Juniata Sentinel and Republican.

B. F. SCHWEIER, THE CONSTITUTION---THE UNION---AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAWS. Editor and Proprietor.

VOL. LIV. MIFFLINTOWN, JUNIATA COUNTY, PENN., WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 1900 NO. 36

Captain Brabazon

BY B. M. CROKER

A Military Romance of South Africa

CHAPTER II—(Continued.)

Here Esme laughed hysterically, and at once brought the whole storm upon her unlucky head, and acted as a kind of lightning-conductor to Mrs. Brabazon's wrath.

"You laugh! You dare to laugh, miss! But it is only what I could expect from you. I believe you were in his confidence, and knew all about it. I'm sure you encouraged him in his abominable conduct. You and he have always been a heavy trial to me. You had a letter this morning; be so good as to hand it over."

"I cannot, Mrs. Brabazon," replied Esme, tremulously; "it—it—is private," glancing appealingly at her stepmother.

"And full of abuse of me, no doubt. Well, you may keep it," making virtue of necessity, "and make much of it, for it is the last you will receive! Every other I find in the post bag I shall burn. Mark my words! into the fire it goes."

"Florian and Gussie," said Esme, timidly, glancing from her brother to her sister, "are neither of you going to say anything? Won't you speak for Teddy?" she asked, piteously, "or is it to be left to me? Mrs. Brabazon, surely you cannot forget that Teddy is our brother, and will always be so as long as he lives. He is not dead to us—at least, he is not dead to me—and I hope he will be spared for the next fifty years. I think it only right and honorable to tell you that I will never give him up, that I shall write to him and receive his letters, and meet him and speak to him whenever I get the chance! His being a soldier makes no difference whatever; he is my brother all the same. It was not his fault he could not pass; he did try, and he wanted so much to be a soldier."

"What do you say to this tirade, Augusta?" demanded Mrs. Brabazon, turning on Gussie with a portentous frown.

"I think it is all very dreadful about Ted, of course," she stammered; "but he is my brother," looking hard at Esme, as though endeavoring to borrow some of her spirit.

"And you, Florian?" demanded Mrs. Brabazon, in an awful, hollow voice.

"Oh, if you want my opinion," returned that gentleman, carefully stirring his tea, "I think Ted is a confounded ass, and has made a regular fool of himself, and all that sort of thing, and it's no end of a bore. I would pass him now if I met him in the street," pulling up his collar as he spoke, and feeling that he was a very important, dignified, illustrious young man.

"Oh, Flo!" exclaimed his youngest sister, reproachfully.

"Now, you have your brother's opinion, Esme, the opinion of the head of the house, I hope you are satisfied," said Mrs. Brabazon, with malicious triumph. "You see he is, as usual, quite of my way of thinking! If Teddy had behaved respectfully, I know that Florian would have done something for him, and used his interest with his influential friends; he has always been such a good, generous brother."

Thus Teddy fell into disgrace with his people; his name was erased from the family roll, and written down instead in nearly everyone's black book.

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Two years passed by, and during these two years there have been some little changes even at Baronsford. Esme was now nineteen, prettier than ever, but stiff and shy in general society. Gussie, on the contrary, seemed born for the social circle, was always the center of a little knot of swains on these occasions, and had played havoc with the affections of several susceptible young men. Mrs. Brabazon still frequented stately houses and stately dinner tables, and had saved a sum of money that would have made Miss Jane exclaim "most unaccountable," had she seen her banker's book. Time has not stood still with Teddy. Here is his last letter. It lies on the school room table beside Esme:

"From Troop Sergeant Brown, York, to Miss E. Brabazon:

"My Dear Esme—Always the culprit! you need not tell me that. I've written to you at least ten times in imagination; long letters, too, but I suppose that does not count. I have news for you, good news. You know that for a long time I was instructor in the riding school, and now I am promoted to be troop sergeant, which, by the way, I suppose is Greek to you, old lady; but I dare say your mind can grasp the word 'promotion.' I am getting up the ladder at last. The colonel hinted to me the other day that if I went on as I had commenced he would be happy to recommend me for a commission; so we begin to see daylight. I hope to see you early in the autumn, before we embark for foreign service; we are next on the roster. I shall come down and lie perdue at Mother Swoffer's; it would never do for you to be seen parading about in public with a sergeant of lancers. It will be a case of 'meet me by moonlight alone,' but that will be better than nothing. Only fancy, Esme, I've not spoken to a lady for two years. Give my love to Gussie and Aunt Jane. Do you know that she sent me £25 lately in a very crabbed little letter? Never mind, she shall be proud of me yet.

"Your affectionate brother,

"TEDDY B."

CHAPTER III.

"She hasn't been here, has she?" panted Gussie, thrusting an eager, red faced inside the school room door. "No," with a gesture of relief, "I see she has not," now introducing her whole person in walking costume; tossing off her hat as she subsided into the nearest chair, and altogether presenting an aspect of the wildest excitement. "I thought I'd be the first. I ran," putting her hand to her side. "Such news!"

