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Captain Brabazon

BY B. M. CROKER

A Military Romance of South Africa

CHAPTER I.

"I don't and won't believe it! There must be some mistake. It's too bad to be true!"

This reckless assertion came from the lips of a tall girl of seventeen, who was leaning her shabby elbows on a wide, old-fashioned window sill, and looking out on a steady downpour, in an attitude of the deepest dejection; staring blankly at the whity-gray sky, the dripping bushes, the roses like sponges, and the flattened flower beds, with her pretty face drowned in tears.

Behind her, gazing gloomily over her head, with his hands in the pockets of his shooting coat, stood a young man. No, not her lover—for in him we trace a strong family likeness, and notice the same very dark blue eyes and crisp, brown hair—he is merely her youngest brother, who, five minutes previously, had burst into the room and abruptly informed her that, "just as he expected, he had been spun for the army, and it was his luck all over." On the carpet beside him lay the Morning Post, containing a list of the successful candidates, among whom, alas! the name of Edward Brabazon does not appear.

"Please yourself, my good girl! Believe it or not, as you like," he returned gruffly; "I don't fancy it will make much difference at the Horse Guards. I really wish to goodness, Esme, you would not go on like this."

"But it was your last chance," she sobbed, in a muffled tone. "And, after working so hard, and reading for hours and hours, with a wet towel round your head—it's too hard."

"Fine weather for young ducks," suddenly interrupted a gay treble voice; and another girl, having pushed the door open with her knee, entered slowly, bearing a tray covered with jam pots.

She is Miss Brabazon—Augusta, known as Gussie, in the bosom of her family; not so tall as Esme, and not nearly so pretty; still, as she says herself, "she is by no means an unprepossessing young person." She has a bright, vivacious a pair of twinkling, mischievous brown eyes, a neat little figure, and an impudent nose.

"Tears!" she exclaimed, carefully depositing her tray on the school room table. "What has happened? Who is dead? or is it only one of the dogs?"

"The list is out, and I've been spun," replied her brother.

"Oh, nonsense!" she cried, with a gasp of incredulity. "You don't mean to say so," almost snatching the paper out of his hand in her eagerness to verify the fact.

"And that odious young Thomas has actually passed!" she exclaimed, at length. "A miserable little creature in spectacles, who could never originate one single remark beyond 'Yes, Miss Brabazon,' 'No, Miss Brabazon,' 'Thank you, Miss Brabazon,' that positively dared not say 'Boo' to the proverbial goose! And talking of saying 'Boo' to a goose, who is to break this to Mrs. B.?"

"I am, I suppose!" returned the brother, doggedly. "It is the third occasion I have had to 'break' the same news to her, as you call it. There's a kind of fatal familiarity about the subject by this time!"

"Mr. Edward, if you please, the mistress wishes to speak to you in the drawing room at once," said a grim-looking, elderly woman from the doorway; a person whose figure resembled a deal board covered with a tight black alpaca dress.

"To me! To speak to me, Nokes?" suddenly sitting upright.

"Yes, Mr. Edward, to speak to you," she answered in a tone of decorous decision; a tone which, being interpreted by these experienced young people, meant, "And won't you just catch it, that's all!"

"Then she must have seen it," exclaimed Esme, in an awestruck voice. "Oh, Teddy!"

Mrs. Brabazon is seated at a writing table in one of the windows of the drawing room as Teddy enters. She is a lady with a very long, upright back, a back that has a distinct character and expression of its own, and that of an aggressive nature. When we look into her face, we discover that she is between forty and fifty, dark and sallow, with thin lips pinched together in a manner that bodes but ill for Master Teddy; in fact, her countenance is the embodiment of a thunder cloud, as she waits in an attitude of rigid expectancy, with the Times spread out before her, her eyes fixed on one particular column, engaged in the amiable task of nursing her wrath to keep it warm. She heard the door open and close, she heard his approaching footsteps without moving for fully sixty seconds. At length she turned her head slightly toward the culprit, and said, in a tone which had gathered intensity from the preceding awful pause.

"This is a nice business!" rapping the paper before her with an impressive forefinger. "Pray what have you got to say for yourself, sir—eh? I hope you are ashamed. Only," hastily correcting herself, "it is not in your nature to be ashamed of anything. Come," with a jerk of her chair, "speak; and don't stand there looking like a fool."

"What can I say, Mrs. Brabazon?" returned Teddy, with heightened color. "I am awfully sorry I failed to pass. I did my very best as far as working went. I am sorry for all the time that has been wasted——"

"And money," interpolated the lady, sharply.

"And money, as you say," he continued; "and I am very sorry you should be so much disappointed; but, after all, it's rougher on me than anyone else. I shall be the chief sufferer."

