

principles, there is a demur to this, or the question is parried by a smile as a little joke. I am not sorry that she does not find anything "hideous enough" in my little stock of "comics." With the exception of "babies long and short," we see less and less every year of the frightful cartoons of personal defects and monstrosities.

Now comes Materfamilias to bargain for a dozen or two of "cheap pretty valentines." She hopes that she will be fairly dealt with, as she has so many children she doesn't know what to do about sending one to each; it is *quite* a consideration to invest in valentines for the family, but everybody's children send and receive valentines now-a-days, and *her* children must not be below *par*."

"Oh, dear! I wish this bevy of girls would be quick and choose their valentines," I murmur *sotto voce*, as sweet sixteen and sweeter seventeen upset my boxes. Girls just leaving school are the greatest buyers of valentines, sending them to their bosom friends, big brothers, country cousins, darling grandmas and grandpas, indiscriminately; while sweetest eighteen denies the necessity of propitiating every relation with a valentine; at the same time she may be detected stealthily posting a *recherché confection* to a certain "dear Will," or "sweet Harry."

Enough has been revealed of the tender sex; turn we to the contemplation of the sterner sex in love.

Do you see that modest, inoffensive young man peeping through the window? Presently watching a quiet opportunity, he sidles into the shop. I know that young man. For the last three or four seasons has he come hither for his valentine.

He looks around; refrains from touching any, lest you should suspect his design; quietly and simply asks for a penny railway guide, and then makes as though he were leaving the shop forthwith; but softly, softly—I have pity on that young man, and do not detain him with embarrassing questions; but placing a few valentines, which I flatter myself are just suited for his requirements, within his reach, I see him pause, glance, admire, then hear him say he "doesn't mind

taking one of them"—the prettiest too; and he allows it to be sealed, and addresses it himself, before ever he asks if it will cost him fivepence or five shillings.

Save me from the cool, calculating young fellow of pretension, who comes to look, and looks again and again; for he "likes this one well enough, if the words were but different;" and thinks the "words of that more suitable, but the design is execrable." Trying to please him by placing almost the whole of my stock before him, ten to one he will walk away "still longing, yet for ever unsatisfied."

Very different is the young man who follows him. Entering with manly tread, he declares at once that he "has come for a valentine," and "it must be a very nice one too;" and he smiles, and I smile, and we are quite chatty over it; and he says this is not amiss, and that is "very good," and will do first-rate, if it is not *too* high a figure; and fortunately it is not *too* high a figure; and he laughs outright as he flings down his sovereign, and I place it in his hand with an unuttered God-speed to his wooing.

Still another—a juvenile adorer is this. Young as he is, he belongs to the "Good Intent Society," if he will send to the girl of his heart a trifle that costs a month's pocket-money; he has seen it in the window, and no other will satisfy him; and, oh! the time he occupies in committing its verses to memory before finally sealing it for the post!

Last scene of all—an aged convert to St. Valentine, an old man of venerable aspect, who will by no means avow his intention to send a valentine, but "promenading" his eyes over the "spread," wonders "how in the world such perfection is attained;" mounts his spectacles, and picks up a dainty sachet; turns it over, and "perceives that it has a fine scent." It is not very difficult to win him over. You may see that he really means "business;" for as he reads a certain motto, a wizened smile flits across his wrinkled face; he plunges one hand into his pocket, with the other takes off his specs, and pointing to the valentine that so diverts him, he tells you to pack it up and let him go before he parts with his last shilling. SABINA.

HOW CAPTAIN BURNABY RODE TO KHIVA.



HE "strongest man in the British army" not long since returned from a visit to the furthest point in Central Asia to which Russian conquest has as yet rolled in its course towards India—beyond it, indeed, for Khiva, though reduced to vassalage and disarmed, is a nominally independent state. But the encroaching tide has sapped its foundations, and might swallow it up at any moment.

Several considerations combined to make this journey attractive to him: as a soldier, he wished to go over the ground of recent military operations; as a patriotic Englishman, who possessed the exceedingly rare accomplishment of speaking the Russian language fluently, he desired to satisfy himself of the

extent to which the recent Muscovite conquests threatened British interests; as a man of enterprise and an athlete, the dangers and difficulties of the trip had a rare fascination for him. But when, in addition to all these inducements, there came that of prohibition, the desire to make the journey became too imperative for resistance. When Captain Burnaby saw a paragraph in a newspaper to the effect that no foreigner was to be allowed to travel in Russian Asia, he naturally felt that the question was settled, and travel in Russian Asia he must. The exigencies of his profession added a fresh difficulty; a soldier is not his own master, and cannot absent himself without leave, which he must take when he can get it. Captain Burnaby was successful in obtaining four

months, but they were the worst in the year—namely, from the beginning of December to the end of March, a period when the steppes of Tartary, which he would have to traverse, are covered with snow, and the chronic state of the thermometer is almost Arctic. However, on the last day of November, 1875, he started from London for St. Petersburg, and pushed on from thence by rail, *viâ* Moscow, to Sizeran, where the Orenburg railway terminates at present; and here he found a fellow-passenger to join him in a troika, or three-horse sleigh, to Samara, a town on the Volga. So they put on all the clothing that they had provided, rather necessary with the thermometer at 20° below zero (Réaumur, of course), and a wind blowing, and started, their course during the latter part of the journey lying over the frozen surface of the river.

