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Captain Brabazon

BY B. M. CROKER

A Military Romance of South Africa

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

"Go on, go on; I'm just boiling to hear the sequel," said Mr. Gee, nodding his head like a mandarin.

"Give me time, my dear sir. In a few days back came a letter, saying that the other was a hoax, and he had only sent it to try me, and feel the family pulse, so to speak; and as I had responded in a liberal spirit I would never have any cause to regret my generosity."

"I wish to goodness a relative would play me the same trick. A sprat of ten pounds landing a salmon of forty thousand is 'plenty good business,' as they say out here. And, by the way, about your cousin; did she tip him too?" grinning.

"Not that I am aware of. She must have been in short frocks at the time of this particular episode."

"And have you never seen her?" inquisitively.

"Not to remember distinctly. There were two little girls at Aunt Jane's when I went to say good-by, years ago. I recollect chasing one of them round the garden, and kissing her tremendously; but which it was I don't know, and I suppose it would be a delicate subject to inquire into."

"Pretty picture. But if she were as ugly as the pig-faced lady herself, I'd marry her and never think twice about it," said Mr. Gee resolutely. "There's a lot of spending in forty thousand pounds; but I can't fancy an old stick-in-the-mud like you chasing and kissing any girl, young or old," grinning. "Tell me some more about her. Where does she live when she is at home? Has she any sister that would be likely to come in for money? Come, don't be so glum, man alive."

"I would have to go into our family history," said Miles. "I will read you a letter and enlighten you, for I know very little about her myself. There are lots to choose from. See what it is to come in for a fortune! There's Mrs. Brabazon's frightfully gushing and full of delight, congratulation, and consent. It would be manners to wait till she was asked! There's Aunt Jane's, that looks as if it were written with a pin, crammed with advice. There's my sister Annie's—"

"That's the one for my money," interrupted Mr. Gee, loudly snapping his fingers. "Mrs. Curzon will tell us all about it, so fire away," and his companion, having picked out the letter in question, began to read the following effusion:

"My Dear Miles—Of course you have opened and read Mr. Barker's letter, and know the great news, that you are now a rich and an engaged man! I wonder how you are taking it? I'm sure your face is a beautiful study this minute; I wish I could see it. Do you know how it happened? No, of course you don't; and you shall hear without further delay. Three years ago, when Esme was returning from school, just as the train was starting from Victoria, an old gentleman and his man servant came scuffling up. He was the queerest old fellow you ever beheld, in a white beaver hat, a blue cutaway coat and a checker tie, and carried an umbrella that would frighten you. The carriage door was flung open, but the inmates showed no flattering desire for his society; very much the other way, squared themselves and scowled. But Esme, who is good-natured, made room for him; in fact, did the honors of the compartment so agreeably, and comported herself so worthily, that when he descended at a station he begged the favor of her name and address, which she gave, little dreaming that the yellow-faced old fogy was the renowned Uncle George. About six months later came an invitation, asking her to spend three days with the old gentleman. It seems that she made a very favorable impression on Uncle G., and the conclusion that she was to be rewarded with your hand and that it was a pity to divide the money in the funds.

"Seriously, my dear Miles, she is a very nice girl—pretty and lively, or would be the latter, only for her stepmother, who keeps these poor girls strictly in the background, and is the embodiment of a dozen wet blankets; consequently they are shy—at any rate, Esme is—and countrified. I should like her for a sister-in-law very much; and you have my full and free consent. Of course, you will come home at once. By the time this reaches you six weeks of the six months will be gone. You will never be so mad as to let the money go to the college in Calcutta; if you do, I shall consider that you are not responsible for your actions. Mind you sell off your little effects without delay, and come home immediately to your affectionate sister, ANNIE CURZON."

"Sell off my little effects! I think I see myself!" exclaimed her brother, folding up her letter with deliberate contempt. "With the snipe just coming in, and the races on next month!"

"But there are heaps of racing and shooting at home," observed Mr. Gee.

"No sport to hold a candle to what we have out here. Thirty brace of snipe within four miles at Ya Goo; or if you like to go down the river to Liriam, there are a couple of hundred actually expecting you! Besides all this, I'm going to have a shot for the gold cup with Destiny, and I've promised Patterson to ride Typhoon in the hunt steeplechase, so I don't stir for a month—if then."

"I'll tell you what!" Mr. Gee's favorite preamble, "you are too old to be talking such nonsense! A child would know better than to be playing with his—his fate in this way! And, as to Typhoon—a bad-tempered, puffing little brute, with as much mouth as a whale, he'll nearly kill somebody yet!"

CHAPTER V.

True to Mr. Gee's doleful prophecy, Typhoon threw his rider in the races which took place a few days later, with the result that Miles was laid up with three broken ribs. Captain Brabazon's accident detained him more than a month in Rangoon. It was the first of July before the doctors gave him a reluctant permission to take his passage in the next steamer.