"Chief sufferer! You!" she cried, glaring at him with her fiery little coffee-colored eyes, "you a sufferer! you idle, lazy, good-for-nothing lout! This is the third time you've come to me with this same story—failed to pass! Suffer, indeed!" charging back on that unlucky word. "It has been my purse that has suffered! You must make up your mind to earn your own bread, and that without delay. I never dreamed of having to support you; and what with keeping up the place and Florian's allowance, and your sisters' expenses, my hand is never out of my pocket!"

"Still there is a good deal of spending in three thousand a year, Mrs. Brabazon," said Teddy, impetuously, his soul revolting at her hypocritical rapacity and meanness.

"Three thousand a year! It's nothing of the sort," quickly turning to him with a livid face. "What business is the amount of my income to you? It is my money," passionately, "and not yours! I've put up with your insolence too long. I won't have you another week. I've been prepared for this," pointing a trembling finger to the paper. "I've heard of something at the West Coast of Africa that will suit. There you will learn industry, discipline and manners, and I never wish to see you again. I shall write about your passage this very day—this very post."

"You need not trouble yourself, Mrs. Brabazon," interrupted Teddy, decidedly. "I may as well tell you at once that I shall not go to the West Coast of Africa. I can find work for myself. After what you have said, I would rather break stones than be beholden to you for a crumb. I know of something that will suit me better than the yellow fever."

"Take care what you do!" she exclaimed hoarsely. "If you get into low company, or disgrace yourself in any way, I shall wash my hands of you and your affairs. You shall be——" here she suddenly discovered that Teddy had departed.

When he left his stepmother's presence he quickly made up his mind what to do. He had failed in passing the examination for an officer, he would enlist as a private in the ranks.

He so informed his sisters during the day, and stuck to his determination in spite of all their expostulations. On one thing he was as obstinate as a mule—he would not pass another night in the house as a dependent on his stepmother's bounty. At 9 o'clock that night he bade his sisters a fond farewell, and left Barrowsford to become a soldier.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Adrian Brabazon had been an idle, indolent man, whose predilection was congenial society, and who, when his pretty wife died and left him with four small children, had promptly dispatched the boys to school, the girls to the care of their aunt, his sister, shut up at Baronsford, and taken himself off abroad. He spent a good deal of money in an easy-going, gentlemanly fashion, passing as an invalid, a connoisseur in cookery, a patron of the fine arts, and rambling from Italy to the South of France, from Paris to the German Spas, in a kind of perennial circular tour. During his travels he wedded a second wife. Beyond the fact that she was a Mrs. Jupp, widow, aged 40, nothing whatever was known of her antecedents, although the ears of the Maxton gossips were literally aching for particulars.

To speak quite frankly, Mrs. Brabazon was not a lady by birth, nor yet one of nature's gentlewomen. She was a shrewd, sharp, scheming woman, of scant education, who had worked herself up step by step, and who had recently come abroad as confidential traveling maid to an elderly lady in bad health. She and her employer happened to be inmates of the same hotel in Paris as Mr. Brabazon. It was an unhealthy season, low fever was prowling about and carried off the elderly Englishwoman as one of its first victims. Mr. Brabazon himself became dangerously ill, and was tenderly nursed back to convalescence by Mrs. Jupp, who was a skilled sick nurse, and soft-voiced, soft-footed, sympathetic and soothing. Vague possibilities were floating through Mrs. Jupp's brain at this period. In addition to a small legacy, she had succeeded to her late mistress' handsome wardrobe, and made quite an imposing appearance in soft cashmeres and rich black silks, and dainty little lace caps, whenever Mr. Brabazon was sufficiently convalescent to notice such matters. She spoke of herself as companion only to her late "dear friend," and talked tearfully of better days, far more affluent circumstances, and bewailed her losses in an apocryphal mine in Cornwall. Mrs. Jupp had made herself very necessary to the invalid; he liked her, he was grateful to her. She exactly understood his wants, knew his favorite little dishes, and did not suffer him to be troubled or bored. His health was uncertain, he told himself that he could not dispense with her. He hated the trouble of combating her stronger will, and, telling himself that he was acting for the best, and required a sensible woman to look after him, married her at the English church one morning in November, and, as a reward, his bride carried him away to Italy immediately after the ceremony.

Gradually Mr. Brabazon became more and more feeble and decrepit, and during the last year of his life his mind was much affected. At first he forgot things that happened thirty years previously, then twenty, then ten, then last year—yesterday. His state was not generally known beyond the small retinue of Italian servants, as for years Mrs. Brabazon had conducted his correspondence and managed all his business, and his present unhappy condition made no alteration in his affairs.

She corresponded with her step-children from time to time; stiff, conventional letters, whose contents might have been posted in the market place; but she firmly repressed any desire on their part to come abroad and see their dear papa. The miserable state of his health, she declared in one of her first epistles she wrote to them after her marriage, precluded their much-desired visit, although personally she was languishing to make their acquaintance. At last one day they received a letter with an inch-deep black border, announcing the not unexpected death of their father; and Mrs. Brabazon, having buried him under a touching and handsome white monument in the cemetery at Florence, disposed of her villa, dismissed her servants and returned as a widow to reign at Baronsford.

