found the old gentleman with twenty retainers awaiting me. He stated that he had been appointed a special commissioner by the Empress Dowager to proceed to Lukouch'iao and investigate the circumstances connected with the riot two days previously, as well as to inquire minutely into the condition of two wounded soldiers reported by their officers to have been wantonly shot and dangerously hurt by Captain Norregaard. He desired me to accompany him into the camp, and examine the wounds as an expert, so that he could make a proper report to the Empress.

I confess I did not much care to go alone into the camp of the famous Kansu, haters of foreign, but I was under many obligations to Governor Hu, and wanted to oblige him. Besides, there was a spice of adventure about the undertaking that was pleasant to a correspondent. I preferred to go armed, however, as, although knowing a revolver would be of no use in a hostile camp for offensive warfare, yet if Governor Hu remained with me, I reasoned, I could by placing a revolver to his head and holding him hostage prevent any harm to myself—believing as I did that

the Empress' special commissioner's person would be sacred in the eyes of her generals. The sequel proved how false this belief was, and that before many hours.

So I requested permission to return home for a moment to obtain a small instrument I might need, as well as to inform my wife of my leaving the city, that she might not be anxious if I did not return until after dark.

Governor Hu replied that I could get whatever instrument I needed at the railway hospital at Fengtai, and that he would send one of his retainers with a message to my wife. I insisted, however, that a return home was imperative, and that I would rejoin him in half an hour. Whereupon he decided to order tiffin in the meantime, and told me to hurry back, take tiffin with him at the hotel, and we would then proceed to Machiapu, where a special train would be waiting for us.

I hastened home, obtained my Smith & Wesson six-shooter, and, after a good tiffin with Governor Hu, rode in a springless cart to Machiapu, entrained, and was speedily at the station at Lukouch'iao.

Upon our alighting from the cars we were met by a sub-official from the camps, and were accompanied by him, and about twenty Kansu soldiers, to the entrance to the railroad bridge, the site of the riot two days before.

Here Hu ordered the bridge watchmen to be brought before him, and he interrogated them as to the occurrences described by Cox and Norregaard. The two watchmen's stories were the exact counterpart of the two foreigners; they agreed in every particular, and placed the whole blame on the Kansu soldiers.

I was surprised at the fearless testimony of these two poor watchmen, one of whom was afterward murdered by the soldiers for testifying against them.

Hu now walked to an inn in the village of Lukou, and told the sub-official to order the general and colonels of all the regiments quartered near-by to appear before him at once, as he would hold an investigation by order of the Empress. He and I drank

tea until they arrived.

The first, a General Chang, appeared in about fifteen minutes. We knew some one of importance was coming by the hubbub in the courtyard, the murmur of voices, and the sound of horses' moving feet. Then a soldier appeared in the doorway, and announced:

"General Chang, of the Kansu cavalry, has arrived."

"Ch'ing," replied Hu, and immediately there stood before us as ferocious looking a ruffian as the world could well produce. A tall, weather-beaten man, fifty years of age or more, with rather heavy (for a Chinaman) yet black mustaches, and a more than ordinarily prominent nose; dressed in a dark blue gown, satin high-top boots, official hat with premier button and peacock feather, held at right angles from the rear of his button by an expensive piece of jade. His eyes were deep-set and small, and the whole expression of his face was ferocious and cruel.

He only slightly inclined his head to Hu, took no notice of me, and, ignoring Chinese ceremony, proceeded at once to the highest seat in the little room, and seated himself in the intensely stiff attitude of the god of war one usually sees in a Chinese temple. Hu seemed completely taken aback at this insolence, and allowed the ruffian to remain in the seat of honor throughout the interview.

Before Hu had become acquainted, by his polite questions, with the age, rank, and province of his haughty guest, four other military officers of the rank of colonel and lieutenant-colonel had arrived, namely, Chao, Ma, Wang, and Hung.

Finding their general in the head seat, and noting his imperious bearing, they took their cue from him and maintained throughout the interview the most lofty manner, and treated Hu more like a subordinate than a civil officer of the premier rank and a special high commissioner of Her Majesty the Empress Dowager.

After a few mouthfuls of tea, Hu informed them in most polite and bland terms that as he was Director-General of imperial

railways, as well as Governor of the metropolitan prefecture of Shuntienfu, Her August Majesty, the Empress Dowager, etc., etc., had appointed him to visit the general and officers of the Kansu regiments in camp at this place, to inquire into the circumstances of the late riot.

He stated also that he came gladly because he felt that, by careful inquiry into the circumstances, it could doubtless be proved that the soldiers had acted in a rowdy manner without the knowledge and consent of their officers, and that by a well-worded report the latter would escape all blame, and the matter could be settled to the satisfaction of all, especially as no lives had been lost, or imperial property destroyed.

General Chang haughtily replied that it was entirely unnecessary for Hu to come out at all; that Prince Ching had sent a messenger to him in the morning, and the Empress was doubtless aware, through this messenger, of the exact circumstances of the case already, and consequently Hu might as well return and save himself any further trouble.

His impudent manner indicated that, having given his own side of the case to a trusty henchman of Prince Ching's, and obtained that influential prince's partial testimony in his favor, he did not care one way or the other for anything Hu might report later.

But Hu, although very quiet and apparently humble, was firm and determined, and upon the conclusion of Chang's defiant speech, replied:

"It is very well that Her Majesty should have as early a report as possible, and I am glad you have informed her of the events; but as I have been appointed to inquire officially, I should not return without having done my duty, and I hope that none of the officers present will refuse any testimony I require, and compel me to report a lack of respect for Her Majesty's commands."

Chang bit his lips and pulled his mustaches fiercely at this, but said nothing. But Colonel Chao took up the cudgels in a most unexpected manner. Excitedly rising, he commenced a most ven-