"Upon my word, Gussie," said her sister, gazing at her with calm, dispassionate eyes, "you only want a personal attendant, and a few straws in your hair, to look a complete lunatic."

"But you haven't heard my news! You don't know what I have to tell you!" returned Miss Brabazon, exultingly.

"Your news," contemptuously. "I know the style so well! Mrs. Bell has got a new bonnet, and all Maxton is shaken to its center. You are about to inform me that Lady Louisa has had a fit, or—or—what could it be—that Mr. Vashon has again made you an offer of his hand and heart?"

"It's quite, quite true; beautifully, delightfully true!" returned the young lady. "Come and let us have a dance of jubilee," humming a waltz, and seizing her stupefied sister around her waist, and beginning to whirl her about the room.

"Stop, stop, stop, Gussie!" she cried, breathlessly; "are you in your right senses?" holding her fast, and gazing into her flushed face and sparkling eyes. "Are you serious? Just let me look at you!" drawing her toward the window.

"Perfectly serious," she panted, "and nearly out of my mind with joy. You will have a nice little house in town, a victoria for the park, lots of dances and dinners, at which your elder sister, charming Miss Brabazon, will be the piece de resistance."

"Poor old gentleman! I always thought he was odd; very queer, indeed," returned her sister, slowly.

"Miles is in Burmah, I believe," said Gussie. "I wonder what he will think of this legacy!"

"Think—what every one must think," returned Esme, decidedly, "that Uncle George was mad!"

"Not a bit of it, my dear. I grant you he was odd, eccentric. Mrs. B. once wanted Aunt Jane and Flo to have him looked after and locked up, but it would have been utter nonsense. Because a man wears queer clothes and devours hot curries and Arabian and Persian love tales, it does not naturally follow that he is a lunatic. He was perfectly well able to manage his affairs, and was very sharp about money."

"Well, it's no business of mine," said Esme, shrugging her shoulders; "only I'm sorry he made such a foolish will."

"Foolish will!" cried Gussie. "What do you mean? It's a beautiful will. Don't tell me that you are not going to marry Miles Brabazon—not going to jump at him and the legacy."

"I certainly am not. What a way you talk. Jump, indeed!" getting rather red, and stooping to pick up her scattered work. "I would not marry him on any account, nor he me; we are not crazy. We have not, as the French say, 'Spiders in our garrets,' like poor old Uncle George."

"He will marry you fast enough, once he sees you," observed Gussie, decisively. "I don't know anyone as pretty anywhere, though you are my own sister, and I say it, as shouldn't. Everybody thinks you are the prettiest girl in Thornshire," boastfully.

"The prettiest girl in Thornshire" took not the least notice of this brilliant compliment, but began to shake out, fold up and put away her unfortunate work, evidently incapacitated for any further industry that afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

Let us now adjourn to British Burmah, and pay a visit to the other legatee, Captain Miles Brabazon. A single flight of imagination will land us in Rangoon, without undergoing forty days' torture on the high seas.

"I only wish I had your luck, that's all! But I always knew you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth, and that Dame Fortune had her eye on you."

The speaker, a young man in polo costume, long boots and dangerous looking spurs, was sitting on a teak-wood table in an easy, degage attitude, with his cap set on the side of his close-cropped sandy head, a polo stick in one hand.

The gentleman upon whom Dame Fortune was supposed to "have her eye"—also in polo garb—was sunk in the depths of a Bombay chair, an expression of growing dissatisfaction upon his naturally gay and good-looking countenance. He held a large blue letter in his hand, and the ground around him was littered with papers and envelopes; evidently the European mail had just come in. The young man with the boots and spurs is Mr. Gee, the other Captain Brabazon, both officers in the Royal Marchers, at present luxuriating in the climate of British Burmah. They are friends, and partners in the straggling wooden bungalow in which we find them.

"Luck, indeed," growled Captain Brabazon, angrily, crumpling up the letter and thrusting it into his breast pocket, "I see no luck in it; quite the other way!"

"Will ye listen to him!" cried Mr. Gee. "Have you not always had enough for your modest wants?"

"That's because they were modest," returned the other, promptly.

"Have you not had the best of health, even in this beastly climate? which is enough to undermine the constitution of a rhinoceros! Have you not had speedy promotion? Haven't you youth?" pausing a second for breath.

"Go on; don't shirk it! Why not say beauty at once?" suggested his companion, encouragingly.

"Well, I'll even go as far as that," generously, "though that was not what I was going to remark; but everyone knows, yourself included, that you're a good-looking fellow, and quite one of our show men. And you have actually the cheek to sit there calmly and tell me to my face that you are not a lucky fellow, when bank on the top of all this comes a thumping legacy of forty thousand pounds. I only wish I had half your complaint, that's all!"

