

The Captain's Story

IT WAS just after the scandal at our club, and a little group of us were talking in a very animated way of the affair. Capt. Joubert did not join in the conversation, and did not even seem to be listening to us.

"What will you take for your thoughts?" I said to him at last.

"Oh, they are worth much. I was thinking just then of an incident which occurred once at a club in a small provincial town where I happened to be staying."

"Tell us about it," exclaimed one of the other men, and the captain lit a cigarette and, putting his elbow on the mantel-shelf against which he had been leaning, began his story:

"Well, it was when I was in garrison at M—, one of the dullest and most stupid of provincial towns. There was nothing in the world for a fellow to do with himself there, no theatre even, only a low music hall.

"When I was out duty I gradually got into the habit of turning into the Union Club, which, by the way, was the only one in the town possessed.

"It was called the 'Union.' I should imagine because there was always a dispute of some kind or another going on there. There was very little play at this club except at the time of the three annual fairs, each of which lasted a week. One time, about noon, just at the opening of one of these fairs, I happened to go to the club rather early. There were a fair number of men there that day who were strangers to me, wealthy farmers of the neighborhood, who had come into town, and the various owners of the country houses round.

"They are playing high today," said one of the habitués of the club to me. I turned round toward the table to watch the game, and was so surprised at the sight of one of the players that I almost exclaimed.

"It was a young man of some 22 or 23 years of age, whom I knew by sight. I was very much interested in him. His father had fought courageously at Magenta and had been killed on the field of battle, leaving his widow and son by no means well provided for. The young man came very rarely to the club, and I had never seen him touch a card before. I was stupefied therefore to see him holding the bank, and a good bank it was, too, for there were plenty of notes and gold coins, heaped up in front of him.

"How much?" called out one of the players.

"Oh," laughed a wealthy farmer, "de Mertens is in a lucky way; he can safely keep his bank open."

"I noticed that the young man's face was deadly pale, and there was an excited look in his eyes.

"Open bank?" he said, and it seemed as though the very words had changed the look of the man.

"Ten times running Mertens lost, and in a quarter of an hour his bank was cleared out. Another man took his place and the play went on. It got so exciting that I, too, was fascinated, and joined in. There was no room to sit down at the table, so I continued standing, holding my hat in my hand and throwing my winnings into it. I had a run of luck, and went on playing in the most excited way until I was started by some one calling out, 'You are being robbed, captain!'

"I started, and instinctively seized a hand which had knocked against mine through my sudden movement.

"It was M. de Mertens's hand, and he held the forty-pound note which he had just taken out of my hat. The wretched man was convulsed with emotion. Our eyes met; his eyes were dilated with terror, and there was a look in them that seemed to hold me spell-bound.

"M. de Mertens is my partner," I said, haughtily to the man who had warned me; and I am surprised that you should dare to bring such an accusation against a gentleman whose reputation is so well known."

"The individual who had called out had never been to the club before, and did not know M. de Mertens at all. We had all been standing around the table close to each other, and on seeing another player put his hand into my hat it was very natural that the man should have thought of his duty to warn me. On hearing my explanation he apologized most humbly to M. de Mertens, and several of the acquaintances of the latter gathered round and expressed their regret that such an insult should have been offered to him.

"We then continued our play, and M. de Mertens soon after left the club. Three days passed and I heard nothing more of the young man. In shielding him as I had done my first thought had been of his father, and I had determined to save from disgrace the name of the brave soldier of Magenta. Of course, I could quite understand that the young man should now shrink from seeing me again, but still, it struck me as rather strange that in some way, either direct or indirect, he did not attempt to express his thanks.

"One evening, however, just as I was going out to pay some visits my orderly informed me that a lady wished to see me. I went into the drawing room, and there I found a woman of about forty-five years of age. She was very dignified looking, and there was an open, honest expression about her face which fascinated me.

"I am Mme. de Mertens," she said, simply. "My son told me everything about the affair at the club, and I have come to thank you with all my heart for having preserved for us intact the honor of our name."

"Madame—I began; but she interrupted me in her emotion and nervousness.

"My son had got entangled in various ways, and in desperation had taken to play. It appears that he lost every penny he possessed that night. You know the rest, alas!"