Miles arrived in England early in the month of August, and spent some time with his sister at Folkestone, staving off the evil day, as he called it in his own mind, when he must present himself at Baronsford in the ridiculous character of an engaged young man who had never set eyes on his fiancee. Mrs. Curzon was a well-jointured widow, some years older than her brother, and any affection she could conveniently spare from her three idolized boys was bestowed on him.

"There is no use in postponing the visit," she declared for the tenth time. "It looks so extremely odd; it looks as if you did not want to carry out the engagement."

"Neither I do," muttered her brother.

"You don't know when you are well off!" said Annie, with decision. "It's not one young man in a thousand who has your opportunities. A pretty girl and a large fortune for the mere picking up. You would be mad not to go to Baronsford, at least to see her. Time is getting on."

In the end her eloquent counsels prevailed, and Miles sat down and wrote off a letter announcing his arrival for the following day. "Strike while the iron is hot," was Mrs. Curzon's maxim. The resources of Baronsford were large, its hospitality in old days famous, so he waited for no reply, but turning his back upon the attractions of Folkestone, set forth for Thornshire the next afternoon. In three hours' time he found himself on the platform at Byford station, about four miles from Baronsford; and leaving his portmanteau to follow, set out across the fields, thinking he would make the old short cut and meet with familiar stiles and pathways. But ten years had worked a change. He rambled about and lost his way, and nearly an hour and a half elapsed before the big red chimneys of the house he sought were to be seen shyly peeping through the surrounding trees.

As he approached the gate all his dreamy speculations and nervous forebodings vanished; his mind was galvanized to sudden alertness as he noticed for the first time the figure of a tall girl in white standing on the drive beyond the trees in the full light of the harvest moon. She was young and slender, as well as he could judge. Her head was bent forward in an attitude of listening and her whole pose denoted eager expectation. She was, without doubt, waiting for somebody. Waiting for him? Impossible! The instant she heard his footsteps and caught an outline of his figure, she made a quick gesture of welcome, and, gathering up her dress, with one sudden swoop came flying down to meet him with the swiftness of a white squall.

He could now hear her running toward him in the dark—for it was dark—her hasty, high-heeled shoes pattering rapidly over the gravel. Nearer, nearer, nearer they came. His heart beat faster even than when in dense and distant Indian jungles he had heard the stealthy tread of a tiger creeping through the underwood and approaching the tree in which he was posted. She was at the gate even sooner than he was. She had flashed it open with hurried hands, and almost before he could realize the fact, her arms were round his neck.

He drew his head back with a jerk, while she breathlessly exclaimed:

"I can hardly believe it! I've been waiting for you for ages, and now you have really come. It seems too good to be true. But how funny and dignified you are. Let me have a look at you," she panted, taking him by the arm and dragging him toward the light.

To say that he was astonished at this reception but feebly conveys his feelings. The first shock over, and having successfully eluded her proffered kiss, his next thought was his unhappy collar.

However, he yielded amiably enough to her blandishments, and suffered himself to be almost hauled into the full, searching white moonlight to be inspected.

As its first chaste gleams fell upon him, his companion stopped, as if she had been shot, gazed into his face with an expression of agonized incredulity, dropped his arm with a kind of smothered exclamation, and fled up the avenue like an arrow from a bow. He stared after her speeding figure in speechless amazement till she disappeared into the shrubbery and vanished like the Maid of the Mist. The whole adventure had been so sudden, and had passed so quickly, that it seemed a kind of dream. It could not be a ghost! Another White Lady of Avenel? But no; that hug was certainly human.

"There is no use in my standing here and staring like a stuck pig," he said to himself at last, having somewhat recovered his mental equilibrium; "I may as well be moving on, and ten to one I'll find the key to this riddle. It's certainly some girl who has mistaken me for her lover; She was a lady by her voice, and young, decidedly. By Jove! she can run a bit. May be it's Miss Augusta; there are only two of them."

Supposing it had been his young lady. But, strange to say, this notion did not please him at all; and, turning over this very disagreeable idea in his own mind, he reached the hall door. He was soon ushered into the drawing-room, just five minutes before dinner-time, where he found Mrs. Brabazon dressed for the evening, awaiting the gong, with her hands lying idly in her lap, and an air of pleasant anticipation pervading her aquiline features. Eight o'clock was her favorite hour in all the twenty-four. Florian was lounging in a deep arm-chair, absorbed in a yellow paper-backed French novel. Few and evil were the books that he read. Gussie was flitting about the room, putting away papers, work and magazines. "So it was not Gussie," observed the new arrival to himself, when he had once more made acquaintance with his Cousin Augusta, with her saucy black eyes and bewitching smiles.

"This is quite an unexpected pleasure," said Mrs. Brabazon, assuming her very best company manners. "I think it very nice of you, taking us unawares like this, without any formality."

"Unawares?" he echoed; "did you not get my letter?"

"Your letter will probably arrive here the day after to-morrow," said Florian sarcastically. "Don't you know that we live in the backwoods here, and have no second post? What did you put on the envelope? Byford?"

