

THE HUANG HOUTZES

FRANK G. CARPENTER WRITES OF THE TUAREGS OF MANCHURIA, WHO ARE RAVAGING COUNTRY.

(Special Correspondence.)
CHIN-CHOU, Manchuria, 1909.—I have been riding all day on the railroad with armed guards at both ends of my car. We had a company of soldiers in the third-class compartment next to the engine and every station was guarded. There has been a recent outbreak of the Huang Houtzes. They have been holding up trains in the various parts of Manchuria, and just the other day they robbed the express under the very shadow of the city of Harbin and captured \$40,000. Even here, in the south, the trains are not safe, and they all have soldiers upon them. The first thing one sees on his arrival at every depot is a squad of Chinese soldiers carrying Mauser rifles. They line themselves up in front of the train and demand attention until it pulls out.

THE TUAREGS OF MANCHURIA.
 These guards are a necessity on account of the Huang Houtzes, who form, perhaps, the most remarkable organization of brigands now known. They might be called the Tuaregs of Manchuria, for they surpass in number and daring the veiled, camel-mounted bandits of the Sahara. They have rapidly increased since the Boxer uprising, and especially since the Japanese war. They now number over 200,000, and their agents are to be found in every city and village. They have a regular toll which they collect on all travelers outside the railroads, and every Chinese passenger who goes over Manchuria on foot, in a cart, or on horseback, must pay tribute to them. They have fixed charges as to goods in transit, and the carts carrying freight are marked with little printed flags with red borders, furnished by them. Upon the flags are printed Chinese characters, certifying that the owner has paid his toll, and that the vehicle and drivers are not to be molested. Otherwise the man is sure to be robbed and his men may be killed. A few months ago on the same day 100 carts started out from Mukden. Of these all but two had paid their toll and bore Huang Houtze flags. The men and goods in the carts so flagged completed their journey in safety; but the others, who had refused to pay the toll, were attacked by the bandits before they had gone 15 miles from the city. The goods were stolen and their drivers were killed.

During my stay in Mukden, I talked with the agent of a big mining concession, a man who represents a large organization of British and Japanese capitalists. He is opening up a gold region in the Kirin province, and has sent his supplies to the mining camps across country. He says he dares not start out a cart without such protection, and that in important cases he usually employs one of the brigands to go along in person. He did this with two English mining engineers whom he sent forward last week. Said he: "They might have gotten through all right with the Huang Houtze flags on their carts, but outside the great organization of brigands, there are petty bands of robbers who might attack them. Such men will not dare to touch any one guarded by a Huang Houtze; for, if caught, they would surely be killed by the latter."

MOUNTED ROBBERS.
 The Huang Houtzes are well mounted. They have Chinese ponies, which can be pushed to twice that. The ponies are never groomed and are exceedingly dirty. The bandits carry nothing with them but their arms, except a long fur coat, which they wear in the winter, and a quilt, folded over their saddles. They have modern guns and are armed with revolvers. The

majority carry Mauser rifles or big bore Winchester. Some have Russian pistols, and many have Japanese weapons which they have collected from the battlefield or have gotten hold of some way or other during the war. Their ammunition is of European make, and some of them have cartridges of smokeless powder. During the Chinese-Japanese war they bought or stole a quantity of rifles from the runaway Chinese soldiers, and got additional arms in 1900, when the arsenals of North China were looted and the arms distributed gratis by the officials. They have captured some guns from the Russians during the past few years and they have altogether a splendid equipment.

A BIG ORGANIZATION.

I am told that these bandits have existed as an organization for ages, but that they have never been so associated together as now. Their resorts have been the mountainous regions of Mongolia and Manchuria, from where they have gone down regularly to prey upon the people of the lowlands. The words Huang Houtze mean red boards. It is said that these outlaws sometimes dye their hair and boards red, and that thus decorated their names become synonymous with the devil in the minds of the northern Chinese. I understand that each band has one chief, with several minor chiefs, who form his bodyguard. There are about 50 of these head men in a band, and each has 10 or 20 brigands under him, the whole making a gang of 1,000 or more. Such a band will take charge of a certain part of the country, similar bands being located in other regions. The brigands have a system of intercommunication by which they can combine and by which the guarantee of one company is respected by the others.

