THE BRITISH SPHERE IN ASIA.

A British Trans-Asiatic Railway Would Consolidate Imperial Interests.

From Nineteenth Century.

From the point of view of an optimist, our South African reverses have already read us the most valuable lessons, and chief amongst these is the advantage of enabling us to see the true feelings entertained towards us by other nations. France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, and the United States have each had their say, and up to the date of the relief of Kimberley the hard knocks we have sustained have encouraged each and all plainly. It is unnecessary here to review the exact attitude of each country, but amongst them Russia has probably shown her hand with least pretence at disguise. She has mobilized her forces on the Afghan frontier contiguous to Herat. She has concluded a loan operation with Persia, which, in the opinion of many well qualified to judge, will make the latter a vassal power of the former, and, had it not been for the Czar's personal interposition, would have in all probability seized Herat by a coup de main, thus precipitating the long-foreseen conflict for the possession of India. It would not be fair to ascribe these designs to the Russian government as a whole; it is rather the war party in St. Petersburg, at Tiflis, in Turkestan and Transcaspia, who have been so eager to avail themselves of the supposed difficulties of their rivals. But the history of Russia's unchecked southward progress through Central Asia and in China shows us only too clearly that the military party have always had their way in the end, so it would be folly if we were to regard this momentary arrest of their plans as anything else for us but a fortunate breathing-time for deciding on our counter-policy and maintaining our Eastern empire.

Looking, then, to the position of affairs in Western Asia, we are struck at once with the growing influence of Germany in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, especially in connection with her latest project for the prolongation of her contemplated railroad from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf. This important scheme, had it happened thirty years ago, would have aroused considerable excitement. At that time England was deeply interested in the projects for building a railway from the Syrian coast and down the valley of the Euphrates or Tigris to the head of the Persian Gulf, and a select committee of the House of Commons was appointed to examine into the various projects then put forward, and hear evidence from experts and authorities. The upshot was that the assistance of the Turkish government was enlisted, and that the carrying out of the railway was recommended, mainly, of course, with the object of shortening the route to India. But nothing was actually done, and, though various schemes have in the interval been brought forward and discussed in the public press, there has been a strange and discreditable apathy in constructing a work that has been long and plainly demanded in the interests of commerce and the Empire at large. Now that Germany has come forward with proposals for taking up the work, what is England's attitude to be? We are asulk in an undignified and dog-in-the-manger fashion, because another nation has had greater foresight and enterprise than herself? The coming railway will develop the fertile tracts of Mesopotamia and provide an outlet for the cereal and mineral produce of that region, and will to a certain extent add to German prestige throughout the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan. It is impossible to see what legitimate objection our fellow-countrymen could entertain towards the scheme, especially when it will provide a quicker alternative route from Europe to the East for the many thousands of Anglo-Indians who are incessantly journeying backwards and forwards between England and India. When once means are provided for spanning the Bosphorus and for through trains from Calais to the head of the Persian Gulf, swift steamers being provided to cover the interval to Karachi and Bombay, the saving in time will amount to at least three days between England and India.

The accomplishment of this project might require time, but it would be a powerful encouragement to the construction of the "all British" railway, so strongly pleaded for by Mr. C. A. Moreing, in this Review for September, 1899. I may briefly recall that Mr. Moreing's project was for a railway from Alexandria, across the isthmus of Sinai and Northern Arabia, to the head of the Persian Gulf, whence it would hug the northeastern shore of that inlet and traverse Eastern Persia and Baluchistan to the frontier of British India. Linking up the various gaps in the Indian system which now preclude through trains from Sind to Burma, it would then travel over the line now under construction up to the Chinese frontier, and thence pass through Tali-fu to Sui-fu, whence it would follow the line of the great Yang-tze river to Shanghai.

Such a project as this, for a grand trunk line from Egypt to Shanghai, would be a fitting pendant to the Russian trans-Siberian line, and do more than anything else to mark England's determination to unite and maintain her Eastern empire and spheres of interest between the Nile and the Yang-tze. Having for the last ten years done all I could to advocate such a line, I quite agree with Mr. Moreing that England might and should take a leaf out of her rival's book, and adopt the same means to push her influence in the far East that Russia does, and a through railway line traversing Southern Asia roughly along the thirtieth parallel of latitude appeals to one's common sense as well as imagination and national pride.

To such an undertaking the German line from the Bosphorus to the shores of the Persian Gulf would prove a most useful appendage and feeder. In addition to bringing down the wealth of Mesopotamia there would be a large pilgrim traffic throughout the whole of the Turkish Empire, especially if the trans-Asiatic railway included a branch diverging southward to Medina and Mecca. To a certain extent the German line and British line from Egypt to Basra may be said to be competing lines in respect of traffic from and to the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf, but experience shows that in great projects of this sort the mutual benefit is far greater than the interference with each other's traffic. Moreover, it may be confidently anticipated that the new trans-Asiatic railway will attract a great deal of traffic which would otherwise have passed over the Russian trans-Siberian line.

