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A week-end with Chinese Bandits

Lucy T. Aldrich

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THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 132 No.5, NOVEMBER 1923

ALDRICH (LUCY TRUMAN)

A Week-end with Chinese Bandits.

Pages numbered 672-686.

It is the early hours of the morning.
Here is his letter:—

My darling brave sweetheart, —
Please don't worry about me, darling, because I am in good hands; I was hit this morning, and am now away down from the front in a nice warm bed. I am going to be operated on in a few minutes, and I feel fine. I have been hit by two pieces of shell, and the only thing is, it hurts a little bit once and a while. I was behind an American tank when some German shell came overhead and got me in the chest. Darling, I make my hope all for the future happiness of us. Good-bye. God bless you.

This is the answer I received from him when I cannot express in words my gratitude to you for the letter you wrote me when my husband died. So now, when he has left us and all we know is that he has died, but your kind

and me, and our little child, we know that he is not very far away from us, and is just waiting for us to come to him. But oh! it is hard some when I think that he is a terrible doom. . . . But for the note he dictated I'd have hopes of probably, or death being a mistake; but his note was like his letters, always thinking of my happiness.

Hundreds of thousands of us are these horrors and worse. However we refuse to talk about them; however tightly we lock their remembrance in our breasts, they are not hidden from us. We are still shaken with that terrible vibration of the shock and hideousness of it all. We think of those who bravely died. We think, too, of our dead ones who once vowed that these things should not have died in vain. Can we dare we, travel our smooth road for the and farther away from these things, people of the earth whose consciences we once were?

He asked what his chances were of pulling through and he was told that they were a little against him. Everything that was done for him he appreciated, and he put up a great fight. He asked me if I would send this letter to his wife in case he died, and as he dictated this to me he said: 'We have been married only a year and a half, but we have been so wonderfully happy. I am so thankful even for that short time of happiness.' He was only twenty-one, and so full of health that we felt he could not and must not die; but when I went into the ward the next morning, his bed was empty, he had died in the early hours of the morning. Here is his letter:—

'My darling brave sweetheart, —

'Please don't worry about me, darling, because I am in good hands; I was hit this morning, and am now away down from the front in a nice warm bed. I am going to be operated on in a few minutes, and I feel fine. I have been hit by two pieces of shell, and the only thing is, it hurts a little bit once and a while. I was behind an American tank when some German shrapnel came overhead and got me in the chest. Darling, I make my hope all for the future happiness of us. Good-bye, God bless you.'

This is the answer I received from his wife: 'I cannot express in words my gratefulness to you for the letter you wrote me when my husband died. So many boys have left us and all we know is that they have died, but your kind

letter is so comforting. I have so much to be thankful for, in just knowing he was in a warm bed, and just fell asleep.

'Your letter was the first notice I had received of his death. The last letter I got from him was written September twenty-sixth. He was then leaving for the front and he was wounded October fourth. All the time he has been there, in nearly every letter he has warned me of the chances but always reminded me that if anything should happen it would be for the best. But I have felt so sure he would be spared for Baby and me, and our little home. Now we know that he is n't very far away from us, and is just waiting for us to come to him. But oh! it's so lonesome when I think that he is n't coming home. . . . But for the note he dictated I'd have hopes of probably his death being a mistake; but his note was like his letters, always thinking of my happiness.'

Hundreds of thousands of us saw these horrors and worse. However we refuse to talk about them, however tightly we lock their remembrance in our breasts, they are not hidden from us. We are still shaken with that same vibration of the shock and hideousness of it all. We think of those who bravely died. We think, too, of our dead selves who once vowed that these others should not have died in vain. Can we, dare we, travel our smooth road farther and farther away from those great peoples of the earth whose companions we once were?