"I wish to goodness you had," returned the other, sulkily. "You seem to forget, my clever and very sanguine friend, that I've only a half share in the booty, a half share and a better half. Sounds like a pun, eh? You have overlooked one little detail, matrimony, and that if I don't marry this girl within six months all the coin goes to a college in Calcutta. Did you ever know such an old hunks?" Now standing up, walking to the doorway and leaning against one of the posts, "Why the mischief could he not divide the money and leave us each half?" he demanded, angrily, of his friend.

"Ay, why, indeed?" rejoined Mr. Gee.

"It all came of my tipping him a tenpound note."

"Your grandmother!" ejaculated Mr. Gee, with a laugh of the rudest incredulity.

"Great-grandmother, if you like, but it's a fact! When the old chap came home from India, with pots of money, he was awfully afraid of being set upon by hordes of needy relations. A bright idea struck him. He hastily retired to a shady suburb in London and set up as a pauper. In other words, sent round a begging letter for a little help, to keep him from want in his old age. Rather grim kind of joke, eh?"

"Rather," returned Mr. Gee, admiringly; "and not a bad idea."

"Any old fellow who was capable of that would be capable of anything, this will inclusive," exclaimed his nephew, emphatically. "However, to go on with my story. Mrs. Adrian Brabazon, my future stepmother-in-law, pleaded poverty; Aunt Jane made no excuse of any kind, doubtless she smelled a rat; and I, being just then rather flush of coin, sent him a tenner, with a promise to do what I could; for, after all, he was my father's brother, and I could not let the old beggar starve," apologetically.

(To be continued.)

A strong recommendation: "But, sir, what has your candidate ever done to deserve the support of the people?" "Well, for one thing, this is the first time he has ever run for office."—Chicago Journal.

Teacher—For what else was Julius Caesar noted? Tommy Tucker (who had studied the lesson somewhat hastily)—His great strength, ma'am. He threw a bridge across the Rhine.—Chicago Tribune.

"The codfish," said the professor, "lays considerably more than a million eggs." "It is exceedingly lucky for the codfish that she doesn't have to cackle over every egg," said the student who came from the country.—Tit-Bits.

Softleigh—I—aw—am weally getting to be—aw—quite a poet, doncher know. Miss Cutting—Indeed! Softleigh—Yaws; I have a little book in which I—aw—write down me thoughts in whyme evahwy night before wetiring. Miss Cutting—It will be a volume of blank verse when finished, I suppose.

"I hope you are one of the people who can keep cool in the presence of danger." "I am," answered the man who wanted a place as a private watchman. "Have you ever demonstrated it?" "I have; I once came near being drowned in a skating pond."—Washington Star.

"What is the woman's offense?" "She threw a brick at a neighbor woman, your Honor, and hit a man standing behind her." "The man is guilty of contributory negligence. If he hadn't been an idiot he would have stood in front of her. Case is dismissed."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

"I'll bet a thousand," shouted the excited politician, "that the editor had no proofs of those damaging stories he published against the boss." "I'll go you," retorted the little man with a high forehead and two pairs of glasses. "He had the proofs and went through them, word for word, and O. K.'d the revise." "Who in thunder are you?" "I'm the proof-reader."—Detroit Free Press.

Distressing Mistakes.

"A man can't be too careful whom he snubs."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, every once in awhile I've snubbed some plain people who afterward came into a lot of money."

—The average silk hat rises 7½, weighs five ounces; the average stiff derby hat of the same size weighs four and one-half ounces; the average straw hat of the same size weighs two and one-quarter ounces.

STORY TELLER

"SHE WAS A BEAUTEOUS LADY."

SOFT, velvety carpets; rich draperies; rare old paintings in deep gold frames; quaint cabinets, richly carved, filled with treasures from many lands. The air was heavy with the fragrance of hothouse flowers; the distant murmur of a fountain made a low, dreamy melody.

A woman reclined in a wide easy chair. She was in perfect harmony with the beauty of her surroundings. Her exquisite face, outlined against the dark background, looked like a rare cameo. Jewels gleamed at the snowy throat and in the golden hair, dressed high and looking, in the dim light, like a queen's coronet.

The portieres parted and a little girl came dancing into the room; a little girl with such blue eyes, such golden curls, and such tiny, satin-shod feet, that she looked more like a fairy than a human child. As she rested her dimpled elbows on the woman's lap and looked with childish eyes into the face so like her own, one knew at once that they were mother and daughter.

"Mamma, hasn't Annette made me look pretty?"

"Yes, dear."

"Won't papa and the company come soon?"

"Presently."

"And, mamma, may I have all the creams I want? Oh, dear! It's so stupid. I wish they would come. Mamma"—fretfully, as the lady did not speak—"what are you thinking about? I'm so lonesome. Annette said we would have a lovely time; but—" The blue eyes were full of tears.