The will created a profound sensation. Everything was left in the hands of Mrs. Brabazon until Florian attained his majority, and he was not to come of age until he was twenty-five. Over the fortunes of her step-daughters and their matrimonial possibilities her power was absolute. She was sole mistress of the property till Florian came of age, and guardian to the four young Brabazons. The interest of the money in the funds, the whole yearly rental of Baronsford, and the nice, large, quarterly dividends accruing from the first Mrs. Brabazon's fortune were exclusively hers during the minority of the testator's children. There were no executors, no trustees; all power was vested in one person, and that person was the widow.

"The will of a madman!" shrieked public opinion. "A shameful, unnatural, wicked will; most unfair to the young people."

But after a while public opinion veered around, like a weathercock that it is, and gravely declared that when you came to look into the matter, the will gained upon you, and that really, after all, Adrian Brabazon had more sense than they imagined. It was far wiser to leave the property in the hands of a clever, sensible person, who would keep the house together, and probably put by the money she saved for the benefit of her step-children, and be a second mother to them all, than if everything had gone to idle, thriftless, extravagant Florian.

After that day when Teddy so unceremoniously left her presence Mrs. Brabazon never once mentioned his name, and maintained an ostentatious deportment of injured innocence, generally taking her meals in her own sitting room, greatly to the relief of her step-daughters, who talked about their missing brother with bated breath, and minds full of misgiving and conjecture.

At last, one morning, the news came. He had done it. Esme knew it from her first glance at Mrs. Brabazon's upper lip, as she entered the dining room with a bundle of letters in her hand.

"There will be no prayers this morning," she said abruptly, sending the servants back into the hall. "You can all go! I am not in a fit frame of mind to go down on my knees and ask a blessing on this house and family. I do not know when I have been so upset as I am today. I suppose you have heard about your precious brother?" with a sneer specially dedicated to Esme; and now taking her place before the teapot, as though it were a kind of judgment-seat; "he has written to you, I know, this Private Brown, of the Prince's Lancers."

"What!" cried Florian, startled out of his usual lethargy. "Oh, nonsense! you don't mean to say that the idiot has enlisted?"

"He has," she returned, with vicious energy. "He is now a soldier in the ranks; a common soldier."

"Well, of all the idiots!" ejaculated Florian, contemptuously.

"He has disgraced us," continued Mrs. Brabazon, hoarsely, snatching up the sugar tongs in a kind of blind fury, and commencing to make tea; but her hand shook so violently that half the lumps were scattered about the tray. "If he had gone to sea it would not have mattered; no one would have known. What will people say?" she demanded, fiercely, of her audience. "He had every advantage, and I had the promise of an excellent appointment for him on the West Coast of Africa, as deputy superintendent of a jail; but, without a word, he leaves my roof and walks off and enlists as Private Brown. Such base ingratitude never was heard of.

Gussie and Esme were both in tears, and Florian was slicing the ham before him very delicately and very deliberately, with an air of deep meditation on his sallow brow.

"His name I forbid to be mentioned by any one in this house," proceeded Mrs. Brabazon. "I forbid you girls to correspond with him or speak of him! Edward has as much passed out of your lives now as if his death were in the morning's paper. I have desired Nokes to keep all the front blinds down for three days."

(To be continued.)

At Long Range.

In the Franco-German war, 1870, at Gravelotte, the German cavalry lost 200 horses and 100 men, while their artillery lost 1,300 horses and 950 men.

At Thionville, a terribly fierce battle, the German cavalry lost 1,600 horses and 1,400 men, while their artillery lost 1,000 horses and 780 men; but at the battle of Woerth the German cavalry lost only 50 horses to 60 men. This shows that when the fighting is close and hot the men fall in greater numbers than the horses.

From the relative loss of men and horses you can tell whether it was a defeat or a victory; for in a victory the difference between men lost and horses lost would not be very great, while in a defeat and retirement the loss of horses would be immense.

In a well-contested hand-to-hand fight of cavalry the loss of horses is about equal to the loss of men. When the British troops were engaged in the Peninsular war they lost in each of the 15 battles an average of 18 horses to 19 men, showing fierce and close fighting.

On the other hand, the loss of horses is very great when the cavalry have to go a long distance over open ground before delivering the charge, as they are exposed to the enemy's fire. At Fontenoy the French killed 87 British cavalrymen and 837 of their horses.

Fifty to One.

War is not such a dangerous game as people think. In spite of all efforts to annihilate each other, enemies do comparatively slight damage. During the Franco-German war, with its scores of battles on a vast scale, only 19½ men in each 1,000 were killed and 108 wounded, while 4½ per 1,000 were missing. Thus any soldier engaged had about nine chances to one that he would not get a scratch, and over fifty chances to one that he would not be killed. Most of the wounds received were slight—that is to say, one-fourth of all the wounds were severe, and three-fourths were slight. But it is surprising how small a wound disables a man and knocks him out of the ranks.