whispered, 'They are in Mathilde's room and she is crying.' We then shrieked to Mathilde to give them everything she had and not to try to save anything; but the poor child could n't hear, and in a second they were at our door, smashing and breaking the window into the corridor. Miss MacFadden said, 'Shall I open the door?' and I said, 'Yes.' In a minute the room was filled with a wild crowd, slashing, threatening, and snatching. One man had cut his hand quite badly. He looked at it stupidly for a minute and then went on pawing things over with the blood streaming. They cut and ripped the bags open with long knives, growling like tigers. When they emptied Miss MacFadden's handbag, I saw one take the red case with my letters of credit and Japanese money, and I tore it out of his hand. Another took her precious string of jade and I managed to get it away from him, only to have it snatched in a minute by another. He bent my fingers back, and in wrenching it out of my hand, broke the string, and the beads went all over the floor. I was furious and sternly told him to pick them up. Before he realized what he was doing, he did pick up a few of them, then straightened and held a revolver at my head, while I groped for as many as I could find, myself. Miss MacFadden said she thought he was going to blow my brains out, he looked so threatening.

When they had turned everything upside down and inside out, they stood looking at the ruin to see if there was anything more to take. Miss MacFadden thrust into their hands a box of candy they had overlooked and told them it was to eat, and we half pushed them out of the compartment. We thought it was all over and Mathilde joined us, but another party of bandits came rushing in, and in spite of our protests, forced us out of the car, pistols

at our backs. One had me by the wrist and pulled me down a steep embankment at a terrific rate of speed. I do not see how I kept my feet. Although there was a moon, the light was too dim to see much, but I could feel long grass around my ankles, and knew that we were going out into the country. We kept together for a time. Poor Miss MacFadden had on mules, and slipped and stumbled so that I actually had to hold her up and keep my eyes on the ground to try and guide her into the smoothest places, but in spite of that she could n't walk.

I had planned — as soon as I had a chance — to take my rings out of my slipper, which was terribly thin, and string them on the elastic that held my wrapper around my waist. But I decided I loved Miss MacFadden more than my rings, and after she had tried walking in her bare feet and found it impossible, I tore off the elastic and tied her slippers on. Even then she could n't keep up, and the bandits kept bringing up ponies for us to ride. We always refused as we did n't want to be separated, and we feared one pony could not hold both of us. Finally I told Miss MacFadden we might as well do it sooner as later, so she was put on a donkey and they managed with great difficulty to get me on the back of a small frisky pony who plunged and kicked. When we first left the train I saw no foreigners and was afraid we were the only people taken. We passed groups of bandits sitting on the ground, sorting and dividing their loot, and at last, to my great relief, we came to some of the American men. They seemed to be taking the whole matter as a joke, and a big man was putting on a woman's green hat. Mathilde had been getting on wonderfully: she walked so well that it seemed to me she fairly pranced. I discovered afterward that she had on everything but the kitchen

stove: her shoes and stockings, her own dress, and mine — that a bandit had flung at her head in the train — over hers, then on top of that my pale-blue velvet wrapper trimmed with gray fur. She looked like the Queen of Sheba, and was so conspicuous in the dawning light, and so attracted the attention of the bandits, that I made her take it off.

I could n't notice much after I got on the pony — it was too hard work sticking on. I fortunately had stirrups of a sort tied with string to a makeshift saddle of blankets, and when my feet slipped out, as they sometimes did, I made the bandit who had me in charge put them back, notwithstanding I nearly slid over the pony's head when he went down hill and almost slipped over his tail when he went up hill, until I got the hang of it. On we went, mile after mile, the crowd of bandits around me shifting and changing. They made me think of a pack of wild dogs trotting back and forth, sniffing, growling, and snatching. I cursed the day that the love of color moved me to buy bright jade-green slippers. One old geezer eyed them longingly, but I scowled at him so fiercely that he satisfied himself with tweaking off the pink silk tassel on one side of my wrapper and then trotting around to the other side and pulling off the other. I bossed my bandit terribly. I made him lead my pony most of the time and scolded him when we went too fast. I finally got him so licked into shape that when we went down the steep places, he tried to find the smoothest way, and when we went over stone walls, he pulled the stones down so the pony would n't stumble.