"Don't cry, dearie; they will come soon. Shall I tell you a story?"

"Please do, mamma."

"Well, sit here—so. Once upon a time," began the lady, in a low, musical voice, "there lived a little girl who had blue eyes and yellow curls, like yours, dear, but she didn't have such pretty gowns. No; she wore little gingham aprons and sunbonnets, and ran all day with her little feet bare—"

"Oh, mamma," interrupted the child petulantly, "I don't want to hear about poor little girls."

"Ah, child, she was not poor, but rich—oh, so rich."

"But she had bare feet!"

"True. But she was rich, for she possessed earth's rarest jewels—youth and innocence and love. There was a boy—a dear, noble little boy—who always played with this little girl. He always knew where the first spring flowers grew. The violets came first, in the back pasture, where an old, mossy log sheltered them from the wind. And the buttercups! How they grew around the spring—"

"Mamma, what did the little girl do?" interrupted the child.

"Ah, Mignonne, mother forgets. Well, the little girl loved the little boy. He had such a great, good heart. And the brownest eyes—oh, such beautiful eyes!"

"Were they like Mr. Barnett's, mamma?"

The lady started, and a soft pink flush crept into her cheeks. She glanced quickly at the child; it was only a child's thoughtless question.

"Yes, they were like—and yet so unlike!"

"Did the little boy love the little girl, mamma?"

"Oh, so much, Mignonne! But the little girl grew up, and every one told her that she was beautiful. And—and—child, when she looked at other girls, and then at her own reflection in the mirror, she saw how much more beautiful she was than they. Well, one day a—a prince came, and he told the girl that she was too lovely to stay on the farm with the brown-eyed boy. He asked her to go with him, and promised that she should have every pleasure the world held; gowns and laces and jewels, and operas and balls—everything that her foolish heart longed for. And so, Mignonne, she married the prince and went away with him, far away from the boy, and—"

"Did the prince give her the nice things, mamma?"

"Oh, child, they were not nice! The pure gold was in the buttercups by the old spring; the real diamonds were the dewdrops that grew along the lane; the sweetest music was the singing of the little brook over the pebbles; the only happiness was by his side."

"Whose? The prince's?"

"No; there was nothing there but misery, baby, misery! She saw always the boy's brown eyes; she listened always for his voice. Oh, child! To think that he is famous now; and she—"

"Wasn't the princess happy, mamma?"

"No! Oh, no! Her heart was always aching. She would laugh and dance, and dress in costly laces and jewels; but she never could forget the ache, because—"

"Why?"

"Because her heart was broken."

"Oh, mamma! Here they come!" exclaimed the child, forgetting all about the story, as a murmur of voices broke the silence. Again the portiere parted, and a lady entered, followed by two men in evening dress; one was a thick-set man, with cold, gray eyes and iron gray whiskers—the master of this palatial home; the other a tall, distinguished-looking man, with dark, curling hair and deep brown eyes.

The lady arose as they entered and advanced to greet them. She was lovely before; she looked radiant now. The blue eyes shone, and the fair face glowed with pleasure—or perhaps excitement—for her hands trembled.

The tall gentleman took a seat and began talking to the child.

"What have you been doing to amuse yourself, fairy?" he asked, smiling down at her.

"Mamma has been telling me a story. Do you like stories?"

"Sometimes. Was this a good story?"

"Not very," said the child, frankly; "mamma almost cried about it, but I didn't think it was sad. No one died in it."

"What was it about, Mignonne?"

"Well, it was about a poor little girl with bare feet"—glancing at her own dainty slippers—"only mamma said she was rich."

"Indeed! Why?"

"Well, 'cause she had love and flowers by a spring, and had a farm. Did you ever see a farm, Mr. Barnett?"

"Yes; but the little girl?"

"Well, she loved a little boy."

"Ah!"

"Yes, 'cause he knew all about flowers, and had brown eyes. Mamma said they were about like yours. He loved the little girl, too, and he had an awful great heart."

"What became of the girl?"

"A prince came along—she was growed up then—and told her that she could have everything she wanted—diamonds and laces and things—"

"Did she marry the prince?"

"Yes; and mamma said his gold wasn't real gold at all."

"What was it?"

"Just misery."

"Did—did you say the princess loved the little boy?"

"Oh, more'n anything."

"And wasn't she happy with the prince?"

"Oh," said the child, looking up with eyes that were strangely like those which had looked into his from beneath the hood of a checked sunbonnet in the springtime of a long past youth; "no, her heart was always aching for the boy; and I guess heartache must be awful bad, 'cause mamma just about cried when she told me."

"What did she say?"

"She said," began the child, toying idly with her bit of a lace handkerchief, and looking rather longingly at the group at the other end of the room, for she was tired of the story—"she said the girl's heart was broken."

