

The Tragedy of St. Mark's Steeple.

Do you know, sir, I can never look at that steeple without turning cold all over, although it's nearly forty years since it happened—and the old man pointed towards the distant city, where the tall, slender spire of St. Mark's, rising higher than the rest was silhouetted against the glow of the setting sun, whose last rays had the gilded vase on the summit burn as with fire.

It's forty years since, he continued, but it might have been yesterday, so vivid is the horror of it; but come inside, and I'll tell you all about it.

She was young enough then, and as bonny a girl as there was in all Warwickshire, which I don't think there was a plainer, more awkward lad than myself in the whole county. Only I loved her—as a dozen others did—but I don't think they could ever have loved her quite as I did; and, if I wasn't a beauty, I had muscles of iron and nerves of steel, and "Steeple-Jack Jim," was known for fifty miles round.

She would never let on that she cared for me; she was too artful a puss for that, but I thought I had a chance, and I went for it for all I was worth. She used to drive me mad with jealousy, flinging with this man and smiling on that, until I could have killed the whole lot. But I never let her see it; I was much too deep for that.

Only let a girl know you're jealous and she'll make your life a—well a torment, just for the love of teasing and showing her power on you. I always came up smiling; and she couldn't understand it; but it conquered her in the end; and for nearly forty years, bless her, she's been the sweetest, most loyal wife a man ever had.

But this is an old story, you say; and so it is, but still it's always new—and I'll get on to the tragedy quite soon enough.

The only man I was really afraid of was my partner Jack—Jack Harding—as fine a young fellow as you ever saw in your life, tall and straight as a lath; and with a face like a young god; but he was a bit inclined to be wild, and that's a fatal thing in my line. Ruth was fonder of him than all of the others—what girl could help it—and if he'd only played his cards well, he might have had her, without giving any of us a look in.

But jealousy! Why, my worst attacks were milder than his compared with Jack's—and he couldn't conceal them as I did. He had some Spanish blood in his veins, I always thought; he looked like a Spaniard; and if she ever smiled at another man his eyes flashed as if he would strike them both dead; and more than once he lost his temper, and said things to her that no girl would stand, let alone of Ruth.

Well, to come to the point, I soon saw that the prize rested between him and me; and though I thought my chance was small enough, I wasn't going to lose it without a fight.

If I live to be a hundred I shall always remember that evening when I asked her if I had a chance, and if she could marry a clumsy, ugly man like me. "Chance?" she said, as she looked up at me roughly out of her blue eyes. "Why, Jim, you don't know you've got every chance, and if you hadn't been blind you'd have seen it months ago," and then she laughed, and looked at me with a look that I never forgot.

Well, sir, if she'd knocked me down I couldn't have been more surprised; it was all so sudden and unexpected; but I had the presence of mind to put my arm round her and to draw her face up to mine and kiss it; and then—why sir, there wasn't a man in England half as happy as me.

But what about Jack?" I said, when I'd come to a bit. "About Jack?" she said, as she rolled her eyes at me, "you're tired of me, I'll bet you're tired of him—if I live long enough."

When Jack heard of it he went mad—clean mad—he would kill me with his own hands, and he would fling himself into a wild orgie of drink and dissipation. I saw next to nothing of him for weeks, and when we met he passed on the other side of the road, without looking at me. Of course I was sorry for him, but it was the luck of war, or rather of love, and I had played my cards honourably; while I had fought busily and happily occupied to have any fears for what he might do to me.

Then one day he seemed completely changed; came to me with an outstretched hand and asked my pardon saying that I'd won fairly, and wishing me luck. But somehow I didn't like the looks of him, and didn't trust him; and I was soon to prove. During his drinking bout I had to hire an assistant for any job that came my way; but when he offered to join me, I took him on just as if nothing had happened.

My little girl was very nervous about me now that I was so much to her, and begged me to give up steeple-climbing and work on solid ground; but there is more money in the air, for me, at any rate; and as I wanted to save for that little nest I had in view, I thought I would stick to my steeple a little longer.

