

PAY OR BE SHOT AT BAKU

Blackmail is Carried on in the Oil Fields of Russia.

VALUE LIFE CHEAPLY.

Receipts Given by Revolutionists to Their Victims—The Money Accounted For, Too—The Counter System of Assassination—Brigandage Outside the Town.

"You parasite!"

When you open a letter at breakfast and find that written at the top instead of "Dear Sir," or "My darling love," your attention is immediately drawn to the contents.

But in Baku, if you happen to be the hard working manager of a rich field with lots of wells yielding some 200,000 barrels of oil apiece every twenty-four hours you will not be so much surprised as at home. You will know at once what is coming and your first thought will be a wish to your bankers, says a writer in the New York Sun.

"Our agents," the letter goes on, as though soliciting the favor of your esteemed orders, "will call on you tomorrow afternoon at 5 o'clock, just giving you nice time, you see, to look in at the bank before closing and be back again, and you will give them the sum of \$350. Should you refuse you will be killed tomorrow or next day. Should you betray our agents or give the smallest hint to the police the whole of your family will share your fate. Signed and sealed, for the committee."

The seal is a rubber stamp in red, sometimes bearing the words, "Social Democratic Federation," sometimes "Anarchist Commune."

The sum demanded varies considerably. I think it is seldom more than \$200, for one must be reasonable in these matters; and usually it is less. I have known a popular and capable English manager to get off with \$5, a ludicrous exchange for life.

But when the agents ring at the door and ask the servant if you are at home and disengage the only thing to do is to pay—unless, of course, you happen to be on the verge of suicide and wish to save yourself trouble and expense, or think the world would be all the better without the kind of family you have produced.

For there is no pretence about the threats. Refusal or betrayal means death, probably within the day.

It has been proved over and over again. The government is too busy with the troublesome and expensive task of shooting its political opponents or sending them to Siberia to undertake the protection of commonplace citizens who have no perilous notions about freedom. So the parasite pays, valuing his life as even parasites will. The agents have given him a formal receipt and politely depart. In some cases a formal account of expenditure is afterward forwarded by post, giving the items to which the contribution has been devoted.

Of course, the men are not really anarchists at all, for the anarchist is the salvationist of revolution and will die rather than kill. Nor are they Social Democrats, except in name. Some may be genuine political revolutionists, but most come of the class that always hangs about a gambling mining city like Baku and they use the political opportunity just in the beaten path of livelihood.

I have more sympathy personally with another method of brigandage which flourishes in the wild and desert country outside the town, where caravans of camels go plodding into Asia and members of the English club go killing things for fun.

Some time ago three of these sportsmen had traveled out some twenty miles for a week when they were approached by the Tartar chief of a neighboring village, who captured them with great politeness and held them to ransom for £100 apiece. At first he demanded four times that amount, but when they represented that they were only clerks after all and had relatives depending on their salaries he displayed great consideration and concern at their unhappy lot and allowed one of their number to return to Baku for the smaller sum, while the others were hospitably entertained in his own house.

When the money was brought he not only handed back £4 apiece so that they might travel first class on reaching the railway and enter the town in style, but gave them permission to shoot over his country in future, making them life members of his hunt. It was an action that must appeal to our own game preserves at home and his whole method of restraining poachers appears to me far preferable to theirs.

On the day of my arrival, seeing people running for their lives in front of the Metropole, I naturally suspected the police were at work, but on approaching I only found two men lying on the pavement, shot by each other with revolvers. I thought it an Armenian-Tartar feud, but heard afterward the cause was an old family vendetta between two Tartars.

ONE WHO NEVER CAME BACK

No Trace Was Left by Swede Who Attempted the Pole in Balloon.

"The One Who Never Came Back" was a newspaper headline of last week in recounting the various expeditions to the north pole. Of the long list of those who have braved the frigid terrors of the arctic seas in the interest of science or to grasp the will-o'-the-wisp of fame there are endless tales to stir the souls of men and arouse sympathy, but it is the chapter dealing with "the one who never came back" from which the world turns with a shudder. It is twelve years now since S. A. Andree made his daring and, as it has proved, foolhardy attempt to sail over the north pole in a balloon. How he perished, and when and where, is one of the secrets locked in the icy fastnesses of the region of everlasting cold. What terrible suffering, what horror of loneliness and despair beset him before he perished, is dreadful to contemplate.