"Yes."

"Then that means that it stops in Byford postoffice for twelve hours."

"You seem to be progressing since I was here last," said Miles, with a laugh, glancing surreptitiously around in search of another figure.

"Gussie, my dear," said Mrs. Brabazon, interpreting the pause, with her usual alertness of understanding, "go and tell Nokes to see about a room at once, and Brown to lay another plate, and," in a stage whisper, "let Esme know."

Gussie, having given some hasty directions to Nokes, rushed into the school room with her great news. But it was empty. So was the dining-room; accordingly she ran up the shallow stairs, two steps at a time, breathless, to pant forth the intelligence to her sister, and plunged into their mutual bedroom headlong. At the first glance there was no one to be seen. Stay. What was that limp, crumpled object on Esme's white bed? Esme herself? Never. Esme, who had cast herself down in at attitude of hopeless misery, and seemed crushed out of all shape and form.

"Why," pausing in mid-room, "what on earth is the matter? Are you ill?" demanded Miss Brabazon, aghast.

"No," returned a choked voice half buried in the pillows.

"Then what are you about? Get up this instant," imperiously. "Mrs. Brabazon says you are to come down at once; Miles, your Miles is in the drawing-room."

No answer.

"Esme. Do you hear me?" irritably.

"Yes, of course, I hear you. I'm not stone-deaf," she moaned querulously; then, all at once sitting erect, revealed scarlet cheeks, swollen eyes, and a very disheveled head.

"Why, you've been crying," exclaimed her sister, amazed. "Your nose is like a plum."

"I should rather think I have," impressively. "Gussie," she added slowly, keeping her eyes intently fixed on her companion's face, 'did you ever hear of anybody dying of shame? because I shall."

"Look here, Esme," returned the other, severely, 'this is no time for such nonsense. Dinner is just going in, and you must come down. Mrs. B. says so. "Here," going over to the wash-stand, and hastily pouring out some water, "get up and bathe your eyes, and smooth your hair, and don't be an idiot."

"What will you say," inquired Esme, slowly, getting off the bed and rising to her feet, a tall and very much creased young figure—'what will you say," she reiterated solemnly, "when I tell you that I have seen him already, that I was a long way the first to welcome him?" with a rather hysterical laugh.

"Have seen him? And when, if you please?" disbelievingly.

"At the avenue gate! Oh, Gussie, I don't think I ever can leave this room alive. I took him for Teddy."

"And what harm if you did," replied her sister.

"Harm!" echoed Esme; "just listen, and you will soon hear. You know since my last letter from Teddy announcing his home coming how I have been counting the days and hours till he came, and I was waiting for him near the white gate ever since 6 o'clock."

"Esme, how rash of you! Supposing Mrs. B. had seen him skulking about," ejaculated Gussie.

"I would not care two straws if she did. I would meet him on the hall doorsteps in broad daylight," she panted, breathlessly. "But to go on. I waited ages for Teddy, and at last I heard footsteps, and saw someone that looked very like him coming along the road in the moonlight. Need I saw that I tore down to the gate, threw it wide open, caught him in my arms, hugged him like a bear, telling him I could hardly believe it, it was too good to be true, that I had been counting the days till I saw him and altogether was nearly beside myself with joy. I forcibly dragged him into the light to feast my eyes with a good look at him, and I then discovered that I had been hugging a perfect stranger—a dark young man, who did not seem to approve of it at all, and who my prophetic instinct told me was Miles Brabazon."

(To be continued.)

A Promising Pupil.

A little girl who had just entered school lately jubilantly announced to her father that she did better than all the girls above her in the arithmetic class and went to the top.

"That was smart of you," said he, encouragingly. "How was it?"

"Well, you see, Miss Maggie asked the girl at the top how much was 8 and 5, and she didn't know, and said 12; then the next girl said 9, and the next one said 11, and the next 14. Such silly answers! Then Miss Maggie asked me, and I said 13, and Miss Maggie told me to go up top. Course it was 13."

"That was nice," said the father. "didn't think you could add so well. How did you know it was 13?"

"Why, I guessed it! Nobody said 13."

Our Little Friend Once More.

Her little brother was entertaining in the front room the young man who had just called.

'Look here," he said, suddenly, "are you goin' to propose to my sister tonight?"

"Why—er—er—What do you mean?" asked the youth, with some agitation.

"Oh, nothin', only if you are, you aren't goin' to surprise her. At tea jus' now she bribed me an' my little brother to go to bed at half-past 7. She's hung four Cupid pictures on the drawing-room wall, got pa and ma to promise to go callin' next door, shut the dog in the cellar, and 's been practicin' 'Because I Love You Dearly' on the planner all the afternoon! You'll get her all right, only if she starts talkin' 'bout its bein' sudden, tell her it don't work with you."

—Fondness for milk caused two hogs belonging to George Dennett, of Putnam County, Mo., to take it surreptitiously from his cows. He noticed the falling off in the supply of milk, and watched the cows. He discovered that at night the hogs carefully tapped them.