—The big wheel at the Paris Exposition is 348 feet in diameter, and its cars seat 1,600 passengers. The Ferris wheel was only 250 feet in diameter.

—Petroleum has recently been discovered on the Nile, and a syndicate of American, English and European capitalists has been formed as a result of the success of the recent borings. The discovery of oil is admitted, but the extent and location of the wells have not as yet been announced.

—A resident of Presburg, Austria, after years of experimenting, has succeeded in coloring the plumage of birds by the administration of food mixed with aniline dyes. In this way he has produced red and blue pigeons, and has imparted to canaries all the tints of the rainbow.

—At a prayer meeting in London, in which people of various sects took part, one of the speakers thus tersely expressed himself: "What I means to say, gentlemen, is this—if a man's heart is in the right place, it don't matter at all what sex he belongs to."

—A man of many callings—the huckster.

On the Trigger's Pull.

THERE is always trouble of one sort or another when a woman meddles with those things which do not concern her sex.

Obviously, carbines were none of Miss Mivart's concern. If she felt that she had to play with firearms she should have kept to Flobert rifles. Nothing would do, however, but that she must learn to shoot a carbine, and the result was that the whole post rose up and cut Burton, to a man; so that there was no peace for him any longer in that regiment and he had to seek transfer to another. There were other results, also, but they come further on.

Some thought that what Miss Mivart did was done on purpose, and some thought that it was a piece of idiotic silliness. The latter based their argument upon the general frivolousness of her ways, and upon the innocency of her round, blue eyes. The former held to the belief that Miss Mivart was one of those women favorites of Fortune who look greater fools than they are. They said, with a certain show of reason, that Georgia Mivart was a child of the service and not an importation from civil life. She had been born in a garrison and had played with rows of empty, green-rimmed cartridge-shells at an age when most little girls play with paper dolls. She had hummed snatches of the bugle-calls before she could talk, and the person she had admired the most and obeyed the best for the first dozen years of her life had been Kreutzer, Captain Mivart's two-headed striker. A few years of boarding-school back East could not have obliterated all that.

Besides, the veriest civilian, who has never come nearer to a carbine than to watch a Fourth of July parade, might reasonably be expected to know by intuition that in a target-practice competition every trigger has got to pull just so hard, whatever the regulation number or fraction of pounds may be. Otherwise, it is plain that the nearer you come to a hair-trigger the better your aim will be.

However, whether Miss Mivart was fully aware of what she was doing, nobody ever knew, unless perhaps it was Greville—and he, like Zuleika, never told. But Burton had a bad time of it, and all his beautiful score went for worse than nothing at all.

That, though, was the end. And the beginning ought to come first. The beginning was when Miss Mivart undertook to learn to shoot a carbine.

There was a target-practice competition going on at the post; not one which was of any interest to the service, or even to the department at large; just a little social affair, devised to keep up the esprit de corps of the troops and to lighten the monotony of life. There were three contests, one for troops and companies, as such; one for individual privates, and one for the officers. This last was to finish off, and then there was to be a big hop.

Every one knew from the first, when Burton and Greville shot with their troops, that the officers' competition would lie between them. This made it interesting in more ways than one, because the rivalry was not confined to the target range, but extended to the winning of Miss Mivart's hand and heart, and every one believed that this would settle a matter she did not appear to be able to settle for herself. Not that she was to blame for that. Any one, even a person much more certain of her own mind than Miss Mivart was, would have been put to it to choose.

They were both first lieutenants, and both cavalrymen, and both good to look upon. Burton was fair and Greville was dark, but she had no fixed prejudices regarding that. She had often said so. Also, both were as much in love with her as even she could have wished, and were more than willing that all the world should see it—than which nothing is more pleasant and soothing to a right-minded woman.

The rifle contest lasted ten days, during which time the air hummed with the ping and sing of bullets over on the range, and with the calls of the markers in the rifle-pits. Only scores and records and bets were thought and talked about.

Miss Mivart herself had bet, with all the daring wickedness of a kitten teasing a beetle. She even went so far as to bet on both Burton and Greville at once. The adjutant undertook to explain to her that that was called "hedging," and was not looked upon as altogether sporty. Miss Mivart was hurt. Was it really dishonest, she wanted to know. The adjutant felt that he had been unkind. He hastened to assure her that it was not—not dishonest in the least; only that it took away from the excitement of the thing to a certain extent. Miss Mivart smiled and shook her head. No, she didn't think it did, because, of course, she knew herself which one she wanted to have win. The adjutant admitted that that might possibly be just as interesting for herself and the fortunate man. And which was he, if he might ask. Miss Mivart shook her head and smiled again. No, she didn't think he might ask. As the man himself didn't know, she could hardly tell any one else just yet, could she? She had her own ideas about fair play.

"I can shoot a carbine, myself," she told the adjutant, with her cleft chin proudly raised; "and my shoulder is all black and blue. Mr. Burton is teaching me."

