

## Illustrated Interviews.

LXI.—MR. JOHN FOSTER FRASER. ROUND THE WORLD ON A BICYCLE.

By J. P. BLAIR.

[Illustrated by Photographs taken during the tour.]

**Y**ES, it is a tolerably long ride, twenty thousand miles on a bicycle, right across Europe and Asia, and then right across America, through seventeen countries in all, and taking over two years in the doing—yes, I suppose it is the longest ride on record, and one that will be rather hard to beat.”

So said Mr. Fraser to me as he lounged in a big saddlebag chair in the smoking-room of the Authors' Club, situated in that great block of buildings overlooking the Thames Embankment, and known as Whitehall Court. He was smoking cigarettes and sipping coffee, and had his legs perched up on another chair—a long, slim, brown-skinned, grey-eyed man, evidently fond of ease, and one who, at the first glance, you would never dream of having accomplished the wonderful feat of bicycling clear round the earth, undergoing fearful hardships and privations, fighting with Moslems in fanatical Persia, struggling through the fever-laden jungles of Burma, and plodding across the great unknown region of Central China. The drawn cheeks, haggard eyes, and straggling beard which

told the people of Shanghai what he had undergone during the five months' journey through the Celestial Empire are no more to be seen. He has slipped back quite readily into the ways of civilization, and can dawdle down Piccadilly attracting no attention.

“Oh,” he laughed, in reply to a question of mine, “I don't want to pose as being at all modest about the ride. But when I got

back to England, I really did not think there was much to be very cock-a-hoop over. Yet everybody keeps on saying it was marvellous and daring and brave, until, really, I am beginning to think that Lunn and Lowe and myself, the three who formed the expedition, must be rather extraordinary chaps after all. In another month I'll be saying myself it was a wonderful ride.”

“When did you first begin to have a rough time?” I asked.

“Well, we had nothing to complain of for a month—not until we got right across the Continent to Southern Russia. There there are no roads, you know, only rough cart-tracks running anyhow over the great sandy, heaving steppes. It was a dreary land, and it took us two months to get across. Many a day we were in soft sand, and we had to trudge hour after hour till we were weary. Only in the big towns were there hotels, and so we had to sleep in any foul, filthy hovels we came upon. Heavens, but the *muzjiks* are a dirty crowd! We rarely took off our clothes, but just lay down and stuck our hands in our pockets, and tiredness sent us to sleep. Remember, we

spoke no Russian, and the country people were very suspicious. At one place they decided we were spies, and there was a fine hullabaloo as we were marched off to the Chief of Police. Of course, our papers explained who we were, but the mob got fearfully angry and wanted to administer summary jurisdiction. We might have had a bad time of it if the Chief had not sent along a number of soldiers till we got clear of the town.



MR. FOSTER FRASER AS HE IS TO-DAY.  
From a Photo. by Gibson, Chicago.

"Another time a band of Cossacks swooped down upon us. Never, till my dying day, will I know what their object was, but they were terribly excited, and wanted to drag us off somewhere. We refused, and then there was terrible warfare. We whipped out our revolvers and we pinged away; then we closed up and throttled each other. That was a lively five minutes. Lunn managed to pull out his passport, and wave that in the face of the leader. Of course, he couldn't read it. But he saw it was an official document, and he was frightened. Hostilities ceased, and with mutual curses we went different ways."

"Did you encounter any of those sand-storms we read of, as sweeping with terrible violence across the Russian steppes?"

"Only one," said Mr. Fraser. "It was in the Kuban province. We saw it coming along like a great dun cloud. It seemed to pick up all the sand and small stones, and carry them along like chaff. Out of fun, we rode slap-bang into the storm.

But only for a minute; our faces were slashed with stones just as if somebody was pelting us with hard peas. Off we jumped. The gale was tremendous; we lay down and buried our faces, and, with hands partly over our ears, listened to the shriek of the tempest. It was difficult to see one another. It was like a great brown sandy fog, obscuring the sun and wrapping the earth in gloom. Oh, we had a struggle to push on a mile and a half to a village. We stayed there for three days; it was impossible to ride against the wind. Twice we sallied out and tried to get on by walking, but we had to abandon the attempt. We could only progress about a mile an hour, and it wasn't worth the labour."

"Did you suffer much from lack of food, Mr. Fraser?"

"Indeed, we did," answered the adventurer. "You see, Russia is poor, and the *muzjiks* are but one remove above the beasts. Now and then we could get black bread and *borch*,

a kind of vegetable soup, but we had largely to subsist on eggs. How tired we did get of eggs! Why, I've eaten two dozen eggs a day—eggs for breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper, cooked in all sorts of ways to secure variety. But when one had kept that up for ten days at a stretch, one got sick of them. I can't eat eggs now, because they nauseated me two years ago in South Russia."

"You went right over the Caucasus Mountains, didn't you?"

"Yes, but don't think there was anything very daring about that. We expected ourselves having a wild and rough time getting through the snowy fastnesses. But at



OVER THE CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS.

Vladikavkas we found a really fine military road that soared away into the clouds by way of the Dariel Pass. The scenery was tremendous, horrific, awful. Great torrents crashed and churned down the ravines. The road edged round the slimy slopes of black rocks—at places it was a ledge cut on the rock face; it wound in and out, getting higher and higher, till it was among the snows. But it was a good road, and we cycled the whole way up—fifty miles; then at the summit, with snow round about, we stood at the meeting-place of Europe and Asia. There was a Cossack there, and I wanted to buy his dagger; but he wouldn't sell. That afternoon we broke all records and nearly our necks in having the finest bit of coasting wheelmen ever had—eighty miles of it, right from the bleak, freezing summit of the Caucasus Mountains down into the warm, glowing, fragrant dales of picturesque Georgia."