—The "stinging tree" is a luxurious shrub of Queensland, Australia, and is pleasing to the eye, but dangerous to the touch. It grows from two or three inches to ten or 15 feet in height, and sends forth a very disagreeable odor.

—The "hello" girls have almost double the usual amount of work to do on rainy days. Then the telephone is used to cancel engagements or transact business which in fine weather would be personally attended to.

—A miser in Sulphur Springs, Ark., has no faith in banks, and he placed $1,200 in gold and silver in two tomato cans, and concealed them in his yard. Some one discovered the hiding place of the money, but were not mean enough to take the tomato cans.

—In ancient times the Spartans so detested inebriety that it was their custom to occasionally induce slaves to drink until they became intoxicated, and then arouse general contempt for their condition by exhibiting them in public places.

—A rubber club, intended for policemen, has been invented by a St. Louis gentleman. This is a humane contrivance, as it enables a vigorous officer to stun an unfortunate prisoner without cracking his skull.

Deliver Us from Evil.

THE operating theater was packed with lookers-on.

Mr. Menzies' operations were far-famed. Pending the arrival of the patient from the anaesthetic room on the other side of the passage, the great surgeon stood washing his hands and talking to his dressers.

An enthusiast himself, he always inspired his subordinates with enthusiasm and his daring and success as an operator made him the envy and admiration of all his juniors.

His fine but stern face relaxed into a smile over the naive remarks of one of the students, and a little laugh even broke from his lips. It was unusual for Mr. Menzies to laugh; he was known as a grave, silent man, and the lines of his face were severe, though there was a great kindliness in his keen gray eyes, and his rare smile was particularly charming. The world in which he moved knew well enough what it was that had carved the sternness into what had been so pleasant and bright a face, knew what had caused the look in his eyes which never wholly left them.

The world had been loud in its commiseration, a year before, when Mr. Menzies' wife had left him and their 3-year-old daughter for another man, who had been the great surgeon's friend. Equally loud in its expressed sympathy, but the surgeon had made all such expressions an impossibility.

To no living soul had he ever spoken of the blow which had ruined his happiness, and no living soul had even ventured to touch upon the subject to him.

He faced life sternly now, instead of smilingly as before, that was all; and he flung himself, heart and mind, into his profession, giving apparently no thought to anything beyond it, except to his small daughter.

The child went with him everywhere, and was even now sitting in the carriage, in the hospital courtyard, gravely and intently scanning the people who passed to and fro in the full sunshine.

There was a sudden hushing of the busy talk in the operating theater, as the patient was wheeled in and lifted upon the table, and the surgeon moved forward.

"Patient quite ready, sir," said the house surgeon respectfully.

The surgeon did not even glance at the face of the man upon the table, but proceeded to examine the seat of the injury, asking a few terse questions as he did so.

"Came in early this morning, you say?"

"Yes, sir, only just conscious enough to tell us he was run over."

"Poor fellow! well it is quite obvious what must be done. It is a case of life or death. The only chance of saving him is to operate at once."

The clear, decided voice could be heard all over the theater, the strong, steady hands were watched eagerly from every corner as they began their work with no hesitation, no uncertainty of touch.

For a quarter of an hour Mr. Menzies worked on in silence, broken only by an occasional short word to the dresser beside him.

As usual he was absorbed in the task before him, every other thought for the moment relegated to the back of his mind. Outside, in the courtyard, his little daughter sat in the carriage watching the pigeons strutting to and fro in the sunshine, and the people who passed in and out of the great doors, watched over herself by the coachman, who adored every hair of the curly head, and worshiped the ground that was walked upon by her tiny feet. There was nothing the small girl enjoyed more than coming to the hospital "to wait for father;" it gave her a delightful sensation of being grown up, added to the delight of the long drive sitting beside father, and holding his hand and chatting to him upon the many and varied incidents of the route.

She glanced up at the windows and wondered where father was just that very minute, and whether he would come soon. Then she turned her eyes back again to the pigeons in the sunshine, strutting boldly up and down underneath the feet of the passers-by.

Upstairs, in the theater, there was a breathless silence.

The most critical moment of the operation had been reached, when the surgeon paused for a moment to glance up the table at the face of the patient, and to ask a question of the house surgeon.

But the question was only half uttered, his words broke off suddenly, and a student, more observant than his fellows, noticed what a curious grayness overspread his face.

"Something gone wrong over the anaesthetic," the thought flashed through the student's brain, but even as the flash of thought came, he saw Mr. Menzies pull himself together with a strange, jerky movement, and heard him say quietly:

"Patient all right, Lettesdale?"

"Quite right, sir." The house surgeon's voice was brisk and confident. The student wondered idly what had made the usually calm Mr. Menzies break off in that sudden, irrelevant manner, then his wonderings were forgotten in the absorbing interest of the operation.