"I felt very much embarrassed, for the poor mother's grief was terrible to witness. She was still standing there in front of me, her face was deadly pale, and the tears were trembling on her long, dark eyelashes.

"He is young, madame; you must not take it to heart so," I stammered.

"It was just a moment's weakness. I will see your son, and—"

"No, Captain," she said, shaking her head sadly; "he is no longer here. He has enlisted and he is already on his way with his regiment."

"We had all been listening attentively to Capt. Joubert's story, and when

he stopped speaking there was a silence for a few minutes.

"And what happened to M. de Mertens, Captain?" asked one of our group.

"Did you ever hear?"

"He is dead."

Six months ago I received a letter from Kelung—a pitiful little letter—written with very pale ink, and on a sheet of paper that was all crumpled and yellow with age. There were only a few lines for me to read. I knew them by heart. They were as follows:

"I am mortally wounded

Joubert Courbet has just brought me the cross, but I am dying. I am sending it to you, my poor cross for you saved me, and I should like you to wear it."

"This is why, my friends, instead of wearing the decoration which I received from the Chancellor, you always see me with the sergeant's cross which poor Mertens sent me. Poor boy! I think that he started a thief, and died a hero's death at Kelung."—Strand Magazine.

FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE.

Millions of Copies of the Scriptures Printed Every Year.

From the St. Louis Republic.

The success of a widely read novel invariably sets people talking about enormous sales, and paragraphs find their way into print recording the fact that so many thousands of copies have been sold. And we talk about it as if it were a nine days' wonder, totally unaccountable of a book which has run through countless editions, and of which nearly 2,000,000 copies were printed in New York last year. That book is the Bible.

Of course, everybody knows that more copies of the Bible have been printed and sold than of any other book, but few persons realize, or stop to think about it if they do, just to what extent the Bible is circulated. "What becomes of all the pins," is a question that has never been satisfactorily solved. What becomes of all the Bibles is a problem more difficult of solution. A pin assumes infinitesimal proportions compared with a bound book, and when one considers that the increased publication of Bibles is out of all proportion to the natural increase in population, it cannot help wondering what becomes of all of them.

It stands to reason that a great many copies find their way into the hands of foreign missionary societies and are sent to the heathen of other lands. Possibly the proportion is one-half. But even then the balance for home consumption, if so purely mercantile a phrase may be permissible, is very considerable. One New York publishing house alone, the American Bible Society, issued during the last year 1,380,892 copies, of which a trifle more than one-half were sent abroad. And one year is very much like another in this respect. Times may be good or times may be bad, but the printing of the Scriptures goes on.

Now, the success of them all is seldom discarded a Bible no matter how old or worn. The ordinary book, except the bible, is regarded as an article of commerce—something to buy and sell, something to read and enjoy, and then, if necessarily demands, pass along that some one else may enjoy its benefits. If this were not so there would be no second-hand book-dealers.

Not so with the Bible. You may hunt the town over, you may delve among dust-covered tomes in out-of-the-way book stores until your head grows dizzy, and I doubt if you will find a dozen second-hand Bibles in all New York. I asked the proprietor of one of these old book shops if he could explain why it was. He shrugged his

shoulders and frankly admitted that it had been a puzzle to him for years. And he was a man of ripe experience, too.

At the office of the American Bible Society I was only bewildered by figures without having any light thrown upon the real question of what becomes of all the Bibles—the Bibles that are not sent to the heathen. The figures as to production were stupendous in themselves. I was told that the various Bible societies alone had distributed more than 250,000,000 Bibles since the year 1804, and this number did not include the output of individual publishing houses, of which there are about a dozen in New York alone, which issue Bibles.

The British and Foreign Bible Society of London operates on even a larger scale than our own American Bible Society. Last year 4,474,000 copies were printed and distributed, and since 1804, when the society was organized, it has issued no less than 169,000,393 Bibles.

When one comes to consider the achievements of the American Bible Society abroad the result is astounding. The society publishes, and now has for sale, copies of the Bible printed in German, French, Welsh, Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Italian, Dutch, Hebrew, Greek, Lettish, Arabic, Icelandic, Syriac, Russian, Hungarian, Bohemian, Polish, Gaelic, Finnish, Armenian, Malay, Arabo-Turkish, Slavonian, Slavic, Bulgarian, Chinese and Japanese. For Africa, the Scriptures are printed in eight different languages, while for the Sandwich Islands there are seven different editions in as many different languages. The North American Indians have Bibles printed in Cherokee, Choctaw, Mohawk, Dakota, Arrawach, Ojibwa, Muskogee and Seneca.