"Come, Mignonne, you will tire Mr. Barnett with your chatter," called the sweet voice of the lady. "I think I hear a carriage. The others will soon be here."

"Mignonne has been telling me a story," Mr. Barnett said to the lady; then, reaching out his hand to detain the child, as her mother moved away, "listen, dear; I will tell you the rest of the story. I know it."

"Do you? Mamma hadn't finished when you came," replied the child, with returning interest, thinking that perhaps the story would yet prove interesting.

"Tell your mamma that the rest of the story is—" He paused and glanced at the beautiful lady.

"What?" questioned the child impatiently.

Stooping down and whispering softly in the child's pink ear, he said:

"That the boy's heart is dead."—Munsey's Magazine.

New Words in English Language.

Every week seems to witness the addition of some new word to the English language. If we go on developing at the present rate and in the present manner, a reading book for upper standards—say standard X.—in the next century will present such a lesson as the following:

"It was no use boycotting her; she was not to be burked. Where we went, her tribbies eagerly followed. She scorned no hypocrisy; she would betray us as readily as smile at us; nay, she would dreyfus us the while she professed the fondest friendship.

"No mafeking on festival holiday, but her scowling face krugered upon us. She was slim, and we knew it, but we could not home the fact; she deweyed before us as a hero, but in private she mobiled. She steadied her speech with sentiment, but her actions were incomprehensibly browninged, and, as regards their definite purpose, ruthlessly kitchenered." — Liverpool (England) Post.

RAILWAYS OF CHINA.

They Are Few in Number and Mostly Controlled by Foreigners.

China has few railways, the policy of foreign exclusion so long in vogue having prevented their construction. Most of the lines in existence are in the region which is now the scene of military operations and of the depredations of the "Boxers." A railway, eighty miles long, belonging to an English company, extends from the port of Tien-Tsin north to Pekin. At Fengtai, five miles south of Pekin on this line begins the Belgian "Lu Han" railway, which extends southwest seventy-eight miles to Paotingfu, where the "Boxers" have been particularly active. Both the English and the Belgian lines have been largely destroyed by the rioters. From Tien-Tsin a railway extends 287 miles eastward to Chenchou, and there are branches aggregating fifty miles. Altogether the English system has 407 miles and the Belgian eighty-eight. It is the former that is to be ultimately connected with Moukden, in the Russian sphere, where it will connect with the Siberian railway. About sixty miles of the American Hankan-Pekin line has been graded, but work is now stopped.

A VOLCANIC TRAGEDY

OVERCOME BY DEADLY FUMES FROM MOUNT VESUVIUS.

The Family of a Rich Wine Maker at Bosco Reale Found as They Were When in a Supposably Safe Refuge, in the Year A. D. 79.

Curious as are some of the scenes unearthed at Pompeii, still more so are some recent finds at Bosco Reale, near Naples. Recently there was laid bare the home of a well-to-do ancient who was engaged in the wine and oil business. His house was strictly self-contained, having the dwelling-rooms and the winemaking-rooms on two adjacent sides of a small court. The house was not remarkable, except for the singular modernity of its water supply. It depended on the rainfall, which was carefully stored in a lead cistern. Thence a portion passed to the ordinary domestic taps. A portion passed to a large boiler, from which by an elaborate system of cocks the master's private bath and basin could be supplied at pleasure with hot, cold or tepid water. In the early autumn of 79 A. D. the threatening state of Vesuvius alarmed the household. The vintage was approaching, and the room which contained the wine presses had been cleaned and made ready for the new grapes. In particular a reservoir to which the new wine flowed from the presses was clean and empty. The room was well protected with a thick wall. Here, therefore, when flight was still thought to be unnecessary, or perhaps when it had already become impossible, a couch and a table and smaller articles were brought from the living rooms of the house. Some man, perhaps the master, hastily gathered in a cloth his precious collection of silver plate and his hoard of a thousand gold pieces—varying in date from the well worn coins of the early emperors to the brand new mintage of Vespasian. The lady of the house, marked by her jeweled earrings; two other men and a favorite dog also came to the chosen refuge. But the foul gases were quick in their action. The master sought safety in the underground reservoir, but shared the fate of his companions. His store of silver plate lay with him till the other day. It now adorns the Louvre, to which it was presented by the liberality of a member of the house of Rothschild. One fragment alone, which in his haste he had dropped near his strong cupboard, and which was therefore found separately, is now at the British Museum. While this was passing indoors there was also a moment of brief agony outside. The dog by the porter's recess was straining his chain when he was overcome. One of the three horses had broken loose from the stable. The fowls had huddled together in one corner of the yard and the pigs in another.

Still another interesting find was in the grounds of a villa called Vona at Bosco Reale, belonging to the De Prisco family. A huge peristyle and four large chambers have been discovered, on the walls of which are some twenty frescoes of large dimensions, rich coloring, and of a design hitherto unequaled by any brought to light.