It would thus be extremely desirable from every point of view that the new line should be entered upon with German co-operation, more especially as the two projects will infallibly conduce to their mutual advantage. Sir Lepel Griffin, in a recent and instructive lecture delivered before the East India Association, laid stress on the expediency of Great Britain and Germany working hand in hand in this matter, and declared that nothing but good to both could result from such co-operation.

As to the political consequences of the line there can be no question. Southern Asia has undoubtedly been marked out by nature and the course of events as the real British sphere of influence, but it is astonishing how little has been done to take any effective steps to consolidate this influence. Proceeding from Egypt—that most important stepping-stone in the great waterway between England and India—we sail down the Red Sea, and without including the various British possessions on the African mainland, such as Suakin and the Egyptian coastlands and the Somali Coast Protectorate, we may take note of one or two British islands on the Red Sea littoral of Arabia—of Perim, the 'entrance lodge' to the mare clausum of the Erythraea; of Aden, that extraordinarily flourishing entrepot of Western and Oriental trade; and of various islands, including the Kuria Muria group, dotted along the southern shore of Arabia. All these are British soil, while the hinterland for a considerable distance round Aden and the valleys of Hadramaut to the east are as much British as the native States of India. The evidence of Mr. Theodore Bent, amongst other authorities, is very striking as to this. The rulers of Shihr and Mokalla, the two principal ports of Hadramaut, are British stipendiaries. Muscat, as we know, is virtually under the suzerainty of Great Britain, while the whole of the gulf, with its riparian tribes, is policed by our gunboats, and British-Indian residents are posted at the chief towns.

At the head of the gulf there is a very interesting port—that of Koweit, or Grane. It is the outlet of the trade of the interior of Arabia, viz.: Nejd, Jebel Shimer, Hail, and El Hasa, and pearls, gheo, dates, horses, and other produce are conveyed thence down the gulf, either in native boats to Persian or Arabian ports, or for transhipment to the steamers of the British India Steam Navigation Company's ships to be carried to Karachi and Bombay. If ever the talked of trans-Arabian railway line is constructed from Alexandria or Port Said across the neck of the huge Arabian peninsula and direct to the head of the Persian Gulf, Koweit would undoubtedly be its eastern terminus. It is one of the finest harbors in Western Asia, and ought undoubtedly to form one of the regular ports of call of the British India steamers. Although neglected by European merchants, in 1870 it boasted a population of some 20,000, and native enterprise has erected there some dozen stone docks for the convenience of the shipping. When the House of Commons select committee recommended the construction of a railway down the Euphrates valley, with the view of shortening the route to India, Koweit was to have been the southern terminus. But for the last thirty years the project has been allowed to lapse and languish in obscurity, so Koweit has remained unvisited. Last year, however, a German emissary arrived and remained there for some months, evidently paving the way for the extension of the German railway from Bagdad to the sea, which we are told has been practically decided on. While we should welcome the evidence of Teutonic commercial enterprise, we ought not to neglect plain measures for the promotion of British trade, and the appointment of a consular agent, as soon as the British India steamers can be induced to call at Koweit, would be a sensible and useful step.

As to Persia, matters stand differently. We all know how irritated the Russian press was at the German railway concession to Bagdad. The Novoye Vremya, in particular, declared that Russia could not be indifferent to the extension of the influence of other countries in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, and since then two notable events have occurred in the regions to the west which show very clearly that Russia was determined to have compensation somehow for the German concession. An ostentatious military mobilization has been made by Russia on the Herat frontier, and a loan of 2¼ millions sterling concluded between the Shah's government and the Russian Bank at Teheran, secured on the national customs. Whether the former step was intended as a cover to the latter it is difficult to say, but neither of these bodes much good to British interests. Sir Lepel Griffin, whose position as chairman of the Imperial Bank of Persia and knowledge of the East make his opinion valuable, considers that the most important as well as the only proviso in the loan agreement to which objection might fairly be taken is that which prohibits the government from borrowing again without the consent of the Russians. As the primary object of the loan is to enable Persia to pay off the British loan of 1892, the conditions of the new loan would seem to threaten our interests. But Sir Lepel says, very cogently, that Persia, having once tasted the sweets of borrowing, is not likely to content herself with one venture, but is certain to want money again, and that in the event of her appealing to Great Britain for financial aid nobody could really prevent her borrowing, and that the prohibiting clause would become inoperative.