It was suddenly light. I passed Mathilde on a donkey with the little Finger boy in front of her, and shouted at her that I was glad she had him. For a long time a Chinese girl rode stolidly in front of me. I never saw her face, as she never turned. Then I was behind

the Mexican bride. I only noticed she had on woollen stockings below her knees. We were all astride, with no saddles and hardly any clothes. I came to Miss MacFadden standing by her donkey, her glasses gone and a dazed expression on her face. She had been thrown off and they were trying to put her back. I wanted to get off and help her, but they slapped my steed into a trot and I soon left her behind. From that time on I was alone with the bandits.

Our way lay through a valley of cultivated fields of rice and maize, a most peaceful place. I could see miles in front of me a stream of bandits winding over the fields and far away, — thousands of them, — they were not scattered but marched together, apparently four or five abreast. It looked Biblical. I thought of Moses leading the Israelites to the land of Canaan. We were never frightened for a minute, and I never once saw any foreigner who appeared to be. I kept saying over and over to myself, 'We are really captured by bandits and in great danger,' but I could n't make it seem true. I have a vague impression of passing many people — a Chinese boy of about sixteen supported by two bandits, apparently frightened to death; a white man sitting on the ground, vaguely looking at his bare feet, one of which seemed to be paralyzed; a Chinese gentleman holding his silk coat up around his waist like a petticoat (I was surprised to see the beautiful silk in his trousers did n't go way up, for the seat was cotton); bandits of all kinds: one type short, pale yellow, intelligent; another very tall, almost coal-black straggling hair around wild faces and thick cues flapping around their knees, — the last more like animals than human beings, — and I can't say I fancied them, but told them to 'go away' every time they came near me.

We hurried on and on, and just at sunrise came to a little sleeping mud-village. A big gaunt Chinese, the only person visible, watched the procession of half-dressed foreigners as though it were an everyday affair for him. The bandits ran into an onion patch, pulling up the onions and thrusting them into the breasts of their jackets. I shall never smell onions again without thinking of bandits. They all reeked of them. A strange atmosphere for an Oriental outrage! Not at all according to fiction! Some one in the village must have been awake, for I noticed, as we left it behind, that the bandits had kettles of hot water and dishes of hot bean-soup. They ate as they hurried on, leaving the dishes carefully by the road to be picked up by the villagers afterward, I suppose.

The bandit who led my pony, when I could persuade him to, — he preferred to drop behind and smoke, — must have been a collector, for he had found a huge white vase (imitation *blanc de Chine*) and carried it tenderly for miles. He probably will sell it later to some guileless American as a bit of Sung porcelain that he 'picked up' in Shantung.

We soon turned to go into the hills, really low mountains that rose on either side of the valley. My poor pony, who had lost his first fine careless rapture after carrying nearly one hundred and seventy pounds for miles, slipped and stumbled over the boulders. His poor little legs trembled and so did mine when they helped me off and I tried to stand after the long rough ride. The bandits wanted me to get on my pony again, but the poor little fellow was really done and I preferred to climb on my own. We started off, a bandit tugging at my wrist, which was soon black and blue, to help me up the steep wall of shifting rock and stone that rose in front of us. Some of the

time it was like trying to climb in a coal bin, there were so many loose stones. My heart beat suffocatingly. I told my captor that it was weak and that I'd probably die if I went on at that rate of speed, — a very bad thing for him if I did, — and held his dirty paw over it to show him. He was really very nice and explained to the others, by clapping his hands together very fast, how my heart was acting. He told me by signs that it was because we were so high and afterward let me rest as often as he could.

The first time I sat down, the sun was quite high and I felt it on my bare head. One of the men near me was looking over the things he had stolen and I asked him to let me take a beautiful orange-chiffon scarf he was unfolding to put over my head. To my surprise he gave it to me without a word. I saw a villainous looking Chinese with Miss MacFadden's blue georgette hat on his head, the feather waving in the breeze like the plume on the helmet of Navarre. I had spent hours over that hat, sitting on a hard chair in the little French milliner's, trying to decide if it was becoming, whether it was too heavy for her, and if the feather was the latest thing, and it was too killing to see it on the head of that dirty wretch. He also sported two strings of blue beads that were Mathilde's, and three wrist-watches.