Mr. Fraser lit another cigarette, and as he blew out the match he muttered: "Ah, it was lovely—eighty miles, coasting!—think of it!"

"Well," he went on, "we were now out of Europe, and when we left Tiflis and struck away into the bandit-infested hills bordering Armenia it was fully prophesied we would have our throats cut by the Kurds. Certainly it was a wild region—great scarped hills, barren and wearisome; and the tribes we met were composed of sinister-looking ruffians, with dark, matted hair, their eyes cunning and suspicious, and always daggers and revolvers at their waists, and generally a carbine across their shoulders. But, bless you, we never received anything but kindness from the Kurds. They were immensely interested in our bicycles, and we invited them to ride and tumble off and generally

"You went across Armenia, didn't you?"

"Yes. I'll always remember the afternoon we wheeled round some rocks, and there was revealed before us the great Mount of the Ark, Ararat itself. It is an imposing mountain, stern and grand. When we got down in the plain it was quite evident the Flood had not yet subsided. It was raining, and all the country was a swamp. We stayed at Erivan for three days, and visited Etchmiadzin, the oldest monastery in the world, where of course there is preserved a whole plank of the Ark, and we drank wine which the Armenian monks assured us was from a vine the descendant of the vine planted by Noah."

"And next?"

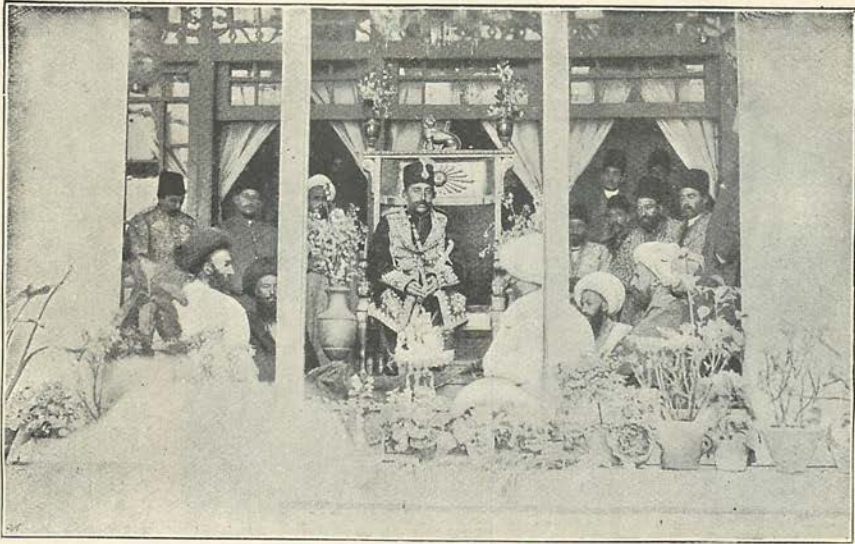
"Next we set off across the traditional Garden of Eden towards Persia. If the Garden of Eden in the old days was anything like it



MOUNT ARARAT AND THE TRADITIONAL GARDEN OF EDEN.

enjoy themselves. One night we lost our way. We roamed about the hill-side in the dark, but happily fell in with two Kurds. They were frightened at us, and, I confess, we were a bit frightened at them. When, however, they understood we were friendly, they led us up to their village in the hills. Everybody came to look at us. By signs we made it clear we wanted food and a place to sleep. Well, they provided us a shanty, lit a fire, cooked rice for us, brought sheepskins, and in their rough, uncouth, barbarous way made us comfortable. True, we slept that night with revolvers beneath us. But there was really no need."

is now, then Moses was an exaggerative writer. The weather all this time was wretchedly cold. Crossing the frontier into Persia, we had no end of a rough time. We began to be shaky in health; our shoes and our clothes began to give out, until we were like tramps; there were no roads, but plenty of snow and sleet. It was really discouraging. You probably think Persia a land of cool bowers and gurgling streams, and lazy delight and soft-eyed women. It isn't that. You've got your idea, as I got mine, from 'Lalla Rookh.' Persia is a wretched land, barren and forbidding. We were mighty glad to get to Teheran, the capital, and there we stayed



THE SHAH OF PERSIA.