At the same time the coincidence of these Russian moves in Persia and Afghanistan—one fiscal and one strategic—is ominous. It shows clearly that Russia is determined to take Herat on very small provocation, and it also shows that she is preparing to spread her net over as much of Persia as she can cover. At present the provinces in the south are exempted from the lien on the customs imposed by the new loan, in virtue of an old understanding (though it cannot be called a definite agreement) between Russia and Great Britain that Southern Persia lies within the sphere of influence of the latter. Our great object ought to be to ensure that this cardinal point in our policy is never lost sight of. Lord Curzon of Kedleston, the present Viceroy of India, has laid down in the clearest way what this policy ought to be.

Adverting to "the famous secret scheme for the invasion of India, drawn up by General Kuropatkin (the present war minister) in 1885, and understood to be officially accepted outline of the next Russian advance in Central Asia," Mr. Curzon went on to observe:

"This can only be accomplished in either of two directions, by a war with Turkey and the capture of Bagdad, or by a semi-peaceful advance through Persia. At the time that the Kuropatkin memo was penned, a secret agreement was either concluded or sought to be concluded, by which the advance of a Russian column into Khorassan was to be followed by the cession to Russia of the Gulf port of Bunder Abbas, and (I ask whether) the most recent railroad concession presased for by Russian agents at Teheran did not postulate a main outlet at Chahbar, on the coast of Persian Baluchistan?"

These remarks of the present Indian Viceroy are specially deserving of note at the present juncture, and I regard it as a most fortunate circumstance for India that she has been ruled by one who has been at such extraordinary pains to mastered and much misunderstood elements of her foreign policy. He was very careful even at that time, eight years ago, to draw attention to Russian designs on Bunder Abbas and Chahbar, and these are the very ports that the Sviet, the Nevoye Vremya, and the Rossiya are now insisting that their country ought to make for and occupy. At the same time Lord Curzon was uncompromisingly clear as to how Great Britain should regard such encroachment. He says:

"Such aggression could only be prosecuted in the teeth of international morality, in defiance of civilized opinion, and with the ultimate certainty of a war with this country and with every pole to pole."

A dictum like this, emanating from one who, since the death of Sir Henry Rawlinson, is certainly, apart from his present high office, our greatest expert on the politics of our Eastern empire, cannot but arrest immediate attention. It is his deliberate and fearless opinion that such aggression ought to be treated by England as a casus belli, and it is impossible for those anxious for the welfare of our Asiatic dominions not to rejoice at such plain speaking. The harm done by the persistent silence of English Ministers is incalculable, as it encourages our rivals to formulate ever-increasing pretensions and demands. Russia was not only allowed but actually encouraged by England to occupy an ice-free port in the Gulf of Pechili. The consequences of that fateful invitation cannot as yet be measured, but her descent to the shores of the Indian Ocean would be nothing else but a fatal wedge interposed between Egypt and India, which in her own highest interests, and in the interests of the hundreds of millions committed to her protection, England never could or would put up with.

Where then is the dividing line between Russian and British influence in Persia to be drawn? Here again Lord Curzon fortunately comes to our aid:

"A line can be drawn from Seistan on the east via Kerman and Yezd to Ispahan, and prolonged west to Burujird, Hamadan, and Kermanshah, south of which no hostile influence should be tolerated."

This delineation coincides with the line approximately traced by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, who was for some years our Ambassador at Teheran; and if, as generally understood, it is not contrary to the confidential understanding hitherto believed to subsist between Russia and Great Britain, there is surely enough basis for the erection thereon of a sound and fixed international policy with regard to Persia.

What then is to be our future attitude towards Afghanistan? On this it is needless to waste much speculation. As to the Amir, there is no valid ground for impugning his loyalty to Great Britain. He has had his chronic squabbles with the foreign department of the government of India, but, with the imperfect information to hand, it would be premature to adjudge him in the wrong throughout. Indian foreign policy has never been so conspicuously successful as to warrant us in inferring that our treatment of Abdurrahman has been all that is statesmanlike and equitable. His last deliverance was made to Mr. Thomas Martin, the only remaining Englishman in Cabul, and to him the Amir frankly declared, a propos of the Transvaal, that England's troubles were his troubles, her strength was his strength, and her weakness his weakness, for "are we not allies? England must remember that I am always ready to fight for her on land, here or in India." It is all very well to talk of Oriental instability, but an allegiance that has borne the test of twenty years' experience is no light matter, and in the face of such assurances like these must count for something. While Abdurahman is alive there is no strong likelihood of Russia plunging into hostilities, and our only course at present is to strengthen our position in Baluchistan and Persia, without forcing the Amir's hand in his own dominions. At the same time if Lord Curzon, who is personally known to the ruler of Afghanistan, could arrange to confer with him over the general situation the meeting could not fail to be opportune and fruitful.