Bandits were passing us all the time loaded with loot, and they often stopped me to ask the use of things. One of them had a tube of cold-cream and wanted to know if it was to eat; but I rubbed my cheeks to show him it was a skin food only, and he threw it away. They were terribly interested in the medicine they had stolen and I was consulted about Mothersill's Seasick Remedy, phenacetine, and all kinds of drugs more or less dangerous if taken by the bottleful. I was dying to tell

them it was candy, and reduce their number by a few; but a New England conscience is impossible to live down, even in a moment of danger, and I shook my head. Lots of them wore the foreigners' felt hats, held on by winding their cues over the hats and under their chins. They loved the clocks and carried them with a swagger, swinging them from their hands like dinner-pails. I had bought lots of cross-stitch in Shanghai, and one of the bandits wore a folded tray-cloth adorned with peacocks on his head, to keep the sun off. They threw away lots of things I should think they would have found useful — underclothes and so forth — but clung to blankets and sheets. I saw a boy drinking out of my silver powder-box and carefully putting the cover on afterward.

I was never allowed to rest long at a time, but was dragged on up the hill. When we walked along a steep path above a sheer drop to the valley below, I longed to push my bandit off, for just a touch would have sent him hurtling down to sure death. His grasp on my wrist and the fact that I would probably have gone too were the only things that saved him. When we were nearly to the top, I refused to go any farther, and I sat down surrounded by ten or fifteen, they as glad as I to stop. We were right by a trace of a path and the bandits passed back and forth. Some of them had most interesting chains to fasten their tobacco pouches, very beautiful old carved nuts, and so on. One man had a lovely piece of old white jade with a carved flying-fox as a netsuke. If they had left me any money, I should have tried to buy it. I persuaded several to let me look at their things closely and they were as pleased as Punch when I admired them.

The view was magnificent, more like the Dolomites than anything I had seen. I could n't enjoy it long. It had

grown warm and one of the bandits sitting just a few feet in front of me took off most of his clothes and began killing cooties. It was an awful sight and I wondered how far a cootie could jump. We were miles up in the air and some of the village boys toiled up to us bringing small teakettles of water. I was awfully thirsty, but there was n't nearly enough to go around and they would n't give me any. They did share their food, such as it was, and gave me thin flat cakes of what looked and tasted like wrapping-paper. They offered me onions and when I refused them, one man gave me a pinch of what looked like tobacco to flavor the tasteless cakes. Papa always said I would eat anything I had n't seen before, so, true to form, I tried this and found it good though the hand that offered it was pretty dirty.

Everybody took a nap after tiffin, so I stretched myself out, my head on a rock — after rubbing my slippers with dirt to make them a little less green — and peacefully went to sleep. Suddenly someone shook me and pointed to the valley, and down we went again. It was really worse than climbing up. My man dragged me along and we slipped and slid down over the rocks. My chiffon scarf kept slipping over my face like a veil, and every time it did, the bandit put it back for me. I was very conscious of the rings in my slipper; they hurt me every step I took, but I would n't think of the pain, I was so determined they should n't get them. I did n't care so much about keeping the rings for myself as I was absolutely determined that the bandits should not have them. I thought it was such a good joke that I was walking on the most valuable thing I had and they did n't know it.

We rested for a minute under a small tree just above the village and finally went down to it. It was very quiet and

peaceful. Two old men were talking together under a tree in front of the gates and a woman was grinding corn in a primitive hollowed stone. She never even turned to look at me. The sun was very hot. The people brought me a little stool and I sat in the shadow of the gate with my back against the mud wall. Opposite me sat one of the headmen of the village smoking, while a few women and children gathered to look at the 'foreign devil.' I made them understand that I wanted something to drink and that I wanted it hot, so they sent someone to heat water. While we waited I felt a little soft touch on my arm and, turning, saw a little girl scuttling off to hide behind her mother. I tried to get her to talk to me. She would n't come but her small brother easily made friends. The man in the gate was very much pleased, as the children were his. I held up my five fingers and told him I had five nephews, showing the different heights. I saw he understood I had five sons and thought it was a great joke. I must have looked pretty wild, as the grandmother of the village brought out the village comb and wanted me to comb my hair. I wish you could have seen it. It was made of wood and looked more like a zoo than a comb. I'm sure if she had put it down, it would have run back to its place on the shelf. I politely declined, the only thing I refused to take from the Chinese women; they were so kind and gentle that I hated to hurt their feelings. When the pot of hot water arrived, I gulped it down though the rice bowl that held it had evidently been used for bean soup. They washed it out before handing it to me, but the rim was still beany and sticky.

