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Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
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Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
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Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Schiller Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schilling Kralik
Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Lafontaine Schilling Kralik Iffland Sokrates
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Vulpus
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Gleim Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Mörike Musil
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Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
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**Under the Dragon Flag My
Experiences in the Chino-Japanese
War**

James Allan

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[1]

CHAPTER I

The following narrative is a record of my experiences during the late memorable war between China and Japan. Without going into any detailed account of my earlier life, some few facts concerning myself are probably necessary for the better understanding of the circumstances which led up to the events here presented. It will be obvious that I can make no claim to literary skill; I have simply written down my exact and unadorned remembrance of incidents which I witnessed and took part in. Now it is all over I wonder more and more at the slightness of the hazard which suddenly placed me at such a period in so strange an experience.

I am the son of a Lancashire gentleman who accumulated considerable wealth in the cotton trade. He died when I was still a boy. I found myself, when I came of age, the possessor of upwards of £80,000. Thus [2] I started in life as a man of fortune; but it is due to myself to say that I took prompt and effectual measures to clear myself of that invidious character. Not to mince matters needlessly, I ran through that eighty thousand pounds in something short of four years. I was not in the least "horsey"; my sphere was the gaieties of Paris and the gaming-tables of Monte Carlo—a sphere which has made short work of fortunes compared with which mine would be insignificant. The pace was fast and furious; I threw out my ballast liberally as I went along, and the harpies, male and female, who surrounded me, picked it up. Bright and fair enough was the prospect as I started on the road to ruin; gloomy the clouds that settled round me as I approached that dismal terminus. Then, when too late, I began to regret my folly. I seemed to wake as if from a dream, from a state of helpless infatuation, in which my acts were scarcely the effect of my own volition. The general out-look became decidedly uninviting.

About eleven o'clock one spring night of the year 1892, I was standing close to the railings of the Whitworth Park in my native city of Manchester, to whose dull provincial shades I had retired at the enforced close of my creditable career. I remember that I was engaged [3] in wondering what on earth I could have done with all my money, the only tangible return for which appeared to be an

intimate and peculiar knowledge of the French language and of certain undesirable phases of French life. The hour, as I have said, was late, and Moss Lane, the street in which I stood disconsolate, dark and deserted. Presently there came along towards me a man whose uncertain gait was strongly suggestive of the influence of alcohol. He stopped upon reaching me, and asked if I could direct him to Victoria Park. This is an extensive semi-private enclosure, where numbers of the plutocracy of Cottonopolis have their residences. One of its several gates is nearly opposite the spot where Moss Lane leads into Oxford Street, which fact I communicated to my questioner. To my surprise he, by way of acknowledgment, struck his hand into mine and shook it fervently.

"Shake hands, shake hands," he said; "that's right—you're talking to a gentleman, though you mightn't think it."

I certainly should not have thought it. He was a short, thick-set man, of about five feet and two or three inches, shabbily dressed; and his unsteady lurch, swollen features, and odorous breath, told plainly of a heavy debauch. Amused by his manner, I entered into conversation [4] with him. He was, it appeared, a sailor, a Lancashire man, and, if he was to be believed, very respectably connected in Manchester. I gathered that he had ended a boyhood of contumacy by running away to sea, his people, though they had practically disowned him, allowing him a pound a week. This allowance had for some time past been stopped, and he was coming up in person to investigate the why and wherefore. Having a week or two before come off a voyage at Liverpool, he had at that port drawn £75 in pay, which he had spent in two days and nights of revelry, an assertion to which his personal appearance bore strong corroborative testimony. He appeared, on the whole, to consider himself an exceedingly ill-used person. "I'm a houtcast," he repeatedly said. I asked him in what capacity he served on shipboard. "A.B.," he replied, "always A.B.;" and certainly, in speech and appearance, he seemed nothing better than a foremast man, although, shaking hands with me again and again, he each time asseverated that it was the hand of a gentleman. At length he went on his way, and I stood watching his receding figure as he reeled down the street. I was just turning away, when I heard a loud outcry; the "houtcast," about a hundred yards distant, was hailing me. On what trifles does destiny

depend! [5] My first impulse was to walk off without taking any notice of his shouts, and on the simple decision to stay and see what he wanted, turned the whole future. It appeared that whilst talking with me his obfuscated mind had lost the directions I had given him as to the locality of Victoria Park. Having nothing in particular to do, I volunteered to walk along with him, and keep him in the right direction, and accordingly we entered the park together. With considerable difficulty, he found out the road and house he was in search of; I doubt if, without my aid, he would have found it at all in his then condition. He had not, he informed me, been in Manchester for years, and those he was looking up had changed their residence. The exterior of the place, when found, seemed to bear out his statement as to the social position of his relatives. I asked him what sort of reception he thought he would get from them.