As to Baluchistan, matters are getting interesting. It is now about twenty years that our influence has been supreme throughout that region, which previously owed only a vague allegiance to the Khan of Khelat. We are the paramount power there, but we have been very chary of exhibiting any material signs of our supremacy. It is not so long since a murderous attack was made on a survey party near the Mekran coast, an outrage probably encouraged by the removal of British Indian garrisons formerly stationed at some of the few habitable centres. Within the past twelvemonths, however, a significant beginning towards the development of the country has been made by the opening up of a trade route between Quetta and Seistan in Persia, a very encouraging instance of the good results that may be achieved by co-operation between two government departments, viz.: the foreign and India offices. Colonel Sir Thomas Holdich has told us how, in ancient times, Baluchistan was traversed by Arab caravans trading between Persia, and how populous towns were dotted at intervals along the routes. I am strongly inclined to think that the institution of this new trade route (which after all may very possibly be nothing but a revival of an old one) is partly due to Lord Curzon, whose strong geographical instincts have enabled him to bring an expert knowledge to the solution of so many Indian problems. Anyhow, he has publicly declared he will do all he can to promote it. The two officers who have been mainly concerned with the organization of this new route are Major Sykes, our consul at Kerman, and Capt. Webb Ware. At every stage between Quetta and Robat, which is about halfway to the Persian frontier, the water supply is now unlimited, and the trade route, as aligned, avoids all sand. Between Quetta and Nushki a good camel track has been blasted through the hills, where the old road was steep and rough. The trade returns for the past ten months are encouraging, and a telegraph line to follow this route, and thus establish a connection between Baluchistan and Persia, is under consideration.

After over thirty years' devotion to the affairs of India, especially with reference to her relations with adjoining States, I am convinced that the development of the countries which lie between her western frontiers and the Suez Canal is of the greatest possible importance to her future, commercially and politically considered. And I am encouraged by the discovery that in this contention I have the support of a distinguished a writer as Captain A. T. Mahan, of the United States Navy. In his articles "The Problem of Asia," in the March and April numbers of Harper's Monthly Magazine, he shows, in his own characteristic and logical way, how between the thirtieth and fortieth parallels of latitude in Asia there lies a belt of great physical and political importance. "The division of Asia," he truly remarks, "is east and west: movement is north and south," the general tendency of Russia being to drive a wedge down to the Persian Gulf. And the Captain concludes by declaring that a railway from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf will undoubtedly be a feature of the future development of Asia. It is very regrettable that so little has been done towards this end, but the recent threatening activity of Russia against Persia and Afghanistan may be a blessing in disguise in compelling the British government to take measures for securing her influence in these regions.

The best and surest way to consolidate our Asiatic empire is to use the same means that Russia is using to unite her Western and Eastern possessions. If Lord Salisbury is correct in saying that Western policy in China is a policy of railways, the same certainly holds good of Western Asia. Although we are happily the first naval power, it seems foolish, while other powers are busy considering how to push their railroads down to the sea, that Great Britain should resolutely stand aloof and neglect similar enterprises, which are so vital to the security of her scattered posessions. The reason of this apathy is partly geographical ignorance and partly the extraordinary difficulty of getting different public departments to work together towards a joint undertaking.

A great trunk railway from the Nile to the Yang-tze would be a magnificent enterprise, benefiting Great Britain enormously; and from various points of view, apart from its commercial and administrative importance, the post office the India office, the colonial office, the war office, and the foreign office would all profit. But when one endeavors to yoke all these to one team, the task becomes almost hopeless. It is natural for departments to regard questions from their own standpoint, and a many-sided undertaking invites the criticism that springs from a vague consideration of obstacles outside one's own special experience. While the British public are in an anxious but indeterminate frame of mind as regards this great question, it appears to me the very best way to approach the subject would be to appoint a confidential committee who would be charged with the duty of "considering the strides made by foreign nations in the countries east and west of India, the railway and other concessions contemplated therein, and their general development, and to examine and report how British interests may best be safeguarded, having especial heed to the opening of trade routes and the shortening of land communication between India and the Mediterranean on the one side and China on the other." A representative from each of the public departments mentioned above ought to serve on the committee, with the addition perhaps of one from the telegraph branch and another from the treasury. An equal number of non-official members, merchants, M.P.'s, an engineer, and others would be requisite, to prevent the official element from being too heavy and overpowering. When we consider how carefully the Emphrates Valley select committee examined a question of kindred character but far less import to the interests of the Empire, no one will be able to say that the proposed inquiry would be unnecessary or ill-timed. One of the most eminent civil engineers of the day, after going carefully and at great length into the project is of opinion that the British trans-Asiatic railway could be built for forty million sterling, or less than the capital expenditure of the London and South-Western railway. It would be a grave and deplorable omission if the present session were to pass away without insisting on the institution of such a committee of inquiry on the greatest Imperial desideratum of the day.