The distribution of Bibles in foreign lands is not accomplished without severe hardships and often danger to life. The collectors, as the traveling agents are called, are quite heroic in their devotion to the work, especially in lands where fanaticism holds sway. China is just at present the theater of the most interesting activity.

It will come as a great surprise to the public at large to learn that the Emperor of China is, as far as his personal convictions are concerned, a convert to Christianity. The statement is made on the authority of the Bible Society's agent in China, the Rev. John R. Hykes, D. D.

Dr. Hykes, in a recent communication bearing upon the tragic check placed upon the reform party by the emperor dowager, says that in addition to other imperial edicts of a reactionary nature the emperor went so far as to discuss with his advisers the desirability of adopting Christianity as the national religion.

"He spent much time in the daily study of the Bible," says Dr. Hykes, "and it was no secret in the palace that he frequently retired to a quiet place to pray to the true God. When this engaged the eunuchs had orders he must not be disturbed or interrupted. The emperor and some of the chief reformers were convinced of the truth of Christianity, and they were almost, if not altogether, persuaded to accept it.

"The bright hopes were crushed by the emperor dowager, who, acting upon the misrepresentation of the conservative party, beheaded six of the reformers without trial, imprisoned some for life, cashiered others from the public service, suppressed all newspapers, and by her manifestly anti-Chinese policy, created a bitter and anti-foreign feeling all over the country, which has culminated in massacre and rebellion."

The world has been told of the emperor dowager's opposition to the re-

THE TUGELA RIVER.

Picturesque and Magnificent Surroundings of Its Course.

The Modder and Tugela rivers are at the present moment, perhaps, the most conspicuous streams in South Africa. The Tugela, or "Startling" river, is the longest river in Natal, being over 200 miles long, attaining a breadth at its mouth of 450 feet. For the last sixty miles or so of its course it forms the boundary line between Natal and Zululand, the latter being now a province of Natal.

It rises on the Free States side of Mont of Sources, in the Drakensberg mountains, the extreme western point in Natal, and at once leaps down into the colony with a fall, broken by one or two ledges, of 1,300 feet—the highest waterfall in the world. It then tears through a canyon over two miles long, joined here and there by many a foaming stream from kloof and hillside, and cuts the colony in two, separating the Klip Diver county from Weenen county. Its first tributary of any importance before reaching Colenso is the Little Tugela, flowing in from the south. At Colenso it is crossed by the Balfour road bridge and a substantial railway bridge, consisting of four stone piers and five iron spans. Whether the latter still remains entire is very doubtful. Some distance below Colenso the now famous Klip river, on which stands Ladysmith, flows in from the north.

The Blauwkrans river next joins it on the south bank, and a few miles nearer the mouth the Tugela is augmented by the Bushman river, on which Estcourt stands. Ten miles lower down, but on the north side of the "Startling" river, the Sunday's river comes tearing in from its distant sources in the Biggarsberg, past Elandslaagte. This latter river receives the Inkuni and Vasebank streams, which traverse the southern district of Natal's coal fields.

Just before the Tugela reaches the Zululand border the Mooi (good) river runs in from the south. At the Zululand border the Tugela receives its largest tributary, the Buffalo or Umzimvati river, which, from its source near Charlestown, flows southeast, forming Natal's eastern boundary between her territory, the Transvaal and Zululand.

Near Dundee are Landsman's and Commando drifts, across the Buffalo, and lower down come Rork's and Fugitive drifts, at the latter of which Lieutenant Meville was killed, with his regiment's colors wrapped round him, in the Zululand war of 1879. On the Buffalo bank, overlooking the drift, there is a monument to his memory. The Buffalo is joined between Amajuba and Newcastle by the historic ingogo river, where over 150 of our men were lost by fight and flooded stream in the first Boer rebellion.

The scenery throughout the whole length of the Tugela is picturesque, and at places wild and magnificent. High cliffs, lofty hills, deep ravines and wooded kloofs mark its progress to the sea.

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