The surgeon had turned quietly back to his work, and, with steady fingers that never faltered or wavered, was going on with his task. But his soul was in a tumult; his brain was on fire. The helpless man lying before him—the man whose life lay in his hands—was the friend who one short year before had stolen from him his wife and his happiness, the friend who had been worse than an open enemy. Some long-forgotten words swung through his brain as his fingers moved mechanically in their work.

"If it had been an open enemy that had done me this dishonor, I could have borne it. But it was even thou, mine own familiar friend."

"Mine own familiar friend!" A queer look flashed into the gray eyes; he raised them suddenly and glanced again at the patient's white face. It was so very white that, except for the faint breathing that was just audible, you might have supposed that the one lying upon the table was dead. Dead? the word sprung into Mr. Menzies' mind, following quickly upon those words, "Mine own familiar friend."

Dead—well, if the patient were dead, there would be one villain less in the world; the wrong would have been revenged—if—if the patient who lay so still and white were still forever in death.

The surgeon's eyes went back to their work; his steady fingers never relaxed their task; there was no outward sign of the tumult within his soul, save a certain tightening of his lips.

"Dead!" The word surged to and fro in his brain, until he could see it actually dancing before his eyes. The man whom he had cursed so bitterly—the man who had vanished from his life a year ago—was helpless in his hands, absolutely at his mercy, and, if the knife slipped, ever so little, by the fraction of a hair's breadth, the faint breathing would cease—and—the life that had ruined his life's happiness would go down into silence.

I was so easy, too—so absurdly easy! The operation was one of extreme delicacy. If it failed, no one would ever blame the surgeon! Few men besides himself would even have undertaken it, still fewer would have been able to carry it to a successful termination.

To fail meant such a tiny, tiny shifting of the instrument he handled with such skill and care. The most critical moment of the whole operation was approaching. There was a breathless silence in the theater, and across it the whisper of one student to another was distinctly audible.

"By Jove, he has got a tough job there!"

Then the stillness became almost tangible again as the steady fingers went on with their work.

As though it had been yesterday, instead of a year ago, there rose before Mr. Menzies' eyes a sudden vision of the last day on which he and the patient had met. He saw his wife's drawing-room, flooded with the sunshine, and his wife smiling up into his face, with laughing eyes. The fragrance of roses pervaded everything; she had always loved roses; and a vivid recollection came to him of great roses upon the tables. A mass of gorgeous red ones had caught the flashing sunlight and shone blood-red in its gleams. She had had a big pink one at her belt; and she had held out to him a dainty orange-colored bud. "For your buttonhole, dear," she had said softly.

Beside her stood the man who now lay unconscious under his hands, and their two laughing faces rose up and mocked him with their falseness.

Such a little slip of the hand, so easily compassed, and the life of the man before him would slip forever into silence, and revenge was sweet.

His lips tightened, his eyes grew hard.

"Wrong? absurd!" There was no wrong in avenging your honor. Heaven had thrown this man in his way, the vengeance was meant to be. It was childish, ridiculous, to draw back now, when the game was in his hands.

His lips had tightened till they looked like a thin band of steel, his eyes were for the moment devilish.

For what seemed to him like a century, but what was in reality a quarter of a second, his hand stayed it work, and the patient's life hung in the balance. Then all at once the tense look on his face relaxed, his hand moved on steadily, firmly, surely and only that again one student more observant than the rest, noticed that he was white to the very lips.

"Strain too much for him," was the thought in the young man's mind; "no wonder he feels bad; that was a nasty moment, a slip of a hair's breadth, and good-by to the patient."

"Never saw anything like it," another student murmured; "the finest bit of operating anybody could wish to see. That fellow ought to be grateful to Menzies."

Perhaps there was a little surprise in the minds of all those in the theater that day, that Mr. Menzies did not improve the occasion by a lecture upon the case. Indeed he uttered no syllable during the remainder of the operation, and never once again did he raise his eyes to the face of the patient.

"Get Mr. Stiles to see the case now," he said briefly; "I—I shall not be able to come down to-morrow."

Outside, in the June sunshine, his little daughter awaited him as he came down the hospital steps, and as he stepped into his carriage she slipped her hand into his.

"Are you tired, daddy dear?" she said; "you are ever so white."

"Very tired, my darling," he said mechanically, and his voice shook.

"And you're cold," the child went on, "I felt you shiver, though the sun is as hot—as hot——!"

Another shiver ran through the surgeon's frame.

"Yes, I think I am cold," he said. Perhaps——"

He broke off abruptly, "I have—had a hard time," he finished after a pause.

"Poor daddy," the child whispered. Her soft hand held his more closely, and her little forehead puckered itself into anxious lines as she looked into her father's white face and tired eyes.

Loving little soul! All the way home she wondered what could have made her father so terribly unlike himself that afternoon; all the evening she watched him with tender, anxious eyes, pondering the problem still. But perhaps she wondered most of all when, as was her wont, she said her prayers beside him, and at the end of the Lord's Prayer he whispered, in a strangely broken voice:

"Say again, 'Deliver us from evil, say it—for—for all who are tempted." And the golden curls fell over his trembling hand as she whispered, softly; "Deliver us from evil."—The Argosy.