CHARLES E. D. BLACK.

MAY AND JUNE.

I.

May comes, days comes.
One who was away comes;
All the earth is glad again,
Kind and fair to me.

May comes, day comes,
One who was away comes;
Set his place at hearth and board
As they used to be.

May comes, day comes,
One who was away comes;
Higher are the hills of home,
Bluer is the sea.

II.

June comes, and the moon comes
Out of the curving sea,
Like a frail golden bubble,
To hang in the lilac tree.

June comes, and a croon comes
Up from the old gray sea,
But not the longed-for footstep
And the voice at the door for me.

—Bliss Carman, in The Smart Set.

THE GOLDEN MONTH.

The tide of day's deep, glowing stream
Is setting toward the afternoon;
Through misted light the waters gleam;
The wide serenity of June
Sets all the country world adream.

About the homestead dooryard's space
Are lemon-balm and mignonette,
And southernwood, with plumy lace;
And, in a narrow border set,
The china pink's old-fashioned grace.

Among the fragrant flower-flocks
Maraud the lusty humble-bees;
A row of slender hollyhocks
Is tipped and tilted by the breeze,
Till every crimson breaker rocks.

Along the worn, neglected lot,
The quitch-grass trails its odd device;
From forest and from garden-plot
The air is tinctured with the spice
Of mallow and wild bergamot.

The plums have caught a fiery stain
That burns beneath the satin skin,
Till, seething in each golden vein,
The mellow honey-juice within
Splits all their scarlet coats in twain.

So, on the stream of summer flows;
And June, a happy-hearted maid,
Whose cheek with healthy color glows,
Weaves in and out her tawny braid
The glory of the damask rose.

—Hattie Whitney, in Truth.

THE REACTION.

"What's de matter wid you?" asked Sauntering Sim. "You look like you had something preyin' on your mind."

"I have," responded Tired Treadwell. "I done something to-day that'll haunt me to me grave. I got so blamed hungry that I done nearly half an hour's rard work for me dinner! Now, I'll have to go through life hand-in-hand wit a weight of remorse!"

—Chicago Times-Herald.

BOOKS REVIEWED.

"Three Men on Wheels," by Jerome K. Jerome, is full of laughable anecdotes and adventures. It is told with all the author's inimicable drollery, and is a book exactly suited to an idle summer day's reading. Of plot, there is none; the author simply relates the adventures of three friends who make a tour of Germany on bicycles. It takes them some time to start; they have numbers of things to decide, among them the everlasting luggage question. In regard to this, they always follow George's Uncle Podger's advice.

"Always before beginning to pack," my uncle would say, "make a list."

He was a methodical man.

"Take a piece of paper"—he always began at the beginning—"put down on it everything you can possibly require; then go over it and see that it contains nothing you can possibly do without. Imagine yourself in bed; what have you got on? Very well, put it down—together with a change. You get up; what do you do? Wash yourself. What do you wash yourself with? Soap; put down soap. Go on till you have finished. Then take your clothes. Begin at your feet; what do you wear on your feet? Boots, shoes, socks; put them down. Work up till you get to your head. What else do you want besides clothes? A little brandy; put it down. A corkscrew; put it down. Put down everything then you don't forget anything."

"This is the plan he always pursued himself. The list made, he would go over it carefully, as he always advised, to see that he had forgotten nothing. Then he would go over it again, and strike out everything it was possible to dispense with. Then he would lose the list."

Mr. Jerome speaks of the German love for order in everything. "Your German likes Nature, but his idea of Nature is a glorified Welsh lamp." He takes great interest in his garden. He plants seven rose trees on the north side, and seven on the south, and if they do not grow up all the same size and shape it worries him so that he cannot sleep at night. Every flower he ties to a stick. This interferes with his view of the flower, but he has the satisfaction of knowing that it is there and that it is behaving itself. The lake is lined with zinc, and once a week he takes it up, carries it into the kitchen and scours it. In the geometrical centre of the grass plot, which is sometimes large enough for a table-cloth, and is generally railed round, he places a china dog. The Germans are very fond of dogs, but as a rule they prefer them of china. The china dog never digs holes in the lawn to bury bones, and never scatters flower beds to the winds with its legs. From the German point of view, he is the ideal dog. He stays where you put him, and he is never where you do not want him. You can have him perfect in all points according to the latest requirements of the kennel club, or you can indulge your own fancy and have something unique. You are not, as with other dogs, limited to breed. In china, you can have a blue dog, or a pink dog. For a little extra, you can have a double-headed dog."