"He did not," he replied, "care a d—n what it might be, but he was going to see why they had stopped his quid, and no mistake about it."

He extended to me an invitation to come in with him "and have a drink," a courtesy which, needless to say, I declined. He then left me, after another vehement handshaking, and proceeded up the drive in front of the house. A feeling of curiosity to see [6] what kind of greeting the drunken, wastrel "houtcast" would command from his folk, all unconscious of his disagreeable proximity to their eminently respectable residence, induced me to follow him. I paused at a point where, concealed by some shrubbery, I had a view of the hall door, which, upon my friend's ringing, was opened by a smart maid-servant. Swaying up and down on the steps in a most ludicrous manner, the "houtcast" addressed her, although I was too far off to make out the words, but to judge by her looks she felt no prepossession in his favour. After a while she went away, leaving the door open and him standing on the steps. In about a minute a stout, middle-aged gentleman appeared from the brightly-lighted hall, his whole aspect presenting the strongest possible contrast to that of the seedy mariner. The conference between them was brief and angry, and terminated with the gentleman's returning within and slamming the door in the other's face, who, with his hands in his pockets, stood for some time planted where he was, staring at the *visage de bois* as if dumfounded. Then he applied himself vigor-

ously to the bell, and pulled with might and main. This course of treatment having no effect, he commenced shouting a series of ob-jurgations much too vigorous to be here set down. No response, of course, was forthcoming, and at [7] length the discomfited visitor turned slowly away from the inhospitable mansion. I rejoined him as he staggered past me. He showed no surprise at seeing me again, but contented himself with simply asking me where the — I had been. From what he said in answer to my questions, it appeared that they had had the brutality to tell him to call when he was sober,—“as if,” said he, with a good many curses, “I wasn't sober enough for them. Wouldn't even give me a night's shelter. But it's always how they've treated me—a houtcast, that's what I am—a houtcast.”

Apparently hard hit, the “houtcast,” who for the time being certainly had some grounds for so styling himself, leaned with his back against the gate, as if the effort to stand upright was too much for him on the top of his recent disappointment. His plight was undoubtedly pitiable. He had no money, it was well after midnight, the city was distant, and moreover the search for a lodging would in his condition be a matter of time and difficulty. Taking pity on his forlorn state, I offered him the shelter of my own roof for the night, an offer he was not slow to accept, remarking that one gentleman should help another; and that if I had any “tidy brandy” he would be able to get on well enough until to-morrow. So we set out for my lodgings in Cecil Street.

[8]

This chance meeting was the beginning of a long and intimate acquaintance. In the course of conversation I disclosed to Charles Webster—such was his name—the desperate state of my affairs, with the gloomy prospect they entailed. The remedy he proposed—and when sober he spoke well and sensibly—was drastic and by no means unfeasible. “Cut it all and go to sea,” he said. “You've enjoyed yourself while your money lasted, and what's the good of money but to spend? You've spent yours—now go to sea and get some more. That's how I do—have a regular good blow-out when I draw my pay, and then ship for another voyage.”

"That is all very well for you," I replied, "but how can I, without either training or experience, get a berth on board ship?"

"I can do it for you," replied Webster. "Lots of vessels are ordered to sea in a hurry, and not particular in picking up a crew, or perhaps a trifle over-loaded or not properly found, and short-handed in consequence. That's the sort of craft I'd look out for you, and if one wouldn't take you, another would. I'd tog you out like an A.B., and swear you knew your duty."

"And what when they found I didn't?"

"Wouldn't matter a straw when we were afloat. All they could do would be to d— —n my eyes or [9] yours and make the best of it. It's done every day. Certificates go for nothing, they're so easily obtained. When the voyage was over, you'd be up to a thing or two, and the skipper would rather sign your papers than be at the bother of going and swearing you weren't a thorough seaman; then you could get another job without me. It's done constantly, I tell you, and why not? Nobody can do anything without learning. You take a trip with me, and I'll make a sailor of you. You've stood by me like a gentleman, and I'll give you a lift if I can."

Well, to cut the story short, I resolved, after some cogitation, to follow his advice, as, in the circumstances to which I had contrived to reduce myself, I saw nothing better to do. My introduction to a seafaring life was effected pretty much on the lines indicated in the foregoing conversation. The change from the existence of a voluptuary, squandering thousands on the wanton pleasure of the moment, to that of a common sailor, was at first anything but agreeable, and often and bitterly did I curse the follies of the past. However, we learn from experience, and probably I have profited by the unpalatable lesson. Webster was a firm ally, and showed that despite his dissolute and reckless mode of living, he really did possess something of the character which he claimed, that of a [10] gentleman. Under his tuition, and being moreover, like Cuddie Headrigg, "gleg at the uptak," I made rapid progress in knowledge.