I saw a small boy of ten with a little silver fan of mine and borrowed it to keep the sun out of my eyes. He was very proud of it and quite courtly about letting me take it. He was a bright lit-

tle chap and understood English very well. After he appeared on the scene, he acted as my interpreter for the few minutes longer I staid in the village. Lots of the bandits understood and spoke English, when they wanted to.

Suddenly they pulled me to my feet and motioned that I must go on again. I was frightfully tired and they brought out a chair and tied poles to it to carry me; but the poles were too short and it was too difficult climbing up and over the stones, so they soon abandoned it, and dragged me on. The reason for our haste was the fact that the soldiers were coming up back of us, near enough for the shots to sound loud even to my deaf ears, and looking back once, — I did n't turn again, — they seemed only a few yards away.

We went up a different hill this time, not quite so steep but steep enough, running and stumbling on. Every time the soldiers fell back a little I'd drop to the ground, turn my back, and go to sleep. I thought if I were going to be shot, nothing I could do would keep it from happening, and it would be much nicer to die in my sleep. When the soldiers got too near for comfort, they would wake me up and drag me on. Occasionally one of the wild type of bandit, like a black leopard without the 'bien soigné' look a leopard has, would run up behind me and push me on violently for a few yards, with his gun at my back. But they would soon tire and leave me to the old man who had led my pony. He was really kind though he growled like a tiger and threatened me with his pistol when I did n't go fast enough to suit him. I knew it was all bluff and it did n't impress me in the least. I scolded him once or twice and told him to stop, but that did n't seem to impress *him*.

We finally reached the top of the hill, quite flat, covered with sparse grass and a few scattered rocks and

stones. We all sank down, completely tired out. There were several stone huts and some of the bandits crawled into them — refuges for sheep, I think. Though they were so small that only their bodies were sheltered, they were an escape from the sun and I wished they had offered me one. I pillowed my head on a stone, drew my cape over my head and went to sleep again. I was perfectly convinced that we were in for a week or two at the shortest and wanted to save my strength. It was so high the wind blew cold, and I asked a bandit to give me the white counterpane he was sitting on — part of his loot. He gave it up very reluctantly and never left my side until he got it back. It was an old-fashioned honey-comb spread, like the ones I used to see at my grandmother's when I was a child. I wonder where it came from.

I could n't sleep long; my Chinese friends kept shaking me unceremoniously to ask me questions. Though we were miles from the village, one man I had never seen before woke me up, held up his hand with five fingers spread and pointed at me with questioning pride. I started to explain that I had five nephews, not sons; but remembering the Chinese reverence for the mother of many sons, decided to adopt the boys thrust upon me and lose my reputation as well as everything else I had brought with me to Shantung. Doctor Houghton told me afterward that probably the tale of the size of my family had gone all over the country.

I had no sooner dozed off again than another bandit poked me, handed me a man's clean collar and a pencil, and made me understand by signs that he wanted me to write the word for collar. I did, then pointing at his gun I wrote GUN. In a minute I was surrounded by an admiring crowd, like children all wanting to see. One had a beautiful

new red-rubber hot-water bottle. After I had written HOT-WATER BOTTLE on the collar, they tried to have me explain what it was used for. The owner pretended to drink out of it, but I shook my head. Then he held it to his mouth and blew to ask if it were a cushion. Again I shook my head and said 'hot water,' which they seemed to understand. I then held it first to my stomach and then to my ear, with groans and grimaces of imaginary pain, and they finally got it through their heads, to our mutual delight, what the thing was for. The owner loved it and was terribly afraid someone would take it away from him.