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Agnes and Egerton Castle have written a laughter-provoking little book, which they aptly call, "The Bath Comedy." It is the story of Mistress Kitty Bellairs, a charming young widow, who has taken it into her head to settle a little difficulty between Lady Standish and her husband, a three-months' married couple. In her attempt to do this good work, Mistress Kitty gets herself and a dozen others into trouble, from which, for a time, there seems to be no extricating. However, at the last, after taking on and throwing off half a dozen lovers by the way, everything ends happily, and the young widow has the pleasure of seeing the wife happily restored to the husband's arms. The scene of the story is laid in Bath in the second half of the 18th century.

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There is no end to South African literature nowadays, nor is there likely to be for some time to come.

We quote from the introduction to Mr. Bennett Burleigh's letters.

The following chapters sent home by Mr. Bennett Burleigh, the special war correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, are published with only the smallest possible change from the form in which they appeared in the daily newspaper. Soon after the failure of General Buller at Vaal Krantz. Mr. Burleigh left the seat of war in Northern Natal, and transferred himself to the western sphere of the campaign with Lord Roberts. A very short epilogue, not from his pen, narrates the conclusion of the Natal campaign. In an appendix will be found an account written by Mr. McHugh, a correspondent of the Daily Telegraph who was imprisoned in Ladysmith, of the great attack made by the Boers on January 6, which was so valiantly repulsed by General White's garrison.

* * *

The Hon. David Mills has written a very instructive book on the "English in Africa." He deals rather more with the political conditions than with the geographical or historical, and his arguments and explanations lead one well up to the reasons for the state of affairs existing in South Africa to-day.

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Stanley J. Weyman's latest romance, "Sophia," does not, it seems to us, come up to his standard. It is the story of a very young girl who is the victim of an intriguing sister and brother-in-law, and who, by a mere chance, or rather accident, marries the man they had picked out for her, and from cordially hating him at the beginning, grows to love him dearly at the last.

The transition in the young person's character from a rebellious, silly and sentimental girl to a noble, self-sacrificing woman is a little too sudden to be quite comprehensible.

Lady Betty, the youthful, lovely and kind-hearted little coquette, who is true to her character all the way through, is rather a more interesting study than the heroine.

* * *

The "Garden of Eden" is too long and too tedious to be entertaining. It starts out well, but towards the middle and at the last there is a decided dropping off in style and interest.

The moral of the book is also questionable, and we think it a pity that the author having made her heroine fall in love with one married man at the beginning of the book, should find it necessary to wed the second unlucky gentleman before he has met the aforesaid young lady, who, after a short period, transfers her heart to his keeping. Monica, the heroine is a most unfortunate young person, and the two married men not less so.

The story contains evidently a purpose of some kind; but what it is we cannot guess. The plot is unhappily chosen.

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Seldom can one have the pleasure of reading a more humorously written volume than "A Master of Craft," by W. W. Jacobs. It is, like most of the author's books, a tale of the sea, and is full of breezy interest from start to finish.

Captain Flower, a very entertaining villain, has become engaged to three young ladies at the same time. He seeks the help of the mate, Fraser, to aid him in the difficult task of "unengaging" himself to two of them and marrying the one with whom he fancies himself in love. He is rather unscrupulous in the course he pursues, but he so often gets the worst of things, that one's sympathy is unconsciously given him all through the book, especially at the last, when, everything cleared up, he returns to his home to marry the girl of his choice, and finds that she is just in the act of being wedded to Fraser, the mate. In justice to Fraser it must be said, however, that both he and the lady believed Flower to be in the depths of the ocean. He had shipped before the mast as a last resource, intending to return when matters had smoothed themselves out. The ship was wrecked and his friends believed him drowned.

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"Four Months' Besieged," is an intensely interesting book. It is the true story of Ladysmith, and consists of unpublished letters from H. H. S. Pearse, the Daily News special correspondent. The author gives a very fine description of Sir Archibald Hunter's night attack as follows:

"Sir Archibald Hunter kept the whole thing so secret that even his own aide-de-camp knew nothing until some time after dinner last night. Then he sent around a brief message to Colonel Royston, commanding the volunteer forces of Natal, and to Colonel Edwards, of the Imperial Light Horse. In accordance with this order the troops detailed got under arms very quietly, taking all the ammunition they could carry, but leaving their horses and cumbersome equipment in the lines. Lord Ava happened to be a guest of the Light Horse. Getting an inkling of the mysterious movement, he stole away to get a night free from gallopers' duties, shouldered a Lee-Enfield, crammed a bandolier full of cartridges, and came back in time to join the ranks before they marched off.

It was then past ten o'clock; the crescent moon was sloping towards the west behind a bank of clouds, and in another hour the faint light would have gone, giving place to a gloom that makes trees, rough knolls, and deep dongas one shapeless black. General Hunter's instructions were brief and simple, silence being the point most strongly insisted upon.