At Samara, Captain Burnaby lost his Russian travelling companion, and had to buy a sleigh for himself. About horses there was no difficulty, as there are posting stations all the way to Orenburg, where relays can be obtained for a fixed payment of four kopecks per horse for every verst. A verst is about three-quarters of a mile; 100 kopecks go to a ruble, the value of which is three shillings and twopence three-farthings.

Travellers across the Arabian deserts have, or used to have, a custom of making a very short journey the first day, so that if they found on encamping that any mistake had been made, it might be possible to return and rectify it. On a similar principle those who intend to visit the regions of extreme cold, ought to dress themselves up in all their Arctic clothing at home, to see that every article of their outfit is practically adapted to its purpose. Even so experienced a traveller as Captain Burnaby left certain items to the common-sense of his tradesmen, with the natural result. He carried a revolver, in case of an attack by wolves or predatory Turkomans, and for this pistol he ordered a belt. For sleeping on the steppes, in case he should have to pass a night in the open, without being frozen to death, he had a waterproof, air-tight sack made, with a slit in it by which he might creep in. But when he was clad in his thick trousers, long cloth boots, fur-lined shoes, wadded coat and waistcoat, and fur pelisse reaching to his heels, the belt would neither meet round his waist, nor the aperture in the tent-bag admit him: the last important fact being only discovered on the first occasion for its use, when the sleigh-driver lost his way, the vehicle was upset in a snow-drift, and the traveller and his servant had to spend the night in keeping each other from sleeping the sleep that would be death.

At length Orenburg was reached, a little Tartar servant engaged, and an order obtained on each posting-station as far as Kasala, or Fort Number One, for three horses and a driver, at the legal fare. Then, as many stores having been laid in as could be stowed away about the sledge, a fresh departure was taken in the third week of December. Orenburg is the last civilised place, and he was now fairly launched upon

the steppes; for the next hundred miles his course lay over an unbroken sheet of snow. Indeed, from here to Kasala the only dwelling-places were the posting-houses and military stations, or forts as they are called. On leaving one of these resting-places, after an unusual delay in obtaining fresh horses, the traveller forgot to put on his warm gloves, his hands being comfortably ensconced in the fur sleeves of his pelisse. The surface snow being smooth, he fell asleep, but was roused by sharp pains in his hands, which he then found had relaxed from their sheltered positions during his nap, and were lying exposed on the sides of the sleigh. The agony became intense, and crept up towards the body as the extremities grew numb. Rubbing with snow, which his Tartar servant tried vigorously, had no effect; and it was seven miles to the next station, which it seemed to the sufferer would never be reached. But they arrived at last, and found three Cossacks there who understood frost-bites, and while telling him that he would lose his hands, exerted themselves to the utmost to prevent that calamity. Plunging the arms into ice-and-water and rubbing had no effect, however, until a bottle of naphtha was brought from the sleigh, friction with which, hard enough to bring the skin away, at length restored pain to the arms and hands, which were finally saved. If the accident had happened a little later, it must have ended very calamitously, for shortly afterwards all the bottles were broken by the frost, and the strong spirit, which alone restored the circulation, would not have been forthcoming.

At one station there were no horses to be had, and camels were offered instead. One of these creatures would have more than sufficed to draw the little sleigh, but three horses were down on his order and three horses, or substitutes for them, he must have. It must have been like a team of Barclay's horses attached to a perambulator, and the effect was to drag the sleigh almost to pieces, so that he had soon to give it up for another and far less comfortable one.

But he was getting to the end of sleighing by then, for he soon reached the Sea of Aral and the military station of Kasala, and from thence he must take to the saddle.

The critical stage of the journey was now reached; the traveller was on the confines of that territory, so jealously guarded from the visits of foreigners, which it was his object to penetrate.

The Aral Sea, some 290 miles long and 130 broad, lies about 200 miles eastward of the Caspian, extending from N.N.E. to S.S.W. The Jaxartes (Syr Darya) falls into the Aral Sea at its north-eastern, the Oxus (Amou Darya) at its southern extremity. Along the Jaxartes the Russians have established a chain of posts to Tashkent, which place forms a basis of operations from which she secures her latest conquests, Samarcand and Kokan. The nearest of these posts to the mouth of the river is Kasala, or Fort Number One.

In summer-time the journey from the Jaxartes to the Oxus might be made easily and pleasantly enough by the sea; at present this route was precluded by

the ice, and it was necessary to cross the desert of Kizil Kum.