We made several voyages together. In the summer of the year 1894 we were in San Francisco, and rather at a loose end; Webster with a good deal of money in his possession, and spending it as usual in riotous living. We were intimate at this time with a man

named Francis Chubb, an Australian by birth, an able seaman, and a very reckless, daring, and resolute character. To him it is owing that I have this tale to tell. One night as we were sitting over our potatoes, he made us a singular communication and a singular proposition. A shipper and merchant of the place, by whom he had often been employed, had, he said, asked him if he was open to run a cargo of warlike stores for the use of the Chinese soldiers in the struggle which had just broken out, there being rumours that the Chinamen were ill-prepared for a contest, and badly in need of supplies. Chubb added that he had practically closed with the offer, and was looking about for men whom he could depend upon to join him in the enterprise, which his employer, foreseeing from the turn events were taking that the Chinese ports were likely soon to be blockaded, meant as a "feeler" to test the facilities for, and the profit likely to arise from, the organization of a [11] system for supplying those munitions of war of which the Celestials were stated to be in want, some large orders being alleged to have been lodged with American firms on their behalf. Chubb was to command the vessel, and he offered to Webster and myself the posts of first and second hands. The remuneration was very handsome, and we, not adverse to the prospect of a little adventure, had little hesitation in closing with the proposal, much to Chubb's satisfaction, who said we were "just the sort he wanted." His employer, Mr. H— —, I no sooner heard named, than I remembered to have heard described as a very keen hand, and not over-scrupulous.

The vessel which he placed at our disposal was a screw steamer of about 2000 tons, long, low, and sharp; an exceedingly fast boat, capable of doing her twenty knots an hour even when heavily laden, as, in a desperate emergency, we were soon to find out. Articles signed, our cargo was procured and shipped—cannon, rifles, revolvers, cartridges, fuses, medicines, etc., etc. We cleared without difficulty, weighed, stood out, and laid our course straight across the North Pacific.

Our ship, the *Columbia*, proved a beauty, in every way fit for the risky business we were engaged upon. Needless to say she had not only been selected for speed, but was rendered in appearance [12] as unobtrusive as possible. Besides lying low in the water, she was painted a dead grey, funnels and all. The sort of coal we used, an-

thracite, burned with very little smoke, and even that little was obviated, as we approached the seat of war, by a hood on the smoke-stack. She slipped through the water silently and noiselessly as one of its natural denizens, and on a dark night, with all lights out, could hardly have been perceived, even at a short distance, from the deck of another vessel.

Without the ship's log to refer to, I cannot be certain of dates and distances, but it was in the latter days of August that we were steaming up the Yellow Sea, where, by the way, the water is *bluer* than I have ever seen it elsewhere. In some places it presents, on a moonlit night, the appearance of liquefied ultramarine, though it certainly is muddy enough about the coasts. Our destination was Tientsin, one of the most northern of the treaty ports, and of course we kept in with the Chinese mainland as closely as possible to avoid the Japanese cruisers. All had gone well, and we were fast approaching the entrance to the Gulf of Pechili, when we encountered one of those tempests which are only to be met with in the Eastern seas—pitch-black darkness, rain in one sheeted flood, like a second Deluge, blinding flashes of forked lightning more terrific than the gloom, and an almost [13] uninterrupted crash of thunder amidst which the uproar of a pitched field would be inaudible. With our enormous steam-power we held our own for a while although unable to make much headway; but at last a tremendous sea took us right abeam on the port side; the main hatch had been left open, a small Niagara poured down it, and doused our fires. No canvas would have stood the hurricane that was blowing, and for some time we were in a serious way. Before our engines, which fortunately held firm, were working again, we had drifted helplessly over to the Korean coast, and it was all we could do to claw off-shore until the tempest abated, which it did very suddenly, as it had risen.