As they squatted around me in a circle, all of us laughing, an awfully nice-looking young man joined us. He was neatly dressed, about twenty-five or thirty, I should think, — though it is difficult to tell the age of a Chinese, — and evidently a person of authority. The other men were more or less stolid, some of them badly frightened when the soldiers came too near, but he seemed to have a real flair for adventure and was having the time of his life. He pointed proudly to the soldiers' hats and jackets he and one or two of the others wore, and held an imaginary gun to his shoulder. I could n't quite make out whether he was trying to tell me they had been soldiers or that they had captured the uniforms from soldiers they had just killed. I told him I was cold. He understood English perfectly, and took off his own coat and threw it around me and buttoned it under my chin himself. That left him so unprotected in the sharp wind that I did n't want to take it, and told him he would freeze, and urged him to take it back. He finally did and sent one of his men for an English coat, evidently taken from one of the men on the train. I could n't put it on over my cape and when I stood in the wind in only my

how impossible that was made me dumb.

After I had finished writing words for the amusement of the bandits I wrote a note on the collar to Mr. Atkinson of the Standard Oil Company, telling him where I was, as far as I knew. I held it out to the men saying, 'Mei foo, mei foo,' the Chinese for Standard Oil in Shanghai, but they either did n't understand or pretended not to, and threw it on the ground. It was still there when they pulled me to my feet to start on again, and I had a vague hope that someone might find it and send it on.

This time the middle-aged man who dragged me off the train disappeared, and his place was taken by a younger, stronger Chinese. The soldiers must have been very near as we started down the hill at top speed. It was very steep and as I climbed down from rock to rock I felt like the human fly. The men acted frightened and the mob spirit is very contagious and I found myself hurrying, hurrying just as they did; in spite of this I could n't go as fast as they wanted me to, and my bandit insisted, in spite of my protests, on taking me on his back, not realizing how heavy I was, but he soon flattened and had to crawl out from under me. Then he dragged me on as fast as he could by my wrist. Just in front of me were two bandits, half supporting, half carrying a Chinese gentleman. He sank to the ground and the wilder of his captors began to beat him with the stick he carried. He tried to struggle to his feet and I saw his face gleam white, impassive, for a moment, and then he fell again. The men went wild and fired at his prostrate body until he no longer moved. The one who had beaten him joined my bandit in pulling me along. I soon wished him away, as he was still crazy with excitement and very rough.

When we got to the valley, they put me on a poor little donkey whose back

was already piled high with a thick pack of looted coats and blankets, with no saddle, no stirrups, and no bridle. Of course I slipped and slid. They tried to hold me on, but the rough brute grabbed my arm so hard he pulled me off instead of holding me on. I was so angry that I scolded him and he began to beat me; but my coat and cape were so thick I did n't feel it — it only made me more angry.

In back of us were the soldiers and in front of us a terrific storm was coming up — copper-colored clouds slashed with lightning. They were frightened and soon pulled me off the donkey and started running, dragging me between them and pointing to the clouds. I think I must have run a mile, panting and stumbling, before I became so exhausted even the bandits saw I could go no farther. I was streaming with perspiration and took off my cape, giving it to the kind bandit, and so thirsty that my lips were covered with a dry cottonlike substance. At last my bandit said, in perfectly good English, 'My wife lives in that village; you go there,' and gave me a little push toward a small town I had n't noticed before in the dusk. I turned obediently and trotted down between the paddy fields, thinking my two companions were of course following. In a second I found I was alone, the others having rushed on. The rain was already beginning to come down in big drops and by the time I got to the gates of the town the storm had commenced. I found myself standing or trying to stand in front of closed wooden gates set in a blank mud-wall. The gates were on a chain, and peeking in the crack I could see a donkey and nothing beyond but blackness. The rain was coming down in sheets, turning the dust into a sea of liquid mud in which I slipped and slid in my thin slippers. I pounded and pounded with my hands on the closed gates, crying,