Poking Fires for a Living.

The trades of London are many, and some of them seem very strange to an American. One occupation by which a score of Britons are said to earn their livelihood is that of "poking fires." It is thus described by a London exchange, and whatever else may be thought of the story, it speaks well for the Jews of England as faithful keepers of their law.

By the Rabbinical law, no Jew is allowed to kindle or mend any fire on the Sabbath; and in certain places in England, where Jews are very numerous, this prohibition makes it necessary that persons shall be employed from sunset on Friday to the same hour on Saturday, in going from house to house lighting fires and lamps, and attending to them.

One woman in the East End of London often has as many as fifty houses to attend to, and draws small fees from each of them. It is not long since a male "fire-poker" in that quarter died worth more than three hundred pounds, which he had saved out of his earnings.

It often happens at the East End that a strict Jew goes out into the street and says to some Christian passer-by, "Would you be so kind as to come indoors and light my lamp? The 'fire-poker' has failed me."

Many a tip do the police constables get for services of this kind. One of them said that he had received scores of small presents for putting kettles on the fire.

Life-Saving Suits.

There is always a fascination about life-saving clothes, for there is, somehow, a latent feeling of nervousness and a desire to be provided against possible emergencies among most people who "go down to the sea in ships."

The latest of these suits, intended to be used in the event o fa shipwreck, consists of a very simple though in many ways liberally appointed costume. A pair of watertight trousers of india rubber, lined with wool, make up the lower garment, which is joined near the waist by a bladder of rubber, and when inflated surrounds the whole of the upper part of the body nearly to the shoulders.

What its proportions are can be gathered from the fact that at the highest part the diameter is over six feet. This india rubber is covered with some waterproof material, and the upper part is fastened round the chest by means of a strap.

There are several pockets in this outer covering, in which are placed a convenient spirit flask, as well as receptacles for biscuits and chocolates, a lamp, and a pistol to be fired to attract the attention of a passing vessel, and also an air pump—like that used for inflating tires—by which the suit is filled with air and given its necessary buoyancy.—London Answers.

The Secret of Success.

An anecdote of Bishop Thomas W. Dudley reveals, in his own words, the secrets of his success: When it was first known in the city in which he was settled that he was to go to Kentucky, some of his friends were disposed to be critical. "You are not going to Kentucky, are you?" asked one. "Yes, indeed."

"Do you know what kind of a State that is? I saw in the paper that one man killed another in a Kentucky town for treading on a dog." The bishop said nothing, and the man continued impatiently: "What are you going to do in a place like that?" "I'm not going to tread on the dogs!" was the calm reply.

Peat Fibre in Textiles.

The manufacture of textiles from peat fiber has been introduced into Sweden. The fibers, produced from peat by a mechanical process, can be mixed in the proportion of 75 per cent. with pure wool for the manufacture of yarn similar in appearance to common woolen yarn.

Nothing to Criticise.

Wise—"They'll never get women to join the army."

Mrs. Wise—"Indeed! And why not?"

Wise—"The uniforms are all alike!"—Puck.

RECENT INVENTIONS.

In Washington a man has patented a new crosscut-saw machine, to be worked by the legs, having two L-shaped levers pivoted on a frame, the long end of one L propecting up and the other down, with pedals on the short ends, which reciprocate a bar attached to the saw.

For carriages a comfortable foot rest has been designed by a Massachusetts man, comprising a pair of brackets secured in the front of the wagon box, with curved sockets in the brackets, in which spindles are set to carry a bar, which is raised or lowered to the right height.

There has been patented by a New York man a folding ladder comprising a tube cut in two sections lengthwise, with a row of pivot pins in each half to support the rungs, which are loosely mounted to allow the two parts of the tube to shut up and contain the rungs in the interior.

An improved spade for breaking up earth into fine particles has a steel frame shaped like a shovel blade, with the interior portion cut away and strung with wires, which are headed in the lower edge of the blade, and have screw-threaded ends which are tightened by nuts to stiffen the spade.

Water can be drawn from a well and carried to the house by a new apparatus, having a carriage riding on a cable and carrying a windlass, which is revolved by a gear wheel, the latter being operated by the movement of the cable, which in turn is driven by a crank to move the carriage and wind lass in either direction.

SERMONS OF THE DAY

Preached by Rev. Dr. Talmage

Subject: The Mission of Cities—Morally They Are No Worse Than the Country—Vice is More Apparent, But Not More Prevalent—A Plea For Honest Living.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.—From St. Petersburg, the Russian capital, where he was cordially received by the Emperor and Empress and the Empress Dowager, Dr. Talmage sends this discourse, in which he shows the mighty good that may be done by the cities and also the vast evil they may do by their allurements to the unsuspecting and the unguarded. The text is Zechariah ii. 17: "My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad."