As the wind fell, we ran under the lee of an island, oblong, high, and thickly wooded, not far from a heavy promontory of the coast. Here we lay for two or three hours repairing damages. Of course we had no accurate idea whereabouts we had got to, but we reckoned that we could not be far from Chemulpo, a very undesirable neighbourhood from our point of view, as the port was in the hands of the Japanese, who were engaged in landing troops there, and whose armed ships would of course be in the vicinity. It was, therefore,

necessary for us to spend as little time thereabout as possible. As soon as things were ship-shape [14] once more—and luckily for ourselves we had sustained no real injury—steam was got up to regain our former course. It was already quite dark as we passed out from beneath the land; two bells in the first night-watch, or nine o'clock, had just struck. Truly that was a case of out of the frying-pan into the fire, for no sooner had we rounded the extremity of the island than we found ourselves in most unpleasant proximity to a ship of war. I was alone on the bridge at the time, and at once caused the engines to be reversed, in the hope of slipping back behind the land from the cover of which we had just emerged. Too late; we were perceived, and the cruiser's search-light blazed forth, illuminating the dark waters, sky, and coastline with a vivid glare. Simultaneously we were hailed loudly, although the distance was too great to permit of the words being distinguished, keenly as I strained my ears to catch them.

Seeing that we were detected, and knowing that the appearance of flight would increase suspicion, I stopped the steamer, devoutly hoping that our unwelcome neighbour might be a detached vessel of some European squadron. That she could be Chinese there was little hope, as we were aware that the Celestial fleet was in the Gulf of Pechili. Almost before our engines were stopped, one of the cruiser's boats was in the water and dancing [15] towards us. Chubb and Webster ran up from below, and as we awaited the boat, we uneasily speculated as to the character of the craft that had despatched it, as she lay within a quarter of a mile of us, the white muzzles of the guns in her tops and turret seeming, as she rolled with the swell, to dip in the wave. Formidable indeed she looked, and there was an evident stir of offensive preparation on board her; yet in spite of our danger, I could not resist a feeling of surprised and wondering admiration of the wild picturesqueness of the scene—the majestic warship, the glittering, rolling expanse of the sea, and the black lines of the shores, under that intense and vivid radiance, which might fitly have emanated from one of those phantom-craft with which maritime superstition peoples the deep. Everything it touched took a ghostly and unreal look.

There was rather a heavy sea on, and the boat took some while to reach us. At length, however, she was alongside, and then came

clambering up a little lieutenant, who displayed to our dismayed vision all the physical peculiarities of the Japanese. He addressed us in English, a language better understood than any other amongst the Mikado's subjects.

"You are American?" he asked, pointing to the star-spangled banner on the pole-mast. "What is the name of your vessel?"

[16]

We informed him, and received in return that of the warship, but in our consternation we paid little heed to it, and none of us could afterwards remember it. The lieutenant proceeded to question us as to our business, speaking very creditable English. We had previously agreed that in such a dilemma we should describe our cargo as consisting of salt, rice, and cloth stuffs, and we had taken the precaution to ship a quantity of those commodities, in bales and casks which were three parts full of cartridges to economize space, besides having fictitious invoices, etc. These valuable testimonials Chubb, who was outwardly as cool as ice, readily produced when the officer demanded to see our papers. He scrutinized everything carefully, and, still dissatisfied, said he would inspect our cargo. Of course we could not object, and blank indeed were our looks as the enemy walked over to the side to call up two or three of his boat's crew to assist him in the inquisition.

"Never mind," said Chubb, "it's not all up with us yet, and it won't be even if he finds out what we have aboard."

"What shall we do then?" asked Webster and I.

"Sling them overboard and run for it," said Chubb; and I knew by his determined air that he meant what he said.

"What! from under those guns?" said Webster.

[17]

There was no time for more. The Japanese lieutenant, with his men, rejoined us, and motioned us to lead the way below. We complied, and introduced them to our "cargo," the barrels lying everywhere three or four deep above the contraband of war. How consuming was our anxiety as they poked about! Things went well enough for a while; they never penetrated into the casks which they

caused to be opened deep enough to find the cartridges, or hoisted out enough of them to come at what was beneath. Our spirits were beginning to rise, when an unlucky accident sent them down to zero. The hoops of one of the barrels handled were insecure, and coming off, the staves fell apart, and along with a defensive covering of slabs of salt, a neat assortment of revolver cartridges came tumbling out. The Japanese lieutenant smiled till his little oblique optics were scarcely perceptible.

"Very good," said he, picking up one of the packages; "very nice— nice to eat."

We were thunderstruck, and had not a word to say. All was up now, of course; the Japs prosecuted the search with renewed keenness, and the nature of our lading soon stood revealed.

"I shall be obliged to detain this ship, gentlemen," said the lieutenant politely, to Webster and myself. "Where has your captain gone?"

[18]

I looked round for Chubb; he was not visible.

"I suppose he must have gone on deck," said I.