Most of the figures are full sized and more carefully executed than any hitherto known. One is probably a portrait of Epicurus, another represents two young female figures reclining on large cushions at a banquet. A third fresco represents a woman, richly clad, playing a lyre, while a fourth is an exquisitely designed representation of a gladiator seated by the side of a female figure. Rich mural decorations, fresh in color and perfect in drawing, cover the parts of the walls not occupied by the main frescoes.

Unfortunately for students of art, it is feared that exposure to the air and the light will cause these magnificent paintings to fade as quickly as those at Pompeii and in the Naples museum. Every effort is being made to preserve them as long as possible.

Subterranean Lake.

To London, as to almost every large city, the question of a water supply has ben a serious problem. Londoners now see a way to solve it. The Engineer of the County Council has informed that body that underneath London is an immense lake, in a chalk basin 2,500 square miles in extent. The annual rainfall that sinks to this lake, 100 feet below the surface of the ground, amounts to 280,000,000,000 gallons, which would give a daily yield of 767,000,000 gallons. An artesian well has already tapped the lake at Clapham, and it is pointed out that all that is necessary to insure a water supply is to sink a sufficient number of wells. The wonder is that London should have existed for more than 2,000 years and never discovered that the great lake was beneath it.

Queen of Italy Leads Fashion.

The Queen of Italy, although very charitable and exceedingly solicitous for the welfare of her people, is the most extravagant woman in the kingdom in the matter of dress. The king thinks she is setting a bad example, but she says that her doings have no influence, as the Italian ladies are naturally fond of the play, and she is but keeping up her position as the head of the nation.

World's Biggest House.

The Sultan of Turkey has built at Mecca the biggest house in the world. It is intended for the accommodation of pilgrims, and is capable of sheltering 6,000 persons. The next biggest house in the world is in a suburb of Vienna. It accommodates 2,112 tenants.

The Oldest Steam Engine.

The oldest steam engine in the world has recently gone off duty after working more than 120 years. It was built in 1777. It is a beam engine, the beam being of wood; the cylinder 32 inches in diameter, with an 8 ft. stroke. This veteran engine has been in the service of the Birmingham Canal Navigation Company.

SERMONS OF THE DAY

Preached by Rev. Dr. Talmage

Subject: The Kind of Religion That the World Needs—Only That Which Comes Straight Down From Heaven Can Be of Benefit to Humanity.

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WASHINGTON, D. C. — From Norway, where Dr. Talmage is now staying, he sends the following discourse, in which he shows that the world can never be benefited by a religion of human manufacture, which easily yields to one's surroundings, but must have a religion let down from heaven; text, Amos vii, 8: "And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb line."

The solid masonry of the world has for me a fascination. Walk about some of the triumphal arches and the cathedrals, 400 or 600 years old, and see them stand as erect as when they were builded, walls of great height, for centuries not bending a quarter of an inch this way or that. So greatly honored were the masons who builded these walls that they were free from taxation and called "free" masons. The trowel gets most of the credit for these buildings, and its clear ringing on stone and brick has sounded across the ages. But there is another implement of just as much importance as the trowel, and my text recognizes it. Bricklayers and stonemasons and carpenters in the building of walls use an instrument made of a cord, at the end of which a lump of lead is fastened. They drop it over the side of the wall, and, as the plummet naturally seeks the centre of gravity in the earth, the workman discovers where the wall recedes and where it bulges out and just what is the perpendicular. Our text represents God as standing on the wall of character, which the Israelites had built, and in that way testing it. "And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb line."

What the world wants is straight up and down religion. Much of the so-called piety of the day bends this way and that to suit the times. It is oblique, with a low state of sentiment and morals. We have all been building a wall of character, and it is glaringly imperfect and needs reconstruction. How shall it be brought into perpendicular? Only by the divine measurement. "And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb line."

The whole tendency of the times is to make us act by the standard of what others do. We throw over the wall of our character the tangled plumb line of other lives and reject the infallible test which Amos saw. The question for me should not be what you think is right, but what God thinks is right. This perpetual reference to the behavior of others, as though it decided anything but human fallibility, is a mistake as wide as the world. There are 10,000 plumb lines in use, but only one is true and exact, and that is the line of God's eternal right. There is a mighty attempt being made to reconstruct and fix up the Ten Commandments. To many they seem too rigid. The tower of Pisa leans over about thirteen feet from the perpendicular, and people go thousands of miles to see its graceful inclination and to learn how, by extra braces and various architectural contrivances, it is kept leaning from century to century. Why not have the ten granite blocks of Sinai set a little aslant? Why not have the pillar of truth a leaning tower? Why is not an ellipse as good as a square? Why is not an oblique as good as straight up and down? My friends, we must have a standard. Shall it be God's or man's?

