

look up information for me, and insisted upon presenting me with a new map, and a particularly good one, which was afterwards of the utmost service to me. I like to record these little acts of kindness and consideration which I have received from Russians individually, because I believe there are no two nations that would take to each other more than the Russians and ourselves, if the opportunity were forthcoming, and the more the members of each nation know each other the better it would be for us both.

Another of the acquaintances I made at Kalgan was the ex-captain of a Chinese gunboat which had been engaged in the action at Foochow during the Franco-Chinese war. His was a curious story. The Chinese have a principle that in a battle a commander must either be victorious or else die. This man's vessel had been moored at some distance from the French fleet, and had consequently escaped the fate of the rest of the Chinese ships, and had not been blown out of the water. The captain, seeing the day was lost, and not being able to do anything to retrieve the disaster with his little gunboat, had run ashore and escaped. The Chinese Emperor, however, considered this a most ignominious proceeding. If the French had not killed him, he ought to have killed himself, and, as he had not done so, he was ordered into exile for life to the Mongolian border, and told to think himself fortunate that he had not been executed. And here the poor little gentleman was—very sore against his own government, but lively and cheery withal, and certainly most useful to me. He used to accompany me for hours through the bazaars, trying to get things which I wanted, or to obtain information about the road.

Kalgan has some very good shops, and I even bought a watch there. It does an immense trade with the Mongols, and with the caravans which start from there northwards across the desert to Siberia. But even here we could learn nothing