The lieutenant and his men hurried up, Webster and I following. Chubb was conferring with a group of the sailors. The search-light was still flaring away, and I was horrified to see that our formidable neighbour had crept up to within two or three hundred yards. The lieutenant walked sharply to the side, and shouted some directions to the boat's crew. The words were scarcely out of his mouth when I heard Chubb say, "Now." The men with whom he had been speaking rushed upon the Japanese, seized them, and in the twinkling of an eye hove them overboard into their boat, or as near it as they could be aimed in the hurry of the moment. Simultaneously "Full speed ahead" was rung from the bridge, and the steamer sprang forward as the hare springs from the jaws of the hound. For a moment there was no sound except the rush of the water foaming at the bows. Then the warship opened fire on us. Gun after gun resounded, and we held our breath as the ponderous shot hurtled past us. The first few were wide of the mark, but we were not long to go scatheless. One of the terrible projectiles struck the water by

the starboard quarter, rose over the side with a tremendous ricochet, bowled over one of the men, and smashed the top of the [19] opposite bulwark. Immediately after another tore transversely across the decks, playing, as Chubb afterwards said, "all-fired smash" with everything it encountered, and killing another of the men, who was cut literally in two, the upper portion of his body being carried overboard, the lower half remaining on the deck.

"He's mad," roared Webster, meaning Chubb; "we ain't going to be sunk to please him," and he rushed on the bridge to put a stop to our flight.

Chubb interposed to prevent him; they closed, grappled together, and finally fell off the bridge, still struggling.

The cruiser had to stop to pick up her boat, and the delay probably saved us; we must, moreover, have been a very uncertain mark in the unnatural light, which doubtless would be no aid to gunnery practice. On we tore, with the steam-gauge uncomfortably near danger point; the warship in hot pursuit, looking, wreathed as she was in the smoke and flame of her fiercely worked guns, and the electric glare of the vivid shaft which still turned night into day, more like some fabulous sea-monster than a fabric contrived by man. She plied us with both shot and shell; one of the latter burst in the air over our bows; two men were killed and several injured by the fragments. We were struck nine or ten times in all, but they were [20] glancing blows, which never fairly hulled us. Chubb held on resolutely; we increased our distance fast, and at length ran out of range. Never before had I felt so thankful as when those fearful projectiles began to fall short. From that point we were safe. We were five knots better than our pursuer, and the only danger lay in the chance that some other cruiser, attracted by the firing, might be brought across the line of our flight. None, however, appeared, and our great speed dropped the enemy long before daylight.

The damage to the ship was confined to the upper works, and could soon be put to rights, but five of the crew had been killed and twice that number wounded, and unused to such work as I was, I felt strongly inclined to blame Chubb for incurring this sacrifice of life for what appeared to me an inadequate object. He laughed it away.

"They take the risk," said he, "they know it, and they are well paid for it. We've saved ship and cargo; that's all old H— — will think about, and all we need care for."

It was far, however, from being all I cared for as I looked upon the mangled corpses lately filled with life and vigour. I had embarked on the enterprise in a spirit of levity and carelessness, reflecting little on what it might entail, and there was something shocking in thus suddenly coming [21] face to face with the dread reality of war. But whatever may have been the source of the feeling, it soon passed away, and when the dead had been sewed up in their hammocks and laid to their last rest in the deep—a ceremony we performed the day after our escape—Richard was himself again, and the old careless buoyancy swelled up once more.

Prayer-books had been omitted in our outfit, and we were at a loss for the burial service. However, we laid our heads, or rather our memories together, and most of us being able to recollect a scrap of it here and there, we contrived to patch it up sufficiently to give our unfortunate shipmates Christian burial. I should mention that another of the wounded men died after our arrival at Tientsin, and was interred in the English cemetery. He was the man who was first hit; his name was Massinger, and he claimed to be a descendant of the dramatist. He was known on board chiefly as "Hair-oil," from his addiction to plastering his bushy black hair with some shiny and odorous compound of that nature. Both his legs were broken by the shot that struck him.

As to my friend Webster, adorned with a black eye, he never ceased, during the remainder of the voyage, to declaim against Chubb's foolhardiness and uphold his own proceedings on the eventful [22] night. For his own discomfiture he sought consolation in rum, protesting that it was a miracle that any of us had survived to taste another drop of that liquid comforter.

"But I'm a houtcast," he would wind up invariably, as his potations overcame him; "that's where it is—who cares what a — — houtcast thinks?"

Chubb took no further notice of him than to laughingly threaten to put him under arrest for mutiny. It must not be supposed that the "houtcast's" behaviour on the occasion in question was due to any

want of courage. Escape seemed impossible; the risk of the attempt was tremendous, and I am convinced that if the matter had been left to my own judgment, I should not have dared it. But Chubb was one of those men whom nothing can daunt, and who are never more completely in their element than when running some desperate hazard.

[23]