*From a private Photograph presented to Mr. Fraser from the Shah's collection.*

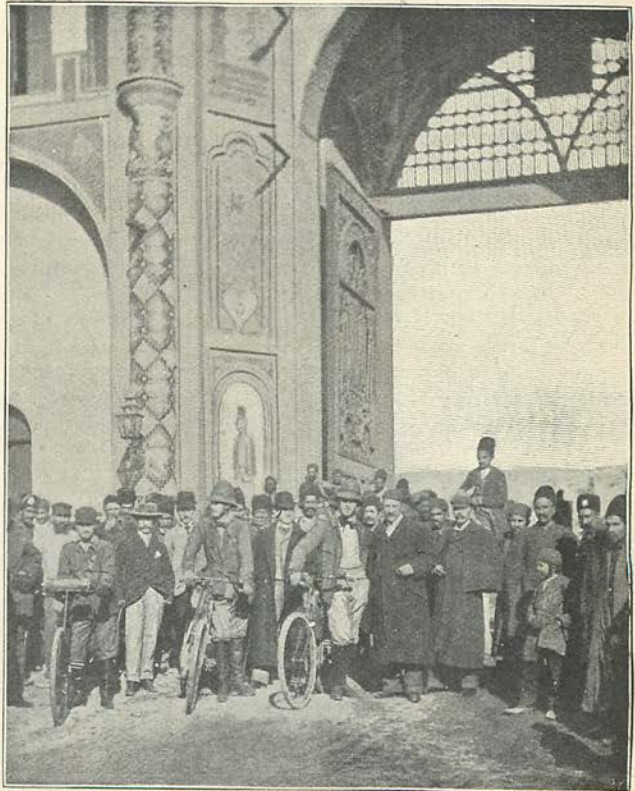
for five weeks, having a good time. Yes, we saw the Shah, and were entertained at the palace. Oh, the jewels were dazzling. The throne is valued at £5,000,000, and I sat in a gold chair studded with diamonds worth at least £100,000."

"How did you get on with the Persians?"

"Both well and bad. You see, they are very fanatical. At Kum, a holy city, we had a narrow escape. When we went into the bazaars we were mobbed and called 'Dogs of Christians' and 'Sons of burnt fathers.' Then the morning we left they stoned us; there was a perfect hail of cobbles, and we had just to sit tight with our heads over the handle-bars and scud for our dear lives. There were no roads in Persia, but the desert was hard, and the camels had pushed aside the small stones, so that there were always half-a-dozen tracks stretching over the desert like so many ribbons.

"It was a wild, bleak land. Day after day we pressed on away southwards to Ispahan, the central capital, then to Shiraz, and then down the rocks to Bushire, on the coast. There was no turning back. It was January and February, and time

and again we were caught in snowstorms. As a rule the people weren't bad; but we rarely got a decent place to sleep in. Some-



THE BRITISH RESIDENTS AT TEHERAN ACCOMPANYING THE CYCLISTS TO THE CITY GATES.



MR. FRASER IN A PERSIAN VILLAGE.

times we lay down in a stable, sometimes in a mud hovel; we had usually to cook our own food, and we were always cold and inclined to be dejected.

"One night there was a really uncomfortable experience. There was a great mountain called the Koli Kush to go over, over 9,000ft. high. Koli Kush means the 'Shoulder of Death,' an appropriate name, for hundreds of lives had been lost on it. We had been cycling all day under a grey, cold sky. We heard there had been snow in the hills, but we wanted to reach Dehbid, on the other side. Late in the afternoon we struck into the mountains, and soon we came to snow. There had been a caravan along before us, and we progressed all right, though we had to walk and drag our bicycles up the icy slopes. Night closed in; a horseman who was with us to show the way decamped, and we were alone on the mountains, completely lost. The three of us spread out to find a trail, and every now and then we thought we had struck it. Then we were lost again. The higher we climbed the deeper was the snow. You've never tried to carry a heavily weighted bicycle over 4ft. of

snow, have you? Well, it's not easy work. We got downright exhausted. At times we stood and listened for shouts. But there was only the roar of the gale and the rustle of the swishing snow. We fired our revolvers in the hope attention might be called. But no one answered. Then we saw the green eyes of wolves prowling round. We had one or two shots at them, and they kept off. Well, on we dragged and pushed and staggered, until absolutely faint. At two o'clock in the morning we came across the telegraph-line that runs across Persia to India. Then we abandoned our bicycles and determined to follow from post to post to Dehbid. But it was fearfully dark, and we could never see the next post on ahead. The snow was up to our haunches, and we took turns in making leg-holes for the others to follow in. To each post we clung and rested. But the idea of stopping had to be fought against. It would have meant falling asleep, and that would have meant death. So we went on.

"Once we thought we saw lights in the distance. We left the poles and branched off. But we were deceived. It was impossible to find a way back to the telegraph-line. When we came to a wind-swept rock



MR. FRASER WITH A GROUP OF PERSIAN ADMIRERS.



ON THE PERSIAN MOUNTAINS.

we decided to walk up and down till the dawn came. Now and then we sat down; happily we had tobacco and matches. But when sleepiness came along we kicked one another and walked again. Never was day-break welcomed more readily. Our clothes were saturated with wet, and when we looked at one another our eyes were crimson with bloodshot. It took us two hours to find the telegraph-posts, as there was a mist. And we were mighty glad to reach Dehbid. We had been on that mountain in the snow for twenty-one hours, and never a morsel to eat."

"You were glad to reach India, I suppose?"

"Glad," repeated the cyclist; "glad isn't the word. I was hilarious. At Karachi, where we started our ride across India, the first person I saw was a nice, fresh-complexioned, white-bloused, straw-hatted English lass having a spin on her bicycle. I just felt like going up to her and giving her a

kiss to show how pleased I was to see her. But I was such a ruffian, I hadn't shaved for a fortnight, my knickerbockers were all torn and ragged, my jacket in tatters, and I had no shoes but Persian sandals on my feet—altogether the sort of person you would order out of your back yard—and I thought the sweet-faced girl would misunderstand. So I just slunk by her."

"Didn't you find it very warm in

India to do cycling?" I asked.