Andree was a Swede. He was a member of the Swedish international polar expedition of 1882 and 1893, and an aeronaut of considerable skill. He had his own ideas about reaching the goal of the ages. He had observed that at certain seasons of the year a steady current of air flowed toward the north pole. What could be easier, he thought, than for a well equipped balloon to set sail in this current of air, float over the pole, descend, make observations, and then float away again to carry the word to a waiting world.

Desperate as appeared the undertaking, Andree found men who were willing to aid him in carrying it out. Even more, he found two men who were willing to take the slender chance with him and stake their lives or fame and adventure.

Oscar, late King of Sweden, was among those who gave their support to the venture. It was in 1895 that Andree went north to Danes Island, Spitzbergen, and made preparations of the journey. A balloon house was built, and the big bag was inflated. It was found, however, that the gas expanded more rapidly than was expected, and the trip was postponed a year. Two Swedish war vessels escorted the expedition to Spitzbergen the following June. Experiments had shown that the gas would keep the balloon afloat thirty days. The plan was to have the balloon drift along about 800 feet above the surface of the ice. Of men, freight, food, and ballast the craft carried a weight of about five tons.

A favorable breeze was awaited. At last, July 11, 1897, it came. The ropes were cut and the balloon shot upward. Suddenly, for some reason never known, it dropped rapidly almost to the surface of the sea. Ballast was thrown out by the men on board, and the balloon arose again and sailed away over the mountainous island of Vogelsang, an altitude of 1,500 feet being necessary to make the passage.

When the watchers on shore and on the war vessels lost sight of the balloon it was the world's last glimpse of Andree and his two intrepid companions. Three message buoys dropped by Andree the day the start was made have been found. The latest was dated at 10 o'clock that night. An altitude of 82 degrees, 8 degrees from the pole, had been reached at that time. The brave aeronaut reported that all was well. But of the ultimate fate of the balloon and its passengers searchers have found never a sign.

Jukes Family Record.

One argument that caused the Indiana marriage law was the Jukes family. Ancestor Max Jukes, born in New York in 1720, was a lazy drunkard. Of his descendants 1,200 were proved to be occupants of penal and charitable institutions before 1874. Not one was ever elected to public office and not one ever served in the Army or Navy or in any way helped public welfare. On the contrary, they cost society more than \$1,000 each, or a total of \$1,250,000. Three hundred and ten were in poorhouses, 2,300 cents in all; 300, one in four, of his descendants, died in childhood; 400 were violently diseased; 400 were physically wrecked early by their own viciousness; fifty were notorious women; seven were murderers; sixty habitual thieves; 130 were convicted for miscellaneous crimes.

When It's Gone, It's Gone Forever.

There is yet to come no end of fake serums, hair restorers, to make bald heads dream of hyacinth locks, departed never to return. The hope of the bald head is one of the strange and positive delusions of men. It is an old stale drug store joke how a bald-headed man will buy hair "restorer" from a baldheaded druggist. Baldness is largely a natural process in many higher types of man and rather shows such men to be still growing and changing, even for into senility, and that science is still very much in the dark about Nature's aim and purposes in old age.

Handing Down Bad Eyes.

There is no certain or even marked relationship between bad homes and bad eyesight. It is mostly a matter of heredity and disease. As Tip pointed out years ago a mother with rare and complicated eye defects transmitted these same defects in every detail to every one of her sons. Here coincidence was out of the question.

National Development of College.

One of the differences between love and a puppy is that a puppy ceases to be blind when it is about nine days old. Sometimes it takes love a little longer to get its eyes open.

Romance

"You don't want to stay for the pictures, do you?" asked Molly in the tone of one who expects the answer to be "No."