"Notwithstanding the difficulties of keeping touch across rough ground, where silence was imposed, the movement, once started, was carried out with a guide to lead it, marched so quietly that not a word was spoken, and all arrived at their proper posts in admirable order worthy of trained troops. That, however, became somewhat broken as the ascent began, and little wonder, for the boulders, rounded and worn smooth by the storms of ages, were slippery to tread on, and occasionally a man's foot would become wedged between them in a deep cleft. Here and there progress was extremely slow, and the hill so steep that it had to be climbed on hands and knees. The higher they climbed the worse it became, until one man describing his experiences said they were like a lot of lizards crawling up a rock. Halfway up the hill they had a narrow escape from stumbling on a Boer picket. The sentry heard if he did not see the line creeping by, and the men passed him like ghosts in the darkness with stealthy steps that passed him like ghosts in the darkness with stealthy steps that must have sounded weird across the night's stillness. In a voice huskily vibrant, he challenged, "Wie kom daar? Getting no reply, he called again in twice in clearer tones, and then fired his rifle at nothing in particular. Then the whole picket awakening and beginning to realize that danger was near, let off a volley, and voices were heard shouting to comrades on the ridge: "The English are on us, fire and shoot." A few shots came from so close to one flank of the Imperial Light Horse that Boers must have been lying there almost under the feet of our men, if they did not actually join the ranks for a time to escape detection. But a sound greeted their ears at that moment, and knowing what it meant, they scampered down the hill, not waiting to hear more. It was a ringing British cheer, followed by strident commands to 'Fix bayonets and give the devils cold steel,' Begun by Major Karri Davis, the order ran along from the Imperial Light Horse to Carbineers, who had not a bayonet among them, for irregular mounted infantry in this country do not carry such weapons. But they struck the butts of their rifles on rocks, and made a great clatters as though preparing for a bayonet charge, and cheered again and again for a good deal more than their actual numbers, while crags on each hand tossed the shouts to and fro in a mighty tumult. This was apparently too much for the small number of Boers who held the crest. Letting off bullets in rapid succession until the magazines were exhausted, they turned and bolted, having hit only ten of our men, one of whom, the tallest trooper in the Imperial Light Horse, was badly wounded. In proportion the guides suffered most, having four out of fourteen hit, none very seriously.

Halting for a brief breathing space, now and again, at General Hunter's command, then following with all the speed they could muster where he and his aide-de-camp, Major King, led the Imperial Light Horse on the left, the Carbineers on their right made a final dash for the steepest climb of all, and breathless, gained the ridge, to find that the Boers had left it, leaving not a man in defence of the guns. The Imperial Light Horse captured all they did not destroy.

"Meanwhile the right flank was sweeping round towards the main battery in expectation of meeting with some resistance from the gun's crew of 'Big Ben of Little Bulwaan.'" The weapon had, in virtue of similar qualities, succeeded to "Long Tom's" record title, but did not live long to enjoy it. It was poetical justice that Colonel Edwards and Major Karri Davis of the corps which Big Ben had shelled most persistantly should be first to lay hands on him and claim every part that could be taken away as a rightful trophy for the Imperial Light Horse.

. . . . As a precautionary measure, in case there should be any reverse, and with the object also of cutting off any fugitive Boers who might fly panic-stricken from Gun Hill, the 18th Hussars had gone earlier to make a demonstration by way of Cingo Hill, and destroy some Boer stores. With characteristic faith in the luck that has favored bold cavalry enterprises so often, they pushed far forward and gained some valuable information at the risk of being cut off, but fortunately that did not happen. Meanwhile, the 18th, jealous of the reputation they have won as scouts, attempted a movement even more hazardous. In advance of General Brocklehurst's reconnoitering force one squadron of this regiment made straight for a position which the enemy was believed to hold in strength between Pepworth's and Surprise Hill. To do this they crossed a deep cutting through which the Harrismith railway passes, and there came under a terribly heavy fire. . . . Retiring, they made a detour to avoid unnecessary exposure, and swept round two small kopjes, where not a Boer had been seen previously. But, as it happened, the stony ridges were full of riflemen, who, without emerging from their concealment, brought a furious fusillade to bear on the Hussars, who had to run the gauntlet at full speed, all but one, and he with gallant self-sacrifice, rode straight towards the nearer kopje, drawing the whole fire on himself, and thus giving his comrades time to get clear. Fortunately not a bullet touched him as he wheeled about, lay flat on his saddle-bow, and galloped after the squadron. Its retreat was covered by a very pretty movement of the main body and by salvos of shrapnel from our field batteries, with the naval guns chiming in. Then the reconnoitering force slowly withdrew across the plain towards Junction Hill, still under a rifle fire heavier than we had to face even in the slopes of Elandslaagte, though not so well directed. Several saddles, however, were emptied, bringing the losses in the affair up to five killed and seventeen wounded. Of these considerable more than half were 18th Hussars."