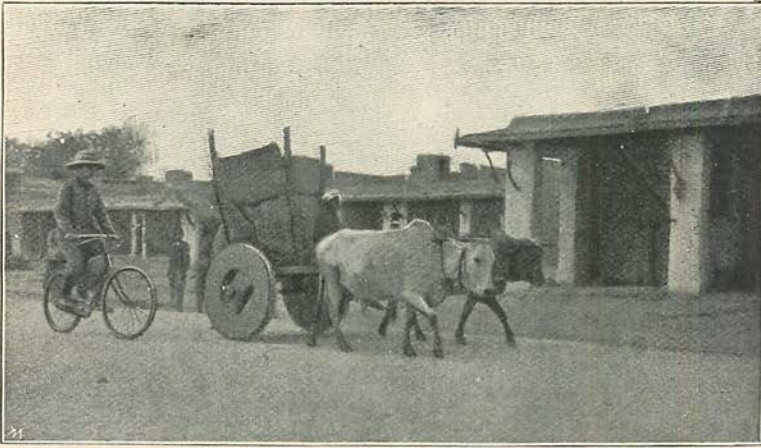
"Yes, it was a bit warm. You see, we were rather unfortunate. We ought to have come through Persia in the late spring, and we came through in mid-winter. Winter was the time for India, and we were there in the hottest weather. Then we went through Burma and Western China in the rainy season, and we were in Japan in the spring, when we ought to have been there in the autumn. But India was frightfully hot, so hot that the bright metal parts of our bicycles



130 MILES OF ROAD LIKE THIS IN SOUTHERN PERSIA.

could not be touched with the bare hand. The first 800 miles were the worst, right over the blistering sands of Scinde. We could only get native food—vile stuff, I can tell you. When we got on the famous Grand Trunk Road at Lahore we would have sung the

marked, parenthetically, “about getting back to civilization is that a fellow can get a really good smoke. I’ve always been a smoker, and the fact that once I had to go without cigars for nearly two months I regard as the only hardship of the trip. Troubles are more



ON THE GRAND TRUNK ROAD—FIFTEEN MILES AN HOUR AND TWO MILES AN HOUR.

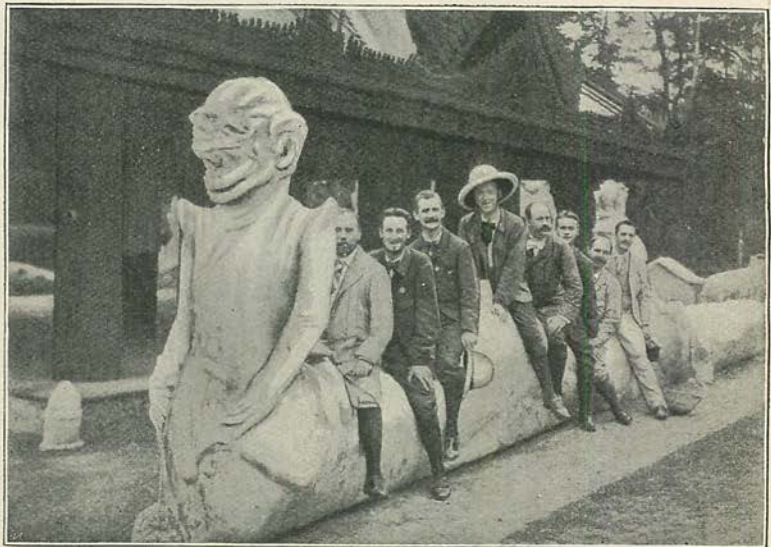
Doxology if only we had known the words. Oh, that Grand Trunk Road was fine—1,200 miles of magnificent road, the finest continuous ride in the world. Then there were the cities we saw—lordly Delhi, fantastic Agra, brave Lucknow, bewildering Benares! Oh, cycling is the way to see India. We struck right through the Bengal jungle—we always rode at night to escape the terrific heat; but we never—I suppose I must tell you the truth—we never saw a tiger. We were fêted by the English folks at Calcutta, and if ever we suffered from swelled head it must have been about then. And then came along that nasty earthquake, which placed half Calcutta in ruins, and quite snuffed us out of public attention. We moved on to Burma.”

Mr. Fraser began trifling with his cigarette-case again. “There’s one thing,” he re-

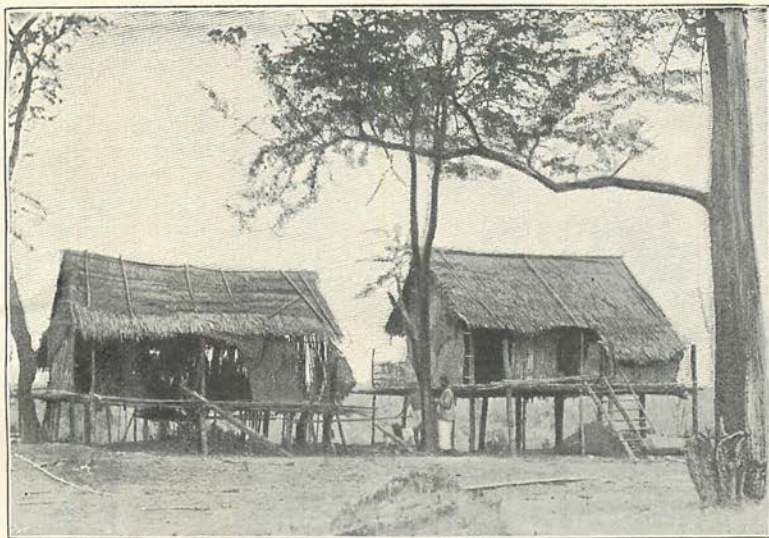
or less excitements; but going without cigars is a moaning sorrow.”