The divine plumb line needs to be thrown over all merchandise. Thousands of years ago Solomon discovered the tendency of buyers to depreciate goods. He saw a man beating down an article lower and lower, and saying it was not worth the price asked, and when he had purchased at the lowest point he told everybody what a sharp bargain he had struck, and how he had outwitted the merchant. "It is naught, saith the buyer, but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth" (Proverbs xx, 14). Society is so utterly askew in this matter that you seldom find a seller asking the price that he expects to get. He puts on a higher value than he expects to receive, knowing that he will have to drop. And when he wants fifty he says seventy-five, and is he wants 2000 he asks 2500. "It is naught," saith the buyer. "The fabric is defective, the style of goods is poor. I can get elsewhere a better article at a smaller price. It is out of fashion, it is damaged, it will fade, it will not wear well." After awhile the merchant, from overpersuasion or from desire to dispose of that particular stock of goods, says, "Well, take it at your own price," and the purchaser goes home with light step and calls into his private office his confidential friends and chuckles while he tells how for half price he got the goods. In other words, he lied and was proud of it.

Nothing would make times so good and the earning of a livelihood so easy as the universal adoption of the law of right. Suspicion strikes through all bargain making. Men who sell know not whether they will ever get the money. Purchasers know not whether the goods shipped will be according to the sample. And what, with the large number of clerks who are making false entries and then absconding, and the explosion of firms that fail for millions of dollars, honest men are at their wits' ends to make a living. He who stands up amid all the pressure and does right is accomplishing something toward the establishment of a high commercial prosperity.

The pressure to do wrong is stronger from the fact that in our day the large business houses are swallowing up the smaller, the whales dining on bluefish and minnows. The large houses undersell the small ones because they buy in greater quantities and at lower figures from the producer. They can afford to make nothing or actually lose on some styles of goods, assured they can make it up on others. So a great dry goods house goes outside of its regular line and sells books at cost or less than cost, and that swamps the bookseller, or the dry goods house sells bric-a-brac at lowest figures, and that swamps the small dealer in bric-a-brac. And the same thing goes on in other styles of merchandise, and the consequence is that all along the business streets of all our cities there are merchants of small capital who are in terrific struggle to keep their heads above water. The ocean liners run down the Newfoundland fishing smacks. This is nothing against the man who has the big store, for every man has as large a store and as great a business as he can manage.

To feel right and do right under all this pressure requires martyr grace, requires divine support, requires celestial reenforcement. Yet there are tens of thousands of such men getting splendidly through. They see others going up and themselves going down, but they keep their patience and courage and their Christian consistency, and after awhile their success will come. There is generally retribution in some form for greediness. The owners of the big business will die, and their boys will get possession of the business, and with a cigar in their mouths and full to the chins with the best liquor and behind a pair of spanking bays they will pass everything on the turnpike road to temporal and eternal perdition. Then the business will break up, and the smaller dealers will have fair opportunity, or the spirit of contentment and right feeling will take possession of the large firm, as recently with a famous business house, and the firm will say: "We have enough money for all our needs and the needs of our children. Now let us dissolve business and make way for other men in the same line." Instead of being startled at a solitary instance of magnimity it will become a common thing. I know of scores of great business houses that have had their opportunity of vast accumulation and who ought to quit. But perhaps for all the days of this generation the struggle of small houses to keep alive under the overshadowing pressure of great houses will continue. Therefore, taking things as they are, you will be wise to preserve your equilibrium and your honesty and your faith and throw over all the counters and shelves and casks in measuring line of divine right. "And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb line."

In the same way we need to rectify our theologies. All sorts of religions are putting forth their pretension. Some have a spiritualistic religion, and their chief work is with ghosts, and others a religion of political economy, proposing to put an end to human misery by a new style of taxation, and there is a humanitarian religion that looks after the bodies of men and lets the soul look after itself, and there is a legislative religion that proposes to rectify all wrongs by enactment of better laws, and there is an aesthetic religion that by rules of exquisite taste would lift the heart out of its deformities, and religions of all sorts, religions by the peck, religions by the square foot and religions by the ton, all of them devices of the devil that would take the heart away from the only religion that will ever effect anything for the human race, and that is the straight up and down religion written in the book which begins with Genesis and ends with Revelation, the religion of the skies, the old religion, the God given religion, the everlasting religion, which says, "Love God above all and your neighbor as yourself." All religions but one begin at the wrong end and in the wrong place. The Bible religion demands that we first get right with God. It begins at the top and measures down, while the other religions begin at the bottom and try to measure up.