'Let me in, let me in,' but no one answered. I was soon wet to the waist and so tired that I sat down in the mud as near the gate as I could get, drawing my knees up and trying to find an inch of shelter. When it began to hail I looked about to find some place I could crawl into, as I saw there was no use trying to get into the village, though I felt sure they had heard me. There were no buildings, nothing but the blank wall; but just in front of the gate was a tiny tent-like hut thatched with straw and with straw in the bottom. I could just manage to get in on my hands and knees; it was too small to sit up in, but I curled up on my side and drew my feet in as far as I could. It was very hard to change my position, but I did it as often as possible, as I was sure I was in a dog-house and did n't want to get too stiff to kick an inhospitable dog when he came home in the morning.

The rain blew in on me; in spite of my shivers I managed to sleep a great part of the night, and when I was awake I could n't help chuckling to think that here was I, who am never allowed by my family to sleep without some one in the room next to me with the door open, — because of my deafness, — alone in a hostile China, sleeping on the ground and 'getting away with it.' Once I got so cold I backed out to have one more try at the gate. While I was pounding and shouting, I saw about a hundred yards away a group of men running and struggling. When they began shooting I realized that every time it lightened I was silhouetted against the gate, and I was afraid they would take a shot at me or else recapture me, so I ran back to my dog-house, to stay until morning, this time. I was really quite uncomfortable; my head jammed against the thatch so that it made my neck stiff and when I managed to turn, my hair caught and pulled. I was still frightfully thirsty

and tried to force my hand through the straw and get some of the hail, big as marbles, just out of my reach. I woke up at dawn with a jerk as though I had been called, and still haunted by the idea of the dog, scrambled out as best I could. No one was in sight as I walked feebly up to the still closed gates. I looked through the crack before I started to pound, and found myself gazing into the eyes of at least fifty Chinese men. I have no idea how long they had been standing there immovable, silent, waiting for the strange something that had been battering at their gates in the night to materialize. The sight of me did n't seem to reassure them, and I was the first to break the menacing silence. I begged them to let me in, trying to put a sob into my voice though I was really very much on guard, watching their expression and trying to guess their attitude. They were afraid of me, I think, and would n't open the gates for several minutes, and then not before they had searched me to see if I carried any concealed weapons. When I finally did get in, one old lady took possession of me and led me across a little courtyard to a mud seat in the opening leading to the mud houses beyond. The men lost their interest and disappeared, going out to their work in the fields, but I was instantly surrounded, altogether too near for comfort, by a crowd of women and children. The young boys, ragged and dirty, fought each other for places in the front line. Almost all were deeply pitted with smallpox, and I imagined that the few who were n't were coming down with it. My old lady was wonderfully bright or else knew a little English. She seemed to understand everything I said and told the others what to do. She smoothed my hair gently back from my face, tried to pick the straw out of it, and sat down beside me holding my hand. All the

heads. We rode straight up under them without a pause and I sat quietly waiting while my escort argued with them. He must have convinced them that we were harmless, as they came down at last and opened the gates. They did n't like me well enough to ask me in, but a fine-looking, well-dressed Chinese came out and gave me and my guide tea in cups. He poured cup after cup from the teapot he carried and I could n't get enough.

I had slipped off my donkey to rest a minute, but soon had to mount again and ride on. The sun was very hot, and when we stopped at another town and I rode into an almost fortified courtyard apart from the rest of the village, I hoped from the bottom of my heart that we had at last arrived wherever we were going; but I found that it was only to leave the donkey, who was all in, and no wonder, poor dear. How to carry me on was a problem. At first, after much searching for rope, they brought out a chair, quite an interesting old carved one, to rig up as a palanquin. As before, the poles were too short and this time the men who carried me too old to go far, and just outside the walls they put me down in despair. Then they hunted up a Shanghai wheelbarrow. My blue handkerchief would n't stay tied under my chin, and while they were making a cushion of hay for me to sit on I asked an old woman for a pin. Of course she did n't have one, but from somewhere in her ragged garments she brought out a needle with a bit of thread — evidently a great treasure — and sewed my handkerchief on in back and under my chin, making a sort of cap.