“Tell me about your ride up through Burma; were the people all right?”

“They were charming,” said Mr. Fraser. “They’re the Italians of the East: easy-going, merry-making, rather slothful. The Burmese girl is rather nice. When travellers have ceased raving over the winsomeness of the little Japanese *mousmee*, they might very



THE ADVENTURERS AND THEIR FRIENDS AT CALCUTTA.



HUTS IN WHICH WE SLEPT IN BURMA.

well turn their praises to the Burmese lass. Well, I told you we struck Burma in the rainy season. And it did rain—a constant torrent for about four months. We moved away north, along the jungle paths. The tracks were frightfully miry, but we bumped and jogged our way along day after day. We were wet to the skin, and for eight days we lay down to sleep in our damp clothes. Every night our saddles and shoes would turn green with the moisture. Matches refused to light. The natives were nice enough, but we could get little to eat but rice. How well I recall the day of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee! The rain swished through the bamboos of the jungle constantly. At night we rested in a little, wind-shaken bamboo hut. We had a miserable light to cook our rice by, and we sat on our haunches, and pushed the rice into our mouths, native fashion. We felt a bit dejected that night, for we thought of London, and wondered what

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sort of Jubilee Day you folks in London were having."

"You got to Mandalay all right, though?"

"Oh, yes; a very curious and delightful place it is. If you're fond of Buddhas, and dragons, and pagodas—go to Mandalay. I had a very interesting morning with the old Buddhist Archbishop of Burma there. Everybody was good to us, especially our own countrymen.

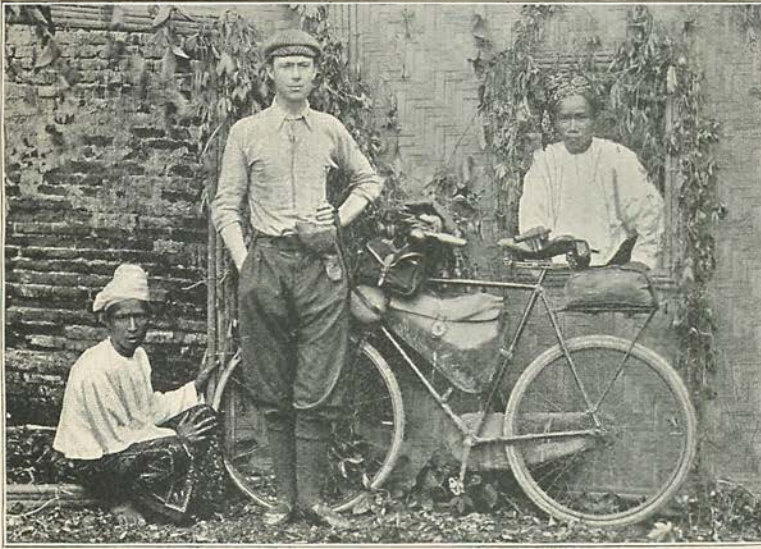
They've turned King Theebaw's palace into a club, and subalterns now drink whisky where kings used to drink hot blood. They're fine, de'il-may-care chaps, are the Britishers away out in Upper Burma. Tommy Atkins, though, doesn't seem to have much to do besides make love to the Burmese girls and die of fever. Everybody declared we were mad to go away into far Upper Burma just then, and strike across Western China. Maybe we were, but we weren't going to turn back."

"Weren't you afraid, leaving civilization so far behind?" I asked.



AN INTERVIEW AT MANDALAY—THE BUDDHIST ARCHBISHOP OF BURMA, THREE BUDDHIST BISHOPS, AND MR. FRASER.





MR. FRASER IN BURMA.

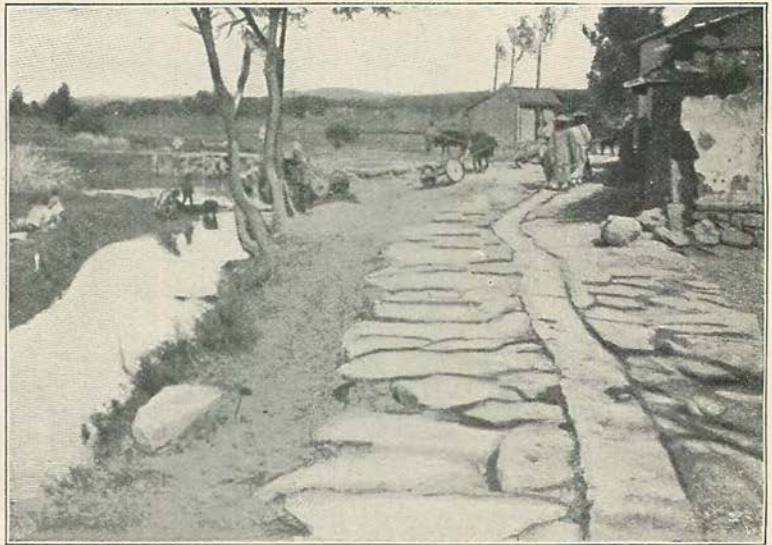
Mr. Fraser laughed. "Now, never in my life have I set up as being courageous. But I'm sure I never was afraid. You see, distance lends danger to the view. But when you're among wild tribes you soon get used to them. One has to come back to England and hear one's friends talk to realize there was any necessity to be afraid."