Bess blushed. She took a childish delight in motion, but her cousin sadly disagreed with her tastes.

"Do you mind?" Bess asked timidly. "They're fire department pictures."

With a shrug of her shoulders her cousin settled back in the seat as the lights went out and the first picture was thrown on the curtain.

The property man and his fellows on the stage supplied the clanging of the bells and the screech of the whistles, and to Bess it was all very real.

Then the street with its engines vanished from the curtain, to be replaced by a contrasting picture of three firemen sitting in quarters engaged in a game of cards. Their faces were shown large enough to illustrate the play of expression, and the audience shrieked at the pantomimic humor.

But Bess had leaned forward and was looking eagerly at the curtain. Molly tugged at her skirt, but the girl did not realize it. There upon the curtain was Ted Prescott. She was sure of it. The picture changed again and she sank back in her seat quivering in every muscle.

Rapidly she explained to Molly how Ted had gone away from home, how his letters had stopped and his mother could find no trace of him.

"His mother's heart is breaking for him," she declared. "I must find him and tell him to write home."

She left her seat, greatly excited, and started up the aisle. Molly followed her country cousin curiously. An usher directed her to the balcony, where the machine was operated, and she waited until the operator had finished. He could give her little information other than to furnish her with the address of the firm that had taken the pictures.

She could scarcely wait until the next morning to continue her search, and she started immediately after breakfast, with a male cousin as an escort.

The manager was courteous and seemed to take an interest in her quest. The pictures had been made in town, he explained, and he gave her the number and address of the engine company.

It was far up town, but she could not rest, and in a short time she stood in front of the tiny desk beside the glittering engine.

"Is Mr. Prescott, a fireman, here?" she asked with trembling voice. The man in blue shook his head.

"Jimmy Prescott is with Seven Truck," he explained.

"I am looking for Theodore Prescott," she explained. "He was photographed here for some moving pictures."

"Pratt, French and Roe posed for that picture," he declared. "You mean this?"

He took down from the wall a small framed photograph, evidently an enlargement of the picture film.

"That's Ted," she cried. "I'm sure of it."

"Call Roe down," demanded a voice behind her. The fireman sprang to obey orders and she soon found that the captain was the man with the gold instead of silver buttons, and crossed trumpets on his cap front.

"Stand where you will be in the light," directed the newcomer, as he stepped into the background. Wonderingly she obeyed his directions, as in answer to the call a man came sliding down the brass pole.

Before she could speak he had turned around and came toward her.

"Hello, Bess," he cried. "Where did you come from?"

"What is your name?" demanded the battalion chief.

Instinctively the man's hand went to salute, and he gave a puzzled laugh.

"It's Prescott," he said. "Yet I know I'm called Roe. What's the matter?"

"You remember the Douglas street fire in the shop where you worked?" suggested the chief. Ted nodded.

"But you forget that in jumping to the net you fell short and struck your head. When you came out of the hospital you had forgotten who you were."

"I remember now," Ted exclaimed. "The boys were interested in me and kept me going until I could get in the department. You gave me Richard Roe for a name, eh?"

"I saw you in the pictures at the theatre," Bess explained. "I knew it was you."

"Which is more than I did," he laughed. "I've been someone else for nearly a year now. Is mother—"

Bess nodded, as he faltered. "She is alive," she assured, "but very lonesome. She thinks you are dead."

The captain stepped forward. "I'm going up to see the chief," he said. "Put in your application for leave and I'll see that headquarters grants it."

As he left the room Ted turned to Bess. "And you," he asked. "Have you—"

"I've been waiting, too," she assured.

"We can have a pretty good honeymoon in 30 days," smiled Ted. "We'll send the picture men some of the cake."

"We must," she agreed, as he kissed her right before the man on watch, "for I found you in the pictures."—L. M. REINHALTER.

USES OF SAWDUST.

Too Valuable now to Be Put to the Uses it Once Served.

Many are the uses of sawdust. In the days when the sawdust wagon made its lumbering rounds through the streets of most large cities two commercial uses of sawdust were to sprinkle floors and to shelter lead pipes from cold and glass bottles from breakage.