We started off, the bandit on one side of the wheelbarrow and I on the other, so near that I felt as though I had my arms around his neck. The old man who wheeled us staggered and lurched and the bandit commandeered three boys

working in a near-by field, and with the three harnessed abreast to pull us in front, and the old man to steady us behind, we bumped over the stones so fast that I felt as though my teeth and eyes would drop out of my head. I tried to make them go slower but they only laughed and went faster. My bandit took out his purse and showed me a piece of money. I think he may have been asking for a reward, but I ignored it and he put it back without pressing the matter. This was the only time anyone even hinted at ransom.

I had been able for some time to see in the distance the smoking chimneys of what seemed to be a large town, but I never for an instant suspected I was being rescued. I suppose fatigue made me stupid. At any rate, I was overcome with surprise when my coach and four drew up at a little railroad station and I was surrounded in an instant by a crowd of excited soldiers and railway men. Mr. Nailla, a good-looking young American of the Asia Development Company, rushed out and helped me to my feet and they all escorted me into the station. I asked Mr. Nailla the minute I saw him, 'How much did you have to pay to get me out?' and was delighted when he said, 'Not one cent.' He told me he had been walking around all day with \$50,000 in his pocket, expecting to use it as ransom, but it had n't been needed as yet. To my very great relief he told me that Miss MacFadden and Mathilde had gotten out that morning and were safe in the hospital at Tsinan-fu. I had n't worried about them much. I did n't see any reason why the Chinese should n't treat them just as well as they did me, but it was pleasant to hear just the same.

Mr. Nailla was an ideal rescuer — handsome, cheerful, executive, and having the time of his life. He looked absolutely worn out, as he had had no

cock already had the bandit in charge, and almost the first thing I heard was 'Miss Aldrich, what do you want done with your bandit?'—a question I was to hear repeated many times before I left China. Mr. Babcock offered to take him home, but I was afraid he might have a relapse and it was arranged to keep him at the station. The poor thing looked so forlorn, I patted him on the back and told him that they would take good care of him. He probably understood nothing but the pat, but that seemed to cheer him.

A great many of our experiences were amusing, but I found myself quite shocked when one of my friends in Japan said she wished she had been captured too. It made me realize that I had dwelt only on the amusing side. It is far from funny to lose all one's little treasures as well as the things that are valuable and difficult to replace. It must have been dreadful beyond words for Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Pinger to have their children torn from them in the darkness of a strange country by a wild horde of armed Chinese. If it is terrifying to tourists who can leave at the least hint of danger or who can give up their trip to China entirely because of the disturbed conditions, forgetting in France or England that such a country exists, what must it be to the many American and other foreigners who live there? Their children, their homes, their money—all safe if nothing happens, but swept away in any instant if there is any trouble.

If a man goes even a little way into the interior on a business trip, his wife

does n't know whether she will see him again in a day or two or not. He may be carried off by bandits to spend months unheard from, and there is always the possibility that he may never come back at all. They carry their constant fear very bravely, even gayly, but I am sure it is there. Someone told me the other day that the Chinese Government had announced that they would pay no indemnity for 'shattered nerves.' No wonder—they would be supporting half of the foreign population if they did.

Once when Mrs. H—— and I came back from shopping, we were met by the gate-boy with, 'We can't find Benny.' I saw the color drop out of her cheeks and the terror come into her eyes. My knees shook as we searched the compound. How awful, if that boy had been kidnapped! Of course he had n't been; he had only sat down just outside under a bush to catch insects; but we were both very much frightened for a few minutes before we found him. Mrs. H—— looked ill for days.

The words, 'Lest we forget,' on the walls of the Legation Compound—in memory of the Boxer trouble in 1900—are growing faint, and I am afraid they are fading out of the hearts of many people. I am not clever enough to make any suggestions; but I wish in some way the United Powers could impress China with the fact that if she is ever to be the greatest country she is capable of being, she must mend her ways.

Your loving sister,
LUCY ALDRICH.

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