Every band has its secret agents in the locality where it operates. These men know all about the business of the towns and villages. They notify the bandits what cargoes of goods are to be shipped and, as far as possible, the wealth and standing of the shipper. They are said to keep books, including the rolls of the bandits' names and the pay they receive, as well as the profit of each robbery and its disposition.

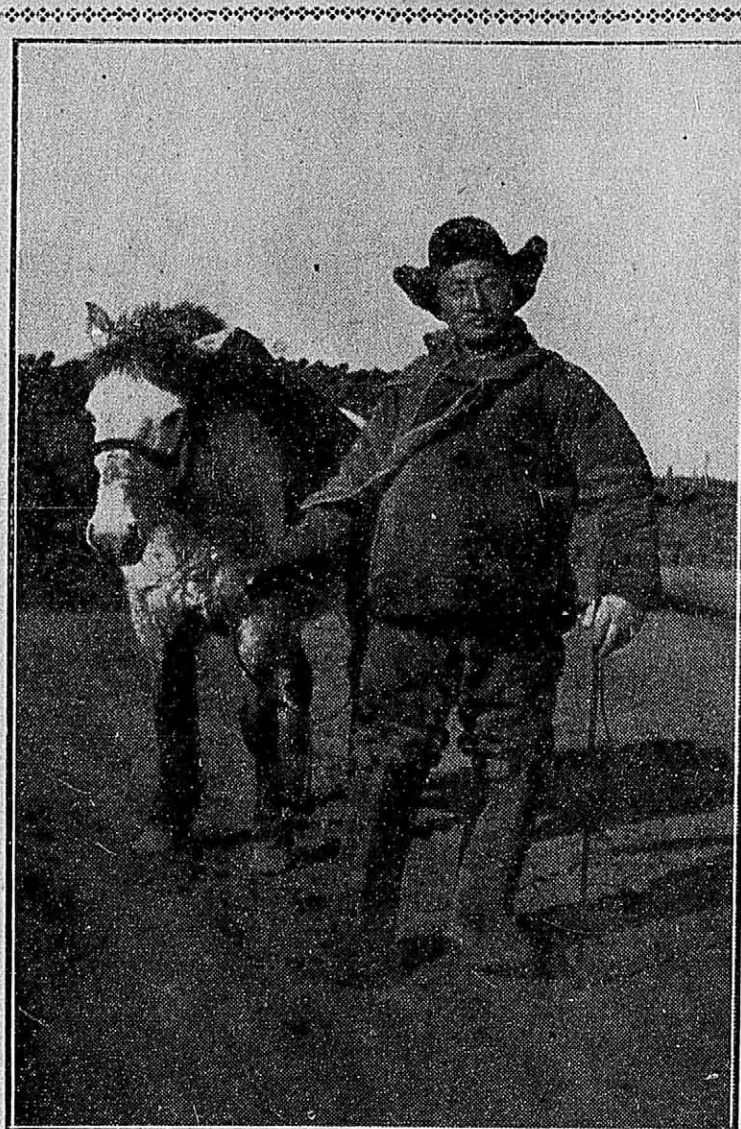
TAXING THE VILLAGES.

The Huang Houtzes are taxing the villages of Manchuria. The chief of the band holding the right to certain territory keeps track of the wealth of its inhabitants, and he makes almost every man pay for protection from the Huang Houtze raids. Villages are taxed as such, and in these cases the brigands agree to keep off other robbers. They sometimes station guards about the towns, and in case of attack come to the aid of the police. In such places the Huang Houtze agent furnishes the flags to travelers, and this is done likewise in the larger cities.