Near every sawmill was a vat for the sawdust and it was carted away free by any one who had any use for it. In this era of the use of by-products sawdust has a commercial value. It is no longer given away, but is sold.

One of the recent uses of sawdust is its distillation, resulting in acetic acid, wood naphtha, wood alcohol and tar. Sawdust may also be burned in special furnaces or mixed with other material for fuel.

Sawdust, when saturated with chemicals, can be effectively used in the manufacture of explosives, but it is more particularly in demand in paper making than for any other purpose. Such a thing as sawdust on the floor of a room as a substitute for a rug or carpet is now practically unknown. Sawdust has joined sand in this respect.

Cotton felt has been substituted for sawdust as a non-conductor of cold in winter. Gas can be made from sawdust. It is also used for briquettes, i. e., blocks of compressed sawdust and wood chips burned for fuel. Even in the protection of glassware against breakage sawdust has been superseded by excelsior, sawdust being regarded as too valuable for such use.

San Salvador Prosperous.

"San Salvador is in a good many respects the best country in Central America," declared Felix Mugden, a merchant of that place, who has just returned from a trip to Europe. "I make this statement because I believe that it is true. Financially and in a great many other respects the country is far ahead of its neighbors. We have not the disturbances that have racked some of the other Central American nations, and we have not interfered in the troubles of others. The President of our country, Figueroa, is a fine man in many ways, and we all love and respect him. He is doing much for San Salvador. He is honest and is an able statesman of the highest type, besides having a fine record as a soldier. He has been a conspicuous figure in public affairs for more than forty years. We did not feel the depression that disturbed business in this country, and commercially we are prosperous. The indications are that the coffee crop this year will be good, and prices promise also to be very favorable."

The King and the Boy.

An amusing anecdote relating to the King's recent stay at Brighton was related last evening by the Rev. Cecil Maunsell, vicar of Thorpe Malsor, to a gathering of his parishioners, who made a presentation to him in celebration of his return from Brighton, where he has been staying for the benefit of his health.

The reverend gentleman, who vouched for the authenticity of the story, said that a few days ago a boy walked up to his Majesty as he was strolling along the esplanade at Howe and said to him:

"Mister, can you tell me the time?"

"Yes, replied the King, taking out his watch; 'it is a quarter to one.'"

The boy then informed his Majesty that he had "been waiting two hours to see the blooming King," adding, "I am not going to wait any longer."

"Neither shall I," replied the King, as he resumed his walk. His Majesty himself, said Mr. Maunsell, afterward related the incident with much gusto.—London Globe.

Discovery of Peat Bog in Maine.

An analysis of the strange mixture which spurted ten feet in the air when Henry Hagan was digging a trench on the Alonzo Davis place at Norridgewock, Me., a few weeks ago shows that it is the finest peat.

So finely separated are the particles that the substance after the water evaporates from it is nearly all carbon. It hardens quickly, and when in this state burns readily. Hagan was digging a trench through a piece of low ground when he struck the vein. It spurted into the air with a rush that drove the men from the trench. The substance was so fine that the men thought it contained oil, but the analysis showed this conclusion to be erroneous. About ten tons are in sight, and it is believed that there is a still larger deposit under the surface. These suppositions are borne out by the fact that the stuff spouted out like an oil well for a while, indicating that somewhere it is under great pressure from a clay or other deposit.

A Good Bargain.

"I wish," said a Capitol Hill man recently, "that peddlers would keep away from my house. Somehow or other my wife can't help buying their wares, whether she needs them or not. All the peddler has to do is to say his article is cheap. When I get home at night I usually find some new stove polish, a new tangled kitchen utensil or something else lying around. Last night my wife had a bottle of something to show me when I entered the house."

"It's an asthma cure, John," she said.

"Asthma cure?" I repeated with a frown. "Why, Mary, no one in our family has asthma. We don't need that stuff."

"But, John, just think how cheap it was," she said, "it only cost a quarter."—Denver Post.

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