"Oh!" said the adjutant, "and what does Greville think about that?" The adjutant was married, so he was out of the running.

"Mr. Greville is teaching me, too," said Georgia; "and here he comes for me now."

Burton was safe on the target range, over behind the barracks. Miss Mivart and Greville went in the other direction, by the back of the officers' row, over in the foothills across the creek. Greville nailed the top of a big red pasteboard box to the trunk of a tree, and Miss Mivart hit it once out of sixteen times—when she was aiming at the head of a prairie dog at least twenty feet away to the right. The other fifteen shots were scattered among the foothills.

Then her shoulder hurt her so that she was ready to cry. Greville would have liked to have her cry upon his own shoulder, but, as she didn't, he did some fancy shooting to distract her. He found a mushroom-can, and threw it into the air and filled it full of holes. She had seen Burton do the same thing that morning with a tomato-can. In fact, from where she sat now, on a lichen-covered rock, she could see the mutilated can glittering in the sun, over beyond the arroyo. So she thirsted for fresher sensations.

"I'll tell you," she said to Greville, as he held up the mushroom-can for her to inspect the eight holes he had made with five shots, "let me toss up your hat, and you make a hole through the trade-mark in the crown."

It was a nice, new straw hat. Greville had sent East for it and it had come by stage the day before. It had cost him, express paid, four dollars and seventy-five cents. This, too, at a time when anything he had left after settling his mess and sutler's and tailor's bills, went into stick-pins and candy and books and music and riding-whips for Miss Mivart. But he took off the hat and gave it to her without even a lingering glance at that high-priced trade-mark within. And he felt that it was worth four times four dollars and seventy-five cents when she picked up the tattered remains, at last, and asked if she might have them to hang in her room.

Then she looked down at her grimy hand and considered the first finger, crooking it open and shut. "I think it's going to swell," she pouted. "That is a perfectly awful trigger to pull."

Greville did what any man might have been expected to do. He caught the hand and kissed it. Miss Mivart looked absolutely unconscious of it. She might have been ten miles away herself. Greville, therefore, thought that she was angry, and his heart was filled with contrition. Yet he was old and wise enough to be a first lieutenant. He walked beside her back to the post in a state of humble dejection she could not understand. The next morning it was Burton's turn. Greville was over on the range now, vainly trying to bring his record up to where Burton's was. This time Miss Mivart fired at a white pasteboard box, and hit it three times out of twenty. She was jubilant, and so was Burton, because she was making such progress under his tuition.

"That's an easy carbine to shoot, isn't it?" she asked as they wandered home; "it isn't at all hard to pull the trigger."

Burton glanced at her, and she met his eyes innocently. "It's just like any other trigger," he told her.

"Yes, of course. And is that the very same carbine you use in the competition—the one you shot with yesterday, and will use this afternoon when you finish up?"

He told her that it was.

"Well," she said, complacently, "I think I'm doing very nicely, don't you. I hit the target three times, and my first finger doesn't hurt a bit this morning."

That afternoon the competition came to an end, with Burton a good many points ahead of Greville. And that night there was the big hop. It had been understood from the first that the man who won was to take Miss Mivart to the hop. So she went over with Burton, and gave him one-third of her dances. Greville had another third, and the rest were open to the post at large.

Greville did not look happy at all. It was not the target record he minded. He never thought about that. It was having to go down the board-walk to the hop-room behind Burton, and to watch Miss Mivart leaning on his arm and looking up into his face from under the white mists of her lace hood. He was not consoled at all when she looked up into his own face even more sweetly at the beginning of the second dance, and whispered that she was "so sorry."

Now as the second dance had been Greville's the third was Burton's. That was the way it had been arranged. As the band began the waltz, Miss Mivart stood beside Greville in the center of quite a group. The commanding officer was in the group, so was Burton's captain, and so was the adjutant. There were some others as well, and also some women. Miss Mivart may have chosen that position, or it may simply have happened so.

Any way, just as the waltz started, Burton, light-hearted and light-footed, came slipping and sliding over the candle-waxed floor, and pushing his way into the midst. "Ours," he said, triumphantly.

But Miss Mivart did not heed him at once. She was telling them all how she had learned to shoot a carbine as well as any one, and they, the men, at any rate, were hanging on her words.

"Mr. Greville taught me," she said, "and so did Mr. Burton." This was the first either had known of the other's part in it, and they exchanged a look.) "They taught me with their own carbines, too. The very same ones they used themselves in the competition. But I shot best with Mr. Burton's carbine. He must have fixed his trigger to pull more easily; it was almost like, what do you call it, a hair-trigger?"

She looked about for an answer, and saw on their faces a stare of stony horror and surprise. They had moved a little away from Burton, and the commanding officer's steely eyes were on his face. The face had turned white, even with the sunburn, and Burton's voice was just a trifle unsteady as he spoke.

"This is our dance, I think, Miss Mivart," he said.