"You got into China?"

"Yes, but there was plenty of difficulty. At Mandalay we made our arrangements for a long good-bye to comfort. The officials equipped us with letters in Chinese, stating who and what we were. Chinese visiting-cards, long vermilion slips, eight inches by four, with our Chinese names on them—mine was Fu-la-su—were prepared, we took quantities of medicine with us, principally quinine, and we changed our cycling shoes for heavy mountain boots. At Bhamo, the last military British station in Upper Burma, we found the country leading to the Chinese frontier to

be under water. Government *employés* lent us ponies to get through; but the flood was too great. Then they lent us elephants, but seven miles out of Bhamo the water was 14ft. deep. So that plan was abandoned. Ultimately we went to Myothit by boat. The current was so strong that it took three days to do the journey of twenty miles. So we pushed into the frontier hills, inhabited by the wild

Kachins, those silent, wily jungle warriors that give the British Government so much trouble every year. They were sullen brutes, heavily tattooed, and they all carried short swords called *dahs*. Absolutely ignorant and superstitious, with a love for the war-path, they hate all other races, the British, the Burmese, the Shans, and the Chinese. Yet we went among them, slept in their huts and ate of their rice, and never were we molested. I need hardly tell you we did not take off our clothes. I used my boots and a volume of Shakespeare as a pillow."



A TYPICAL GOOD (!) CHINESE ROAD.

"What was the cycling like?"

Again Mr. Fraser laughed, accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders. "To tell you the truth, there was precious little cycling. For weeks at a time after we got over the frontier there was nothing but climbing up great, gaunt mountains, edging down into feverish valleys, and then away up into the mountains again. Of roads there were none, only mule tracks in and out of the rocks; and so we went on slithering and sliding a month at a time. The way we went across China is something over 3,000 miles. The first half led us to Chung-King-fu. Now, I reckon that out of the first 1,500 miles we must have walked at least 1,200. What do you think of that for a country to cycle in? We soon lapsed into a delightful condition of barbarity; indeed, none of us shaved from the time we left Bhamo till Shanghai was reached—a period of over five months."

"Did you know any of the Chinese language?"

"Not a word. We knew nothing; we had no guide or interpreter; we had no bedding or prepared foods. All we had was on our bicycles, and we lived like the natives. Remember, it was raining persistently. Many a mile we had to wade through water over knee deep. The natives were dying like flies from fever. The malaria was shocking. I took five grains of quinine every morning, and entirely escaped any fever. My comrades, who did not take that precaution, were seriously ill."

"How did you get on about money?"

"Our money matters caused endless bother. There is no regular currency in China, you know, and we had to travel with chunks of silver of various weight. These we sold in the towns in exchange for Chinese brass cash. Silver is heavy, but it is a feather-weight compared with cash. Nearly 400 of these go to the value of a shilling, and half a crown value of cash weighs just 8lb. Of course we lost tremendously, changing our lump silver into cash, for the

silver in different towns was of different quality. Then, a hundred cash was never a hundred cash. The custom was to deduct four out of every hundred for changing, but frequently more were deducted, and generally a dozen or so spurious coins were palmed off on the poor foreigner. This cash we strung on twine, and then carried it wound round our waists like a rope."

"Did you encounter many tribes in unknown Western China?"

"Not many. There were the Kachins, of which I have spoken. Then there were the Shans, a short, stubby people, very industrious and quiet, who lived in the valleys. The strangest people we saw—though we did not go into their country—were the Lolos. The Lolos are a small nation occupying a

tract of country about the size of Wales. They are tall and muscular, with peculiar, lined features, and they twist up their hair like the horn of a unicorn. They are far braver than the Chinese, treat their women better, and have a calligraphy of their own. Where they came from is an ethnological puzzle. There is now a splendid opportunity for someone to prove they are one of the Lost Tribes. They know they are foreigners to China; they have a hazy sort of tradition they originally came from the west. And here is a curious thing: they use knives and forks. They are clearly a remnant of some wandering European

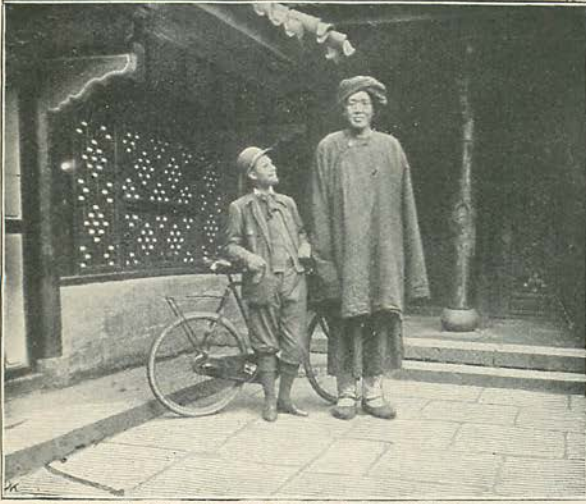
race. At Yunnan I came across the biggest Chinaman I have ever seen in my life, Chang, who is 7ft. 4in. in height."

"Now tell me, Mr. Fraser, how did you get along with the Chinese themselves?"