The city is no worse than the country. The vices of the metropolis are more evident than the vices of the rural districts, because there are more people to be bad, if they wish to be. The merchant is as good as the farmer. There is no more cheating in town than out of town—no worse cheating; it is only on a larger scale. The countryman sometimes prevaricates about the age of the horse that he sells, about the size of the bushel with which he measures the grain, about the peaches at the bottom of the basket as being as large as those at the top, about the quarter of beef as being tender when it is tough, and to as bad an extent as the citizen, the merchant, prevaricates about cotton or silks or hardware.

And as to villages, I think that in some respects they are worse than the cities, because they copy the vices of the cities in the meanest shape, and as to gossip, its heaven is a country village! Everybody knows everybody's business better than he knows it himself. The grocery store or the blacksmith shop by day and night is the grand depot for masculine tittle tattle, and there are always in the village a half dozen women who have their sunbonnets hanging near, so that at the first item of derogatory news they can fly out and cackle it all over the town. Countrymen must not be too hard in their criticism of the citizen, nor must the plow run too sharply against the yardstick.

Cain was the founder of the first city, and I suppose it took after him in morals. It takes a city a long while to escape from the character of the founder. Where the founders of a city are criminal exiles, the filth, the vice, the prisons, are the shadow of those founders. It will take centuries for New York to get over the good influence of the pious founders of that city—the founders whose prayers went up in the streets where now banks discount, and brokers bargain, and companies declare dividends, and smugglers swear custom house lies, and above the roar of the wheels and the crack of the auctioneer's mallet ascends the ascription, "We worship thee, O thou almighty dollar!"

Cities are not evil necessarily, as some have argued. They have been the birthplace of civilization. In them popular liberty has lifted its voice. Witness Genoa and Pisa and Venice. After the death of Alexander the Great among his papers were found extensive plans of cities, some to be built in Europe, some to be built in Asia. The cities in Europe were to be occupied by Asiatics; the cities in Asia were to be occupied, according to his plans, by Europeans, and so there should be a commingling and a fraternity and a kindness and a good well between the continents and between the cities. So there always ought to be. The strangest thing in my comprehension is that there should be bickerings and rivalries around your American cities. New York must stop caricaturing Philadelphia, and Philadelphia must stop picking at New York, and certainly the continent is large enough for St. Paul and Minneapolis. What is good for one city is good for all the cities. Here is the great highway of our national prosperity. On that highway of national prosperity walk the cities.

A city with large forehead and great brain—that is Boston; a city with deliberate step and calm manner—that is Philadelphia; a city with its pocket full of change—that is New York; two cities going with a rush that astounds the continent—they are St. Louis and Chicago; a city that takes its wife and children along with it—that is Brooklyn. Cincinnati, Louisville, Pittsburg, all the cities of the north, and all the cities of the south, some distinguished for one thing, some for another, one for professional ability, another for affluence, another for fashion, but not one can be spared. What advantages one advantages all. What damages Boston Common damages Washington square. Laurel Hill, Mount Auburn, Greenwood, weep over the same grief. The statue of Benjamin Franklin in New York greeting the bronze statue of Edward Everett in Boston. All the cities a confraternity. I cannot understand how there should go on bickerings and rivalries. I plead for a higher style of brotherhood or sisterhood among the cities.

Again, in all cities I am impressed with the fact that all classes and conditions of society must commingle. We sometimes cultivate a wicked exclusiveness. Intellect despises ignorance. Refinement will have nothing to do with boorishness. Gloves hate the sunburned hand, and the high forehead despises the flat head, and the trim hedgerow will have nothing to do with the wild copsewood, and Athens hates Nazareth. This ought not so to be. I like this democratic principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ which recognizes the fact that we stand before God on one and the same platform. Do not take on any airs. Whatever position you have gained in society, you are nothing but a man, born of the same Parent, regenerated by the same Spirit, cleansed in the same blood, to lie down in the same dust, to get up in the same resurrection. It is high time that we all acknowledged not only the Fatherhood of God, but the brotherhood of man.

Again, in all cities I am impressed with the fact that it is a very hard thing for a man to keep his heart right and to get to heaven. Infinite temptations spring upon us from places of public concourse. Amid so much affluence, how much temptation to covetousness and to be discontented with our humble lot! Amid so many opportunities for overreaching, what temptation to vanity! Amid so many saloons of strong drink, what allurements to dissipation! In the maelstroms and hell gates of the street, how many make quick and eternal shipwreck! If a man-of-war comes back from a battle, and is towed into the navy yard, we go down to look at the splintered spars and count the bullet holes, and look with patriotic admiration on the flag that floated in victory from the masthead. But that man is more of a curiosity who has gone through thirty years of the sharpshooting of business life, and yet sails on, victor over the temptations of the street. Oh! how many have gone down under the pressure, leaving not so much as a patch of canvas to tell where they perished. Their dishonesties kept tolling in their ears.