I want you to notice this fact, that when a man gives up the straight up and down religion of the Bible for any newfangled religion it is generally to suit his sins. You first hear of his change of religion, and then you hear of some swindle he has practiced in a special mining stock, telling some one it he will put in $10,000 he can take out $100,000, or he has sacrificed his integrity or plunged into irremediable worldliness. His sins are so broad he has to broaden his religion, and he becomes as broad as temptation, as broad as the soul's darkness, as broad as hell. They want a religion that will allow them to keep their sins and then at death say to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and that tells them, "All is well, for there is no hell." What a glorious heaven they hold before us! Come, let us go in and see it. There are Herod and all the babes he massacred. There are Charles Gaiteau and Robespierre, the feeder of the French guillotine, and all the liars, thieves, house burners, garroters, pickpockets and libertines of all the centuries. They have all got crowns and thrones and harps and scepters, and when they chant they sing, "Thanksgiving and honor and glory and power to the broad religion that lets us all into heaven without repentance and without faith in those humiliating dogmas of ecclesiastical dogvism."

My text gives me a grand opportunity of saying a useful word to all young men who are now forming habits for a lifetime. Of what use to a stonemason or a bricklayer is a plumb line? Why not build the wall by the unaided eye and hand? Because they are insufficient, because if there be a deflection in the wall it cannot further on be corrected. Because, by the law of gravitation, a wall must be straight in order to be symmetrical and safe. A young man is in danger of getting a defect in his wall of character that may never be corrected.

Hear it, men and boys, women and girls, all the fun is on the side of right. Sin may seem attractive, but it is deathful, and like the manchineel, a tree whose dews are poisonous. The only genuine happiness is in a Christian life.

There they go, two brothers. The one was converted a year ago in church one Sunday morning during prayer or sermon or hymn. No one knew it at the time. The persons on either side of him suspected nothing, but in that young man's soul this process went on: "Lord, here I am, a young man amid the temptations of city life, and I am afraid to risk them alone. Come and be my pardon and my help. Save me from making the mistake some of my comrades are making, and save me now." And quicker than a flash God rolled heaven into his soul. He is just as jolly as he used to be, is just as brilliant as he used to be. He can strike a ball or catch one as easily as before he was converted. With gun or fishing rod in this summer vacation he is just is skillful as before. The world is brighter to him than ever. He appreciates pictures, music, innocent hilarity, social life, good jokes and has plenty of fun, glorious fun. But his brother is going down hill. In the morning his head aches from the champagne debauch. Everybody sees he is in rapid descent. What cares he for right or decency or the honor of his family name? Turned out of employment, depleted in health, cast down in spirits, the typhoid fever strikes him in the smallest room on the fourth story of a fifth-rate boarding house, cursing God and calling for his mother and fighting back demons from his dying pillow, which is besweated and torn to rags. He plunges out of the world, with the shriek of a destroyed spirit.

God is now throwing that plumb line over this republic, and it is a solemn time with this nation, and whether we keep His Sabbaths or dishonor them, whether righteousness or iniquity dominate, whether we are Christian or infidel, whether we fulfill our mission or refuse, whether we are for God or against Him, will decide whether we shall as a nation go on in higher and higher career or go down in the same grave where Babylon and Nineveh and Thebes are sepulchered.

"But," say you, "if there be nothing but a plumb line, what can any of us do, for there is an old proverb which truthfully declares, 'If the best man's faults were written on his forehead, it would make him pull his hat over his eyes.' What shall we do when, according to Isaiah, 'God shall lay judgment to the line and righteousness the plummet?'"

Ah, here is where the gospel comes in with a Saviour's righteousness to make up for our deficits. And while I see a hand on the wall a plumb line, I see also hanging there a cross. And while the one condemns us, the other saves us, if only we will hold to it.

And here and now you may be set free with a more glorious liberty than Hampden or Sidney or Kosciusko ever fought for. Not out yonder or down there or up here, but just where you are you may get it.

The invalid proprietress of a wealthy estate in Scotland visited the continent of Europe to get rid of her maladies, and she went to Baden-Baden, and tried those waters, and went to Carlsbad and tried those waters, and went to Homburg and tried those waters, and instead of getting better, she got worse, and in despair she said to a physician, "What shall I do?" His reply was: "Medicine can do nothing for you. You have only one chance, and that is the waters of Pit Keathly, Scotland." "Is it possible?" she replied. "Why, those waters are on my own estate." She returned and drank of the fountain at her own gate, and in two months completely recovered. Oh, sick and diseased and sinning and dying, why go trudging all the world over and seeking here and there relief for your discouraged spirit when close by and at your very feet and at the door of your heart, aye, within the very estate of your own consciousness, the healing waters of eternal life may be had and had this very hour, this very minute? Blessed be God that over against the plumb line that Amos saw is the cross, through the emancipating power of which you and I may live and live forever!

A Woman's Question.

"I see," he remarked as he looked up from his paper, "that the British have recovered that battery of guns."

"What was it covered with the first time, dear?" she sweetly asked.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Crushed Again.

Softleigh—You dwell in me—aw—mind all the—aw—time, doncher know.

Miss Cutting—Well, you'll have to change your mind or I'll move. I never did fancy living in a flat.