"On the whole, not very well. The Chinese are cowards, and I've got a great contempt for them. They used to stand a long distance off and boo and call *Yang-quitze* (foreign devil), and when there were three or four hundred of them they got somewhat nasty. We had to fight crowds of them—that is, we went for them with fists



MR. FRASER—PHOTOGRAPHED AFTER HIS LONELY RIDE ACROSS HUPEH, CHINA.



MR. FRASER, 5FT. 11IN., AND CHANG, A BIG CHINAMAN, 7FT. 4IN.

and feet while they were tumbling to get out of the way.

"The first real trouble was at a town called Yung-Chang-fu. It started at first by the mob playfully pelting us with stones and ofial, so that we had to dash into a temple for refuge. They came at us again, and we

had to go out and fight them. I daresay we would have had the worst of it in time, but the mandarin hearing of the row sent soldiers from the yamen, and eight of the ringleaders were dragged off by the pigtail to prison.

"Another time, while we were in a tea-house, the cry, 'Kill the foreign devils,' was raised. Certainly a Chinese mob can be very objectionable, and one had to stop the row at once. I whipped out my revolver, and pointing to a man who was carrying a boulder let him understand I would kill if he threw. The Chinese have greater fear of a revolver than of a gun, for the number of shots it carries has been greatly exaggerated. Although they roared and bellowed, we went on with our tea-drinking, I holding the revolver in my hand all the time.

"The roughest time, however, we had with a mob was, strange to say, when we were within a week's journey of Shanghai. It was a little place, called Pan-ya, if I remember rightly. The mob that got round us was



SHASI—"THE TERROR OF THE YANG-TZI"—WHERE MR. FRASER WAS CHASED BY A CHINESE MOB.

unwieldy, there was much pressing, and we had to push them back. Then they started. It was just closing in dark, and we might easily have been murdered and thrown into the canal. So we jumped on board a junk, and threatened the owner with death if he didn't push off. He was in a frightful funk, and could hardly loosen the ropes. A dash was made by the mob for our junk. But we kicked them and stamped on their fingers while they tried to clamber aboard. As soon as the junk moved off we were fusilladed with stones. We crouched at the bottom of the junk, and all the time I was threatening to blow out the brains of the man if he didn't get us into mid-stream and keep quiet his yelling. So we got away. He punted us outside the town and then, running his boat ashore, jumped on the bank and skedaddled. However, we didn't mind, and we lay down in the boat all night. The next morning the owner came back cautiously, and bowed to the very ground in joy at the money we gave him."

"Didn't you, Mr. Fraser, go across a part of Central China alone?"

"Yes, and by reputation, though perhaps not in actuality, it was the most anti-foreign part of China, the province of Hupeh. You see, after leaving Burma we struck in a south-easterly direction to the city of Yunnan-sen, then we struck away northerly to the great town of Chung-King-fu. Then we were to keep to the Yang-tzi Valley till Ichang was reached, strike for Hankow, keep to the Valley again till Wuhu was reached, and from there make a bee-line for Shanghai.

As I told you, Lunn and Lowe were in weak health, and at Ichang they decided to go to Hankow by boat. So off I went across Hupeh alone. The weather was frightful. I lost my way, got up to my knees in slush, I ripped my knickerbockers, my shoes gave out, and I never washed or took off my wet clothes for five days. Besides, I never had anything to eat except badly cooked rice and some green-stuff. The excitement I caused!—heavens, in the towns the streets were simply packed with noisy throngs, not objectionable, but over-curious. At one small place on the Yang-tzi I sniffed trouble. So I at once palled up to the crowd, pretending to be in great dismay that I had lost my pigtail, and, catching hold of a man, said I would cut off his. The Chinaman appreciates a joke, and so it was all right with that crowd. At another place I was pelted pretty liberally with mud. Riding alone in the rain along the dreary Yang-tzi bank, on and on, long miles after long miles, was hardly pleasant cycling. At Shasi, appropriately called 'the terror of the Yang-tzi,' because it is the worst town all along the valley, where the Chinese periodically wreck the mission-houses and make the missionaries fly for their lives, I certainly did expect trouble. Just on the outskirts of the town the boatmen, about 200 of them, came for me. Hitting a 'foreign devil' over the head would have been great fun. They were intent on being nasty. But the cycling was good, and I just bent my head over the handle-bars and scorched. It was dark by the time I got to the city gates; also, it was



THE MANCHU CITY OF KIN-CHA-FU.

raining hard and folks were indoors. Happily, I met a friendly Chinaman, who conducted me by back lanes to the junk of the Imperial Customs, where there was a wash and a good dinner waiting me. While I was at Shasi I walked four miles inland to Kin-cha-fu, a Manchu city where foreigners are invariably

made me tea and fed me. And, oh, blessed missionary, he produced a box of cigars! I think he just sat and looked at me, while I wolfed his food and then smoked his cigars. I was a pretty rough-looking beggar in those days, shaggy and bearded. But I did appreciate his cigars: it was my first whiff of



MR. LOWE.

MR. FRASER.

MR. LUNN.

RELAXATION IN JAPAN.