"Take, for instance, Newchwang, which is the chief seaport of Manchuria. It has a Huang Houtze agent who has a regular office where any one may go and buy a right to travel over the country. It is only recently that it has been necessary for foreigners to have such protection, but now all people going alone will do well to get Huang Houtze flags. Just the other day a young woman, an English girl, who was going across the country in a cart, was swooped down upon by a band of 15 mounted Huang Houtzes. They robbed her of all her belongings, including even her shoes and stockings, leaving her barefooted and bareheaded by the roadside. She had only \$40.

HELD TO RANSOM.

In this case the young woman was a missionary and the brigands knew that she was probably poor. Had she been a rich Chinese lady, she might have been held for ransom. This has been done with Chinese merchants. Not long ago, a silk trader was caught



YOUR COACHMAN MAY BE A BRIGAND IN DISGUISE.

Photographed for the "News" by Frank G. Carpenter.

within five miles of the city in which he lived and carried off to the mountains. The Huang Houtzes kept him there until the \$30,000 which they demanded as a ransom was paid. Not a few merchants when they have valuable cargoes to take from one place to another hire companies of these brigands to go along with them, and this is so on both sides of the great wall.

RAILROAD HOLD-UPS.

In the past few months the Huang Houtzes have held up several trains on the Transiberian railroad and especially on that branch of it which comes down through Manchuria. I talked last night with a man who was on a train stopped near Harbin. This is one of the biggest cities of northern Manchuria, a large military post, and surrounded by Chinese soldiers. Nevertheless, the Huang Houtzes had arranged to ditch the cars and rob the passengers. They had twisted the rails just above an embankment about 20 feet high and were waiting on the hills nearby for the express to come. In the meantime the patrolman had discovered the injury done to the track. He fired three shots, and thus warned the engineer so that the train was stopped within about 50 feet of where the rails were broken. Upon the cars

was a large guard of Cossacks, who made a demonstration. This frightened the bandits and they remained on a neighboring hill while the train stopped. They watched the railroad men, guarded by the Cossacks, relay the tracks, and fired a parting volley at them as the train pulled away.

HUANG HOUTZES AND SEPOYS.

These bandits will have to be controlled by the Chinese. Neither the Japanese nor the Russians will permit a continuation of the attacks upon their trains. As it is now, there seems to be a combination between the Chinese troops and Chinese officials and Huang Houtzes. It is even said that some of the policemen of the villages are themselves Huang Houtzes, and that the officials of the larger cities are in alliance with them. Every few months some soldiers are sent out to pull them down. They come back, bringing the heads of what they say were Huang Houtzes, but which, it is generally believed, are the heads of coolies, whom they have killed instead.

These brigands are very daring. They do not seem afraid of death and they will fight when attacked. It was just after the Boxer trouble that 1,400 of them came down through the great wall and advanced toward the rail-

way. The Chinese asked for help, and some British officers and a company of East Indian troops were sent against them. This company was the Fourth Punjab Infantry. It found the brigands in a town about 10 miles from the railway, and fired upon them. They returned the fire, and at the first volley Maj. Browning, who was in command, was killed and Lieut. Sterling was wounded. Several of the Sepoys were also killed. The firing became general and a retreat was ordered. The East Indians, who were on foot, were pursued by the Huang Houtzes on horseback and they had great trouble in getting back to the railroad. The next day a company of 700 from the same Infantry regiment went out with 300 Japanese soldiers and attacked the brigands. They found them in the same village, and it took four hours of heavy fighting to drive them out. In these two engagements the Huang Houtzes lost more than 300 men, or about one-fifth of their whole number.

SPIES AND SIGNAL FIRES.

On my way from Mukden to Shan-hai-Kwan I saw fires blazing on the mountains. They were of a peculiar shape, forming a ring like a horseshoe, and I was told that they might possibly be the signal fires of the Huang Houtzes. These men have the same telegraph system that once prevailed in Korea. They communicate intelligence by fires built on the hill-tops. By the number and shape of such fires they tell their fellows what they are doing and within a short time are able to send word from one part of Manchuria to the other. Many of their signal lights are made of wooden pegs, which are hollowed out at the top and filled with a composition. Half way down each peg there is a hole to which a fuse is attached. When this is lit the composition sizzles, giving a very bright, round light, which lasts several seconds. One such flash means one thing, two another, and three another, the number of flashes indicating the message.