* * *

"Four Months' Besieged," H. H. S. Pearse, Macmillan & Co. London.

"Three Men on Wheels," Jerome K. Jerome. Copp, Clark Co., Toronto.

"The Bath Comedy," Agnes and Egerton Castle, Macmillan & Co., London.

"The Natal Campaign," Bennett Burleigh. Copp, Clark Co., Toronto.

"The English in South Africa," Hon. David Mills. George N. Morang, Toronto.

"Sophia," Stanley J. Weyman. Copp, Clark Company, Toronto.

"The Garden of Eden," Blanche Willis Howard. Copp, Clark Co., Toronto.

"A Master of Craft," W. W. Jacobs. Copp, Clark Co., Toronto.

FRANK'S UMBRELLA

From the North American.

"You are looking very cheerful to-day," observed the girl with the dimple in her chin. "What has happened now? Have you accidentally inherited a fortune, or have you merely gotten a pair of dollar gloves for ninety-eight cents?"

"I have not," replied the gray-eyed girl; "all of my wealthy relatives are in the very best of health, while my poor ones are invariably laid up with grip and things which require the purchase of roses in their behalf, just at the season when roses touch your purse most deeply. A dollar gloves—"

"Humph, by the appearance of your left hand I should say that your outlay for gloves this season will be small indeed. By the way, where have I seen a ring like the one you are wearing?"

"I'm sure I don't know, dear; unless—By the way, have you happened to see Milly recently?"

"Why, yes, I have, and I must warn you that she spoke of you in the most enthusiastic manner—so warmly, in fact, that it made my blood run cold to hear her. I only hope that she has not happened to see you with Frank recently, for she is so jealous that she—"

"She has not seen me with him, dear; still, I doubt if it would sensibly alter her feeling towards me, if she did. I ran over to see her a while on Tuesday afternoon."

"Oh, did you? Then, perhaps, you accidentally said something which—"

"I said very little of anything, my dear. She usually does most of the talking. I—I am quite sure that she gave Frank no chance to say anything but 'Yes' on the day which settled their engagement."

"Oh, pshaw, you can't begin to pity a man for a little thing like that. Just think how much worse off he will be when he is actually her husband."

"I doubt if Frank will ever be her husband, dear. You know, by the way, that Frank and my brother Ned are great friends and he has always come to the house a great deal. Somehow, Milly had a fancy that I always saw him when he came—I'm sure, I don't know how she ever got it."

"Nor I, dear, smiled the girl with the dimple in her chin, "unless you inadvertently gave it to her yourself."

"Oh, I suppose that even Milly has an idea of her own once in a while," said the gray-eyed girl demurely. "Let me see, what was I saying when—oh, yes, I know! As it happened, Frank had gotten in to speak to Ned on his way to the office on Tuesday morning, and had left his umbrella. I—er—happened to get hold of it by mistake when I started to see Milly. It was rather odd, too, since it is not at all like my own."

"An umbrella need not very closely resemble one's own to be mistaken for it, especially if it is raining, goosie. Go on with your story. Was Milly—"

"She was. She put it in the stand herself to make sure that it really was his. It—it seems that she gave it to him on his birthday, making him promise never to let any one else carry it. Of course—er—I did not know that when I—"

"Then all I've got to say is that you have a very poor memory. I told you all about it myself not two weeks ago!"

"Why—er—so you did. Odd that it had slipped my mind, wasn't it? Well, Milly promptly flew into a rage, and as I was—er—a little upset, I may not have made it quite plain to her that I got the umbrella by accident. She was in such a rage that I went home right away and—"

"Carrying the umbrella, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. You see, it was my duty to return it when I had—well—borrowed it. On the way I happened to meet Frank, and I told him that he had better go to see Milly at once, as she seemed offended at him about something, which he could doubtless explain better than I. H—he didn't seem to be in a very good humor himself at the time."

"You don't say so!"

"The consequence was that they had a dreadful quarrel, and Milly gave him back his ring. It was still raining when he left, and he came over here for his umbrella."

"Naturally," said the girl with the dimple in her chin. "Well?"

"I—I happened to meet him at the door. I told him that I feared the quarrel was a wee little bit my fault, and asked him to let me go and beg Milly to forgive him, as it would break my heart to cause him any trouble. I am sure I don't know how it could have happened; but when he went home I was wearing his ring. And now, if you will believe it, Milly declares that I was the cause of the whole thing!"

ELISA ARMSTRONG.

ON SUNDAY AT ST. JOE.

The Minister. Do you take this man for better or worse?

The Bride. Well, I guess its about a toss-up, but it's all right anyway. I have my own return ticket.—Times-Herald.