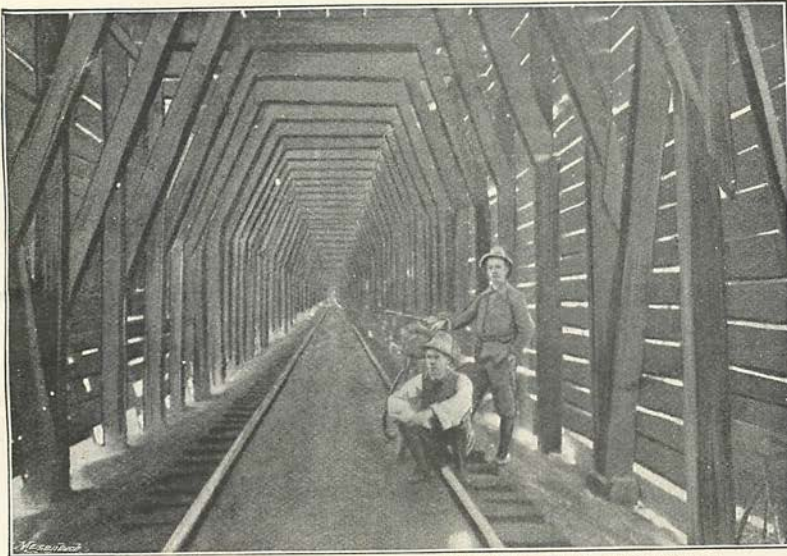
hounded and beaten. I rather hoped for a bit of excitement. But I was disappointed. There wasn't a bad apple thrown. After that I went, in as near a straight line as possible, to Hankow. I rather think I went over a long stretch of country where there had never been a European before. When I reached the Han River I got on board a little boat, and so escaped the mob while I ate some cold sweet potatoes I had in my pocket. I was sitting there, when suddenly among the crowd there appeared a parson, black coat, white choker, and all. We looked at each other; then I jumped ashore and we shook hands. He was a missionary, and he took me up to his little crib, and

heaven. Then we talked by the hour, and I'm afraid that day the souls of the poor heathen were not looked after very much."

"On the whole, you wouldn't recommend the average cyclist to go for a holiday in China?"



MR. FRASER IN JAPAN.



AMONG THE SNOWS OF THE SIERRA NEVADA—THROUGH 40 MILES OF SNOW-SHEDS.

"I would not," answered Mr. Fraser, readily. "It took us just 151 days to cross China, and we were mighty glad when it was over. Then we went to Japan—ah! that is the wheelman's paradise—and we had a lovely ride of over a thousand miles along magnificent roads. At Tokio, the Prime Minister, Marquis Ito, gave a semi-State dinner in our honour, and we met many of the Ministers. Of course, I had to borrow another man's dress-suit for the occasion, and climb into the steel casing of a starched shirt and a high collar. I never was in such agony in my life."

"And then, I think, you rode across America?"

"Yes, right across, from San Francisco on the Pacific side to New York on the Atlantic. Traversing

America, however, was harder work than we anticipated. First, there was going over the snowy Sierra Nevada. We rode on the railway track—indeed, we had seventeen hundred miles of railway track-riding in the States—and one day we did forty miles through the snow-sheds. It's a single line,

and the sheds are narrow and dark. So when the trains came along we had to press ourselves up against the clammy, icy rocks. Then we had to ride over the great alkali desert of Nevada. That was tough. Progress was slow—bumping, bumping, hundreds of miles over the sleepers; the heat was terrible, the alkali blistered our faces; there were no houses for long distances, and we had to carry water in our canteens. When we ran short of water, then we knew what thirst was. We came right over the Rocky Mountains down into the basin of the Missouri. Once across the Missouri, there was good going. Many a century we knocked off on our way to Chicago, then to Niagara Falls, and then to New York."



ON THE GREAT AMERICAN DESERT—A PULL AT THE WATER-BOTTLES.

"And then you came home?"

"We landed at Southampton, and on the evening of August 29th last we pulled up at St. Pancras Church, the very spot from which we started, just 774 days before."

"Well, it was a really marvellous journey to have done on a bicycle, Mr. Fraser," I



IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

said; "but tell me, do you feel better or worse in health now it is all over?"

"Ten times better; yes, I can say that," replied the record breaker, with insistence. "Remember, not one of us are cyclists in a professional sense; we are just chaps fond of bicycling. Of course, we had an occasional breakdown, and the rotting of our pneumatic tyres was the cause of much bad language. Between the three of us we used up eighteen sets of tyres during the ride. We didn't just race scorcher-like through the different countries; we took our time. Educationally, I don't know a better way for a man to see a country than to ride through it on a bicycle. I have collected an immense mass of data, which I am, this winter, throwing at the heads of various learned societies."

"Of course, there is to be a book?" I inquired.

"Of course."

"I suppose, Mr. Fraser, I suppose—," and here I hesitated, for I knew I was treading on delicate ground—

"I suppose, that is—is it true you fell in love with and married an American lady while you were crossing the United States?"

Mr. Fraser twisted in his chair. "Look here," he said, "that isn't fair; we were to talk about cycling round the world, not my matrimonial experiences." Then he turned in his chair again, and laughing, he said, "Well, yes, it is true.

The American woman is the most charming woman in the world—Mrs. Fraser is the most charming of all American women. There! is that what you wanted me to say?" and he laughed once more. "Anyway, you must come and dine with us some night. We live in a house we've christened 'The Den,' in Culverden Road, in the plebeian region of Balham."

And soon after I left this long, lanky, tousle-haired, fair-featured Scot. He was quietly grumbling when I came away, for all his cigarettes were finished, and he was too lazy to go out and buy more.



MR. FRASER'S AMERICAN BRIDE.  
From a Photo. by Curtis, Seattle, Washington.