On the Russian bank of the Oxus stands Petro-Alexandrovsk, 371 miles from Kasala by the shortest route across the desert. On the other side of the river, not a long ride off, is the town of Khiva.

Now the orders were very strict that no Englishman was to be allowed to visit Khiva, or have any communication with its khan; but then, on the other hand, this traveller showed an order from General Milutin to all officers to assist him in going to all places *under their command*. But Khiva was not under Russian command. So they might meet the difficulty by aiding him to reach Petro-Alexandrovsk, and preventing his crossing the Oxus. Captain Burnaby perceived their drift, and studied how to outwit them. It was a friendly game of strategy.

In the meantime the desert had to be crossed, at any rate, and for this purpose he bought a horse, and hired three camels with their driver, who rode a donkey. Barley for the horses had to be taken, besides their own provisions, and a capital sort of tent called a kikitka, which required no centre-pole. The officer in command at Kasala had found him a guide, who rode his own horse, and on the 12th of January they started, in a frost so bitter that they had every now and then to clear the horses' nostrils of the icicles which impeded their breathing. The glare of the snow was so great that Captain Burnaby tried to wear his tinted spectacles, but the steel frame seared his flesh like hot iron. He also suffered a good deal from his sore arms, which still felt the effects of the frost-bite. But he escaped the loss of his heart, which was nearly captured by a lovely Tartar girl belonging to a family who owned some sheep, one of which he proposed to buy. But the glee and dexterity with which she acted the part of butcher, counteracted the effect of her pretty face. The mutton was a nice change from their ordinary diet, the most nutritious item of which was cabbage-soup with lumps of meat in it, which was carried in a frozen state in two stable-buckets. The Kirghis, or Tartars, are extremely fond of mutton, and the songs with which Nazar, the little servant, and the guide, who were both Tartars, beguiled the journey, all had reference to the merits of the sheep, dead and alive. Not that they are often guilty of the extravagance of killing a sheep for their own family consumption, but the animals die a natural death sometimes; or a stranger may enter the tent and demand that hospitality which the religion of Mahomet so strictly enjoins, and then there is a feast.

On arriving at a friendly kikitka one evening, Nazar confided to his master, with great delight, that a horse had died belonging to the establishment, and they were to feed high. To the inquiry whether there would be anything else for dinner, he replied that he thought not; the family was so small. A sheep, perhaps, might be short commons, but a horse had a good deal of meat on it. There might even be something left for breakfast.

But the question became more and more pressing,

how to elude the vigilance of the Russian authorities? To make any direct proposition to the guide to take him to Khiva, and not to Petro-Alexandrovsk, would have defeated its object by arousing the man's fears and putting him on his guard. Fortunately, however, the guide had a weakness, almost universal amongst Tartars and Yorkshiremen—the prospect of selling any one a horse made him blind to all other considerations. His family lived at Kalenderhana, where they had beautiful horses; he could have mounted the Englishman far better than they had done at Kasala; the animal he was riding was not up to his weight. Without seeming eager the traveller led the way to a proposition that he should go and look at these horses, and after a seeming hesitation consented to do so. Now Kalenderhana was out of their way to Petro-Alexandrovsk, but on the direct route to Khiva.

He saw the horses, and a bargain was almost struck, when he suddenly made it a *sine qua non* that half the price should be paid then, and half remitted *from Khiva*. Sooner than lose the joy of selling a screw for double its value, the guide determined to face the risk. And so Captain Burnaby managed to shirk the Russian town which would have proved a trap, and got to the place which he had set his heart on visiting, where the khan treated him with great friendliness, instead of putting his eyes out and throwing him into a dungeon, as the Russian authorities prophesied he would do.

And now, having got clear of Russian territory, the traveller entertained high hopes of carrying out his projected journey *in extenso*, by going on to Bokhara and Merve, and so through Afghanistan to India, leaving frost and snow behind him.

But alas! for the electric telegraph. Where can we go for a holiday now and escape from our business, our wives, our commanding officers? Captain Burnaby might well flatter himself that he was safe, seeing that the nearest telegraph station was at Tashkent, 900 miles off; but no—one of those fatal missives had been forwarded by courier, and proved to be an order from the Duke of Cambridge to return at once to European Russia.

There was nothing for it but to obey, retrace his steps, and endure the bitter cold again, which after enjoying the hospitality of the Russian officers at Petro-Alexandrovsk, and taking part in a curious sort of chase, he did. The sport alluded to was a mixture of hunting, coursing, and hawking. The animals hunted were hares, the pack was composed of greyhounds, and when they could not catch the hare a hawk was let fly, which swooped down on its head and bothered it so much that it got surrounded and taken.

We are sorry for the telegram that stopped Captain Burnaby in his course towards India, but at any rate he out-manceuvred the Russian authorities and got to Khiva; and has written that most amusing, interesting, and instructive book, "A Ride to Khiva;" and if his countrymen derive no benefit from it, it will not be *his* fault.

L. HOUGH.