Then came the job that cost Jack his life and nearly cost me mine—regarding the rane on the top of St. Mark's steeple. How well I remember that morning, a bright, fresh morning in May, when everything—my heart included—seemed to dance for joy of living and loving. I found time to run round to see my little girl before beginning work, and found her sad and tearful.

She had dreamt the previous night that she saw me fighting with a man in mid-air, and then all at once I fell down, and struck the earth with a sickening thud at her very feet. "Don't go to-day, Jim," she pleaded

as the tears chased each other down her cheeks; "I know something will happen to you."

In vain I argued and chaffed, and when at last I tore myself away with a promise to run in the evening she covered her face with her hands and stood motionless at the door till I was out of sight, as if shutting some horrid spectacle from her eyes.

Jack was specially cheerful when I joined him—too gay, I thought, as saw the reckless light in his eyes, and thought he had been drinking.

"You lucky dog," he said, as he slipped me on the shoulder. "You've been to see Ruth, I know; and her kiss is warm on your lips. Ah, well, I shall have my turn of luck some day—maybe sooner than you think!"

"I hope so, too, my lad," I said, sympathetically, as we set to work; "and that soon, the better."

A few hours later we were suspended, one on each side of the steeple, a couple of hundred feet above the pigmies that were crawling beneath us. We were both busy as we could be, guiding the ball from which the vane sprang—Jack on one side and me on the other.

Each of us was standing on a tiny platform, little larger than the seat of a chair, with a sheer, dizzy drop of nearly twenty yards beneath us, and each, for additional safety, was attached to the steeple by a life-line running under his arms.

Jack had not spoken a word for nearly an hour; but I thought nothing of that, as we were working against time, and the darkness was beginning already to creep over the sky. You know when you're working at that height, removed as it were from all the world, and with nothing but silence above and around you, the slightest noise sends a shock through a man, however strong his nerves may be.

You can imagine then, how startled I was when all at once I heard a loud shriek of laughter, almost as if it seemed at my very ear. There was something uncanny about it, too, that set my heart thumping and my flesh creeping as they had never done before, or since.

When the laugh ceased and silence came again as an awful relief I said: "What's the joke, Jack? Don't keep it to yourself."

"No," he said, "I should think it would be a joke. I was fancying you shooting down like a stone on the pavement down there, and what Ruth would think when she saw the pieces."

"What a rummy idea!" I answered, with affected coolness, though my heart was beating faster than ever and seemed as if it would suffocate me. "But I'm going down a little slower than that as soon as I've finished this bit of work. But pull yourself together, Jack, and get your gold on, and then we'll soon be down there on our two legs."

"No, sir!" he shouted, "I'm going to have a race with you to the bottom, and who ever gets there first Ruth can have. Come on, now for a jump together."

As he said this he craned his head round the corner of the steeple to get a look at me, and a single glance at his wild eyes showed me that the man was raving mad, and that I was alone in mid-air with a man, who hated me and would certainly kill me if he could.

I was powerless. If I called for help I might be heard, but who could come to my assistance, so high as I was, such a giddy height above the world! And in a single moment I might be in the throes of a life-and-death struggle with a man quite as strong as myself, and made ten times stronger by madness.

He was slowly and surely working round towards me, and there was not a moment to waste. Something must be done quickly, and everything depended on keeping cool. In a moment I had eased the hitch of the line round my hand, and was swinging round to meet him. Before he had time to protest I had seized him by the throat, and had forced him down on his saddle-board.

But it was only for a moment, for strong as I was, my strength was as a child's compared with his. With a wrench he was free, and had flung his powerful arms around my chest and was squeezing the very life out of me.

In vain I struggled, as we swung backward and forward against the face of the steeple. I tried to call out, but my voice stuck in my throat, and my eyes felt as if they were being forced out of my head, and my breath came in convulsive gasps. All the time, amid the horrible silence, broken only by the creaking of the ropes and the grating of the saddle against