Again, in all these cities I am impressed with the fact that life is full of pretension and sham. What subterfuge, what double dealing, what two facedness! Do all the people who shake hands love each other? Are all those anxious about your health who inquire concerning it? Do all want to see you who ask you to call? Does all the world know half as much as it pretends to know? Is there not many a wretched stock of goods with a brilliant store window? Passing up and down the streets to your business and your work are you not impressed with the fact that society is hollow, and that there are subterfuges and pretensions? Oh, how many there are who swagger and strut, and how few people who are natural and walk! While fops simper and fools snicker and simpletons giggle, how few people are natural and laugh! I say these things not to create in you incredulity or misanthropy, nor do I forget there are thousands of people a great deal better than they seem, but I do not think any man is prepared for the conflict of this life until he knows this particular peril.

Again, in all cities I am impressed with the fact that there is a great field for Christian charity. There are hunger and suffering and want and wretchedness in the country, but these evils chiefly congregate in our great cities. On every street crime prowls and drunkenness staggers, and shame winks, and pauperism thrusts out its hand asking for alms. Here want is most squalid, and hunger is most lean.

A Christian man going along a street in New York saw a poor lad, and he stopped and said: "My boy, do you know how to read and write?" The boy made no answer. The man asked the question twice and thrice. "Can you read and write?" and then the boy answered, with a tear dashing on the back of his hand. He said in defiance: "No, sir; I can't read nor write neither. God, sir, don't want me to read and write. Didn't He take away my father so long ago I never remember to have seen him? And haven't I had to go along the streets to get something to fetch home to eat for the folks? And didn't I, as soon as I could carry a basket, have to go out and pick up cinders, and never have no schooling, sir? God don't want me to read, sir. I can't read nor write neither."

In all cities, east, west, north, south, I notice great temptations to commercial fraud. Here is a man who starts in business. He says, "I'm going to be honest," but on the same street, on the same block, in the same business are Shylocks. Those men, to get the patronage of any one, will break all understandings with other merchants and will sell at ruinous cost, putting their neighbors at great disadvantage, expecting to make up the deficit in something else. If an honest principle could creep into that man's soul it would die of sheer loneliness! The man twists about, trying to escape the penalty of the law, and despises God, while he is just a little anxious about the sheriff. The honest man looks about him and says: "Well, this rivalry is awful. Perhaps I am more scrupulous than I need be. This little bargain I am about to enter is a little doubtful, but then I shall only do as the rest." And so I had a friend who started in commercial life, and as a book merchant, with a high resolve. He said, "In my store there shall be no books that I would not have my family read." Time passed on, and one day I went into his store and found some iniquitous books on the shelf, and I said to him, "How is it possible that you can consent to sell such books as these?" "Oh," he replied, "I have got over those Puritanical notions! A man cannot do business in this day unless he does it in the way other people do it." To make a long story short, he lost his hope of heaven, and in a little while he lost his morality, and then he went into a madhouse. In other words, when a man casts off God, God casts him off.

Hundreds of men going down in our cities every year through the pressure of politics.

That man in the fear and love of God goes into politics with that idea and with the resolution that he will come out uncontaminated and as good as when he went in, but generally the case is, when a man steps into politics, many of the newspapers try to blacken his character and to distort all his past history, and after a little while has gone by, instead of considering himself an honorable citizen, he is lost in contemplation and in admiration of the fact that he has so long been kept out of jail!

If a man should go into politics to reform politics, and with the right spirit, he can come out with the right spirit and unhurt. That was Theodore Frelinghuysen, of New Jersey. That was George Briggs, of Massachusetts. That was Judge McLean, of Ohio.

Then look around and see the allurements to dissipated life. Bad books, unknown to father and mother, vile as the reptiles of Egypt, crawling into some of the best of families of the community, who may read them while the teacher is looking the other way or at recess or on the corner of the street when the groups are gathered. These books are read late at night. Satan finds them a smooth plank on which he can slide down into perdition some of your sons and daughters.

Reading bad books, one never gets over it. The books may be burned, but there is not enough power in all the apothecary's preparations to wash out the stain from the soul. Fathers' hands, mothers' hands, sisters' hands will not wash it out. None but the hand of the Lord can wash it out.

And what is more perilous in regard to some of these temptations we may not mention them. While God in His Bible from chapter to chapter thundered His denunciations against these crimes, people expect the pulpit and the printing press to be silent on the subject, and just in proportion as people are impure are they fastidious on this theme. They are so full of decay and death they do not want their sepulchers opened. God will turn into destruction all the unclean, and the splendors of surrounding can make decent that which He has written. God will not excuse sin merely because it has costly array and beautiful tapestry and palatial residence any more than He will excuse that which crawls, a blotch of sores, through the lowest cellar. Ever and anon, through some lawsuit, there flashes upon the people of our great cities what is transpiring in seemingly respectable circles. You call it "high life," you call it "fast living," you call it "people's eccentricity," and while we kick off the sidewalk the po