The Huang Houtzes have their spies all over the country, and that even in the magistrate's offices. Your coachman may be a brigand in disguise. You are not sure as to your fellow-passengers, and the native who says he is not afraid and boasts of his immunity from the Huang Houtzes is pretty sure to be robbed.

THE PIRATES OF MANCHURIA.

These same men carry on piracy along the coast. They go out in junks, pretending to be merchants, and later put in at little known harbors to take on their fellows. They have captured sailing junks and the smaller trading craft of the Chinese. Their sphere of operation has been the Gulf of Pechili and the coasts of Manchuria and northern Korea. If they are chased by the men-of-war they sail up into the rivers where the water is so shallow that large vessels cannot follow. Some years since a Japanese gunboat captured two of these pirate junks and found more than three hundred thousand dollars' worth of silver in them. The pirates frequently appear near Newchwang, lying in wait for the junks which carry goods out of the river, and making each junk pay toll. They sometimes leave their junks and pillage the villages on shore.

THE BRIGANDS OF KIRIN.

One of the chief seats of brigandage is the province of Kirin, which lies north of here. It is a rich territory, three times as big as the state of Indiana, having altogether a population of about 6,000,000. Its capital is Kirin, a town of about 100,000 people. There are many mountains in that region, which are infested with Huang Houtzes. They are well mounted and well armed, and they collect a heavy toll on the cart traffic which is always moving between the capital and Kwan-Cheng-Tsu, the nearest station on the South Manchurian railroad. Not only here,

but in the other provinces insurance companies have been established to protect trade by bribing the brigands. Each of these companies has its flag, which is usually of a triangular shape. This takes the place of the Huang Houtze flag, and if the Huang Houtzes have been properly paid it is respected. Otherwise not. The insurance companies send armed guards along with their carts, but it is an open secret that it is the money which they pay the brigands and not their guards that afford them a visit that I made to the penitentiary in Mukden I asked the director if he had any Huang Houtzes among his convicts. He replied that he had, and that he would point out one in the next ward we entered. He did so. The man's head had a pitiful black as that of the ordinary Chinese and there was nothing to distinguish him from the others in the shop where he worked. I afterward photographed two Huang Houtzes between the guards in the yard of the prison.

Dr. Christie, the medical missionary in charge of the great hospital at Mukden, tells me that he always has patients under treatment who have been wounded in these Huang Houtze raids and that sometimes they are Huang Houtzes themselves.

WHIPPING OUT THE BRIGANDS.

The authorities say that the time has come now when these brigands must be exterminated. Their raids have attracted the attention of outside nations, and the reform movement which is going on here demands that trade be freed from their taxes. It is only on account of the duties being levied on the goods that an outcry has not arisen long before this. The administration of Mukden,

the capital of Manchuria, is one of the most progressive of the empire, and the army connected with it is especially well drilled. The country could be policed as far as the main trade routes are concerned, and this will probably be done within a short time. If the government once puts its foot down and insists that the Huang Houtzes be destroyed, and the brigands with the exception of those in the mountainous districts, will disappear.

During my stay in Korea the military officials told me that the chief trouble is not with the insurgents but with some Korean brigands who are much like the Huang Houtzes. They have their homes in the mountains and sally out to prey upon the villages. These Korean brigands are supposed to number 15,000, and they have one chief who is practically the head of the whole. The Japanese soldiers are and they are killing these brigands wherever they find them. A similar policy is bound to be instituted in Manchuria. The Chinese government now sending emigrants into the country north of Mukden, and it expects to open up much of its rich agricultural land to settlement. Mining concessions have been granted to foreigners, and the Japanese are insisting that the country be made peaceful. Above this and more important than all, is the very general desire on the part of the men who are running the Chinese government to introduce western methods and the new civilization, so that, altogether, it would seem that the Huang Houtze, powerful as he is today, is doomed to soon disappear.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.



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