The innocent, round, blue orbs looked just a little coldly into his. "No," she told him, "I think you are mistaken. It is Mr. Greville's dance." And she turned and laid her hand on Greville's arm.—San Francisco Argonaut.

As To Pins.

The following is a literal copy of a composition written by a Georgia schoolboy, the original of which is now in my possession. With all its crudeness the essay shows considerable honest effort to learn and give facts relating to the subject, "The pin," which was selected by the teacher: "A pin is a very useful apparatus invention. It is very useful to the people of the United States as well as the people of other countries in Europe. It is used in pinning dresses and other toilets. The pin is very cheap in this town, and other counties of Georgia. They are 2 or 8 packs for 5 cents, and sometimes sold for 4 or 5 packs for 5 cents. Pins were first used in Great Britain and they were first made of wire in 1540. Brass ones were imported from France by Catherine Howard. At first pins were made by filing a point of proper length of wire. In some parts of France the thorns are still used as pins. Supposing a boy was climbing a fence and he accidentally tore his coat, and he was scared his mother would whip him if she would see that whole in his coat, but if he had met another companion of his on his way home, and this boy had a pin, of course the boy would feel better, and go home on a sly, and slip in the house without seeing his mother. Some days after this the boy's mother would notice the whole in her son's coat, of course the boy's mother ask him about this whole, and the boy tell his mother the truth about this, of course the boy feels better after this, and after the boy receives a whipping he meets the boy that gave him the pin and thanks him This is the good of a pin."—Truth.

Expressing His Disgust.

Probably most writers of serial stories are familiar with the sensation of receiving letters of commendation or disapproval from interested readers who are following up the stories as they appear in their regular weekly or monthly installments. Occasionally some curious person asks for private information as to what the outcome is to be, while others offer suggestions as to the disposition to be made of the villain, or express a fear that the author intends to marry the hero to the wrong woman.

The writer of a serial story in one of the popular magazines a few years ago received the following letter from an indignant reader. The names are changed for obvious reasons:

"Dear Sir: I take the liberty of telling you that I regard your 'Simeon Stacy,' now running through the Blank Magazine, as a little the thinnest novel I have ever read. Furthermore, the principal character in the story, to whom you give the title role, so to speak, is so thoroughly detestable a man that I have taken the most effective means in my power to show my contempt for him by changing my name—which happened to be the same as his—to something as unlike it as possible. Yours truly,

"ANDREW JACOBSON,
"(Formerly Simeon Stacy)."

Indians Gave It the Name.

M. Perrault gives an ingenious explanation of the origin of the word "Canada." Giovanni Gaboto, who is also known as Cabot, landed in that country in 1497, being the first European to arrive there.

After him came some Spanish vessels, and in 1506 Denys, a Frenchman and Verrazzani, a Venetian, took possession of the country in the name of France. At that time, says M. Perrault, the French often heard the native use the Spanish words "Acanada," which signify, "nothing here." The natives had picked up these words from the Spaniards who had searched for gold and silver, and who, because they had found nothing, had speedily departed. The French came to the conclusion that the words so often used by the natives were the original name of the country. Another explanation is that Canada means a village or a town.—Revue Scientifique.

Victoria's Coronation Coach.

Queen Victoria has at her disposal when she wishes to take a ride innumerable carriages. Of these the coronation coach is first. This carriage is unknown to the present generation, as it has never left the royal mews at Buckingham palace since 1861. It is lovely, but cumbersome, was designed for George III. and every portion is richly decorated and gilded. Outside its panels are pictures painted by noted artists.

Chinese Barbers.

The barbers in towns in China go about ringing bells to get customers. They carry with them a stool, a basin, a towel, and a pot containing fire. When any person calls to them they run to him, and planting their stool in a convenient place in the street, shave the head, clean the ears, dress the eyebrows, and brush the shoulders, all for the value of only half a cent.

Feel of Your Ears.

An English writer, who for fifteen years or more has been a student of criminal anthropology, says that large, voluminous ears are the most marked characteristic of the criminal.

Waste Material Utilized.

Pine and hemlock stumps and old logs that were supposed to have become worthless years ago, are being gathered in Northern Michigan to be manufactured into lath.

If you don't like a book you can shut it up. Women do not resemble books.

SERMONS OF THE DAY

Preached by Rev. Dr. Talmage

Subject: Profligate Literature—Evil Publications the Greatest Scourge of the World—It Fills the Prisons and Insane Asylums—Power of the Press.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.—Dr. Talmage sends the following report of a discourse, which will be helpful to those who have an appetite for literature and would like some rules to guide them in the selection of books and newspapers; text, Acts xix. 19 "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men, and they counted the price of them and found it 50,000 pieces of silver."

Paul had been stirring up Ephesus with some lively sermons about the sins of that place. Among the more important results was the fact that the citizens brought out their bad books and in a public place made a bonfire of them. I see the people coming out, with their arms full of Ephesian literature and tossing it into the flames. I hear an economist who is standing by saying "Stop this waste! Here are $7,500 worth of books. Do you propose to burn them all up? If you don't want to read them yourselves, sell them." "No," said the people; "if these books are not good for us, they are not good for anybody else, and we shall stand and watch until the last leaf has burned to ashes. They have done us a world of harm; and they shall never do others harm." Hear the flames crackle and roar!

Well, my friends, one of the wants of the cities is a great bonfire of bad books and newspapers. We have enough fuel to make a blaze 200 feet high. Many of the publishing houses would do well to throw into the blaze their entire stock of goods. Bring forth the insufferable trash and put it into the fire and let it be known in the presence of God and angels and men that you are going to rid your homes of the overtopping and underlying course of profligate literature.

The printing press is the mightiest agency on earth for good and for evil. The minister of the gospel standing in the pulpit has a responsible position, but I do not think it is as responsible as the position of an editor or a publisher. At what distant point of time, at what far out cycle of eternity, will cease the influence of Henry J. Raymond or a Horace Greeley, or a James Gordon Bennett, or a Watson Webb, or an Erastus Brooks, or a Thomas Kinsella? Take the overwhelming statistics of the circulation of the daily and weekly newspapers and then cipher, if you can, how far up and how far down and how far out reach the influences of the American printing presses.

What is to be the issue of all this? I believe the Lord intends the printing press to be the chief means for the world's rescue and evangelization, and I think that the great last battle of the world will not be fought with swords and guns, but with types and presses, a purified and gospel literature triumphing over, trampling down and crushing out forever that which is depraved. The only way to overcome unclean literature is by scattering abroad that which is healthful. May God speed the cylinders of an honest, intelligent, aggressive Christian printing press!

I have to tell you that the greatest blessing that ever came to the nations is that of an elevated literature, and the greatest scourge has been that of unclean literature. This last has its victims in all occupations and departments. It has helped to fill insane asylums and penitentiaries and almshouses and dens of shame. The bodies of this infection lie in the hospitals and in the graves, while their souls are being tossed over into a lost eternity! The London plague was nothing to it. That counted its victims by thousands, but this modern pest has already shoveled its millions into the carnal house of the morally dead. The longest train that ever ran over the tracks was not long enough or large enough to carry the beastliness and the putrefaction which have been gathered up in bad books and newspapers in the last twenty years.

Now, it is amid such circumstances that I put a question of overmastering importance to you and your families. What books and newspapers shall we read? You see I group them together. A newspaper is only a book in a swifter and more portable shape, and the same rules which apply to book reading will apply to newspaper reading. What shall we read? Shall our minds be the receptacle of everything that an author has a mind to write? Shall there be no distinction between the tree of life and the tree of death? Shall we stoop down and drink out of the trough which the wickedness of men has filled with pollution and shame? Shall we mire in impurity and chase fantastic will-o'-the-wisps across the swamps when we might walk in the blooming gardens of God? Oh, no! For the sake of our present and everlasting welfare we must make an intelligent and Christian choice.

Standing, as we do, in chin-deep fictitious literature, the question that young people are asking is, "Shall we read novels?" I reply there are novels that are pure, good, Christian, elevating to the heart and enobling to the life, but I have still further to say that I believe that seventy-five out of 100 novels in this day are baleful and destructive to the last degree. A pure work of fiction is history and poetry combined. It is a history of things around us, with the scenes and the assumed names of poetry. The world can never pay the debt which it owes to such writers of fiction as Hawthorne and McKenzie and Landon and Hunt and Arthur and others whose names are familiar to all. The follies of high life were never better exposed than by Miss Edgeworth; the memories of the past were never more faithfully embalmed than in the writings of Walter Scott. Cooper's novels are healthfully redolent with the breath of the seaweed and the air of the American forest. Charles Kingsley has smitten the morbidity of the world and led a great many to appreciate the poetry of sound health, strong muscles and fresh air. Thackeray did a grand work in caricaturing the pretenders to gentility and high blood. Dickens has built his own monument in his books, which are a plea for the poor and the anathema of injustice, and there are a score of novelistic pens to-day doing mighty work for God and righteousness.

Now, I say, books like these, read at right times and read in right proportion with other books, cannot help but be ennobling and purifying, but, alas, for the loathsome and impure literature that has come in the shape of novels like a freshet overflowing all the banks of decency and common sense! They are coming from some of the most celebrated publishing houses; they lie on your centre table to curse your children and blast with their infernal fires generations unborn. You find these books in the desk of the school miss, in the trunk of the young man, in the steamboat cabin, on the table of the hotel reception room. You see a light in your child's room late at night. You suddenly go in and say, "What are you doing?" "I am reading." "What are you reading?" "A book." "Where did you get it?" "I borrowed it." Alas, there are always those abroad who would like to loan your son or daughter a bad book! Everywhere, everywhere, all unclean literature! I charge upon it the destruction of 10,000 immortal souls, and I bid you wake up to the magnitude of the evil.

I charge you, in the first place, to stand aloof from all books that give false pictures of life. Life is neither a tragedy nor a farce. Men are not all either knaves or heroes. Women are neither angels nor furies. And yet, if you depended upon much of the literature of the day, you would get the idea that life, instead of being something earnest, something practical, is a fitful and fantastic and extravagant thing. How poorly prepared are that young man and woman for the duties of to-day who spent last night wading through brilliant passages descriptive of magnificent knavery and wickedness! The man will be looking all day long for his heroine, in the office, by the forge, in the factory, in the counting room, and he will not find her, and he will be dissatisfied. A man who gives himself up to the indiscriminate reading of novels will be nerveless, inane and a nuisance. He will be fit neither for the store, nor the shop, nor the field. A woman who gives herself up to the indiscriminate reading of novels will be unfitted for the duties of wife, mother, sister, daughter. There she is, hair disheveled, countenance vacant, cheeks pale, hands trembling, bursting into tears at midnight over the fate of some unfortunate lover; in the daytime, when she ought to busy, staring by the half hour at nothing; biting her finger nails into the quick. The carpet that was plain before will be plainer after having wandered through a romance all night long in tessellated halls of castles. And your industrious companion will be more unattractive than ever, now that you have walked in the romance through parks with plumed princesses, or lounged in the arbor with polished desperado. Oh, these confirmed no! readers! They are unfitted for this life, which is a tremendous discipline. They know not how to go through the furnaces of trial through which they must pass, and they are unfitted for a world where everything we gain we achieve by hard and long continuing work.

Again, abstain from all those books which, while they have some good things, have also an admixture of evil. You have read books that had two elements in them—the good and the bad. Which struck you? The bad. The heart of most people is like a sieve which lets the small particles of gold fall through, but keeps the great cinders. Once in awhile there is a mind like a loadstone which, plunged amid steel and brass filings, gathers up the steel and repels the brass. But it is generally exactly the opposite. If you attempt to plunge through a hedge of burs to get one blackberry, you will get more burs than blackberries. You cannot afford to read a bad book, however good you are. You say, "The influence is insignificant." I tell you that the scratch of a pin has sometimes produced lockjaw. Alas, if through curiosity, as many do, you pry into an evil book your curiosity is as dangerous as that of the man who would take a torch into a gunpowder mill to see whether it would really blow up or not!

In a menagerie in New York a man put his arm through the bars of a black leopard's cage. The animal's hide looked so sleek and bright and beautiful. He just stroked it once. The monster seized him, and he drew forth a hand torn and mangled and bleeding. Oh, touch not evil with the faintest stroke! Though it may be glossy and beautiful, touch it not lest you pull forth your soul torn and bleeding under the clutch of the leopard. "But," you say, "how can I find out whether a book is good or bad without reading it?" There is always something suspicious about a bad book. I never knew an exception—something suspicious in the index or style of illustration. This venomous reptile always carries a warning rattle.

Much of the impure pictorial literature is most tremendous for ruin. There is no one who can like good pictures better than I do. The quickest and most condensed way of impressing the public mind is by a picture. What the painter does by his brush for a few favorites the engraver does by his knife for the million. What the author accomplishes by fifty pages the artist does by a flash. The best part of a painting that costs $10,000 you may buy for ten cents. Fine paintings belong to the democracy of art. You do well to gather good pictures in your homes.

But what shall I say of the prostitution of art to purposes of iniquity? These death warrants of the soul are at every street corner. They smite the vision of the young, man with pollution. Many a young man buying a copy has bought his eternal discomfiture.

There may be enough poison in one bad picture to poison one soul, and that soul may poison ten and fifty and the fifty hundreds and the hundreds thousands until nothing but the unmeasuring light of eternity can tell the height and depth and ghastliness and horror of the great undoing.

The work of death that the wicked author does in a whole book the bad engraver may do on a half side of a pictorial. Under the guise of pure mirth the young man buys one of these sheets. He unrolls it before his companions amid roars of laughter, but long after the paper is gone the result may perhaps be seen in the blasted imaginations of those who saw it.

The queen of death holds a banquet every night, and these periodicals are the invitation to her guests.

Young man, buy not this moral strychnine for your soul! Pick not up the nest of coiled adders for your pocket! Patronize no newsstand that keeps them! Have your room bright with good engravings, but for these outrageous pictorials have not one wall, one bureau, not one pocket.

A man is no better than the pictures he loves to look at. If your eyes are not pure, your heart cannot be. At a newsstand one can guess the character of a man by the kind of pictorial he purchases.

When the devil fails to get a man to read a bad book, he sometimes succeeds in getting him to look at a bad picture. When satan goes a-fishing, he does not care whether it is a long line or a short line if he only draws his victim in. Beware of lacivious pictorials, young man, in the name of Almighty God, I charge you!

Cherish good books and newspapers; beware of bad ones. The assassin of Lord Russell declared that he was led into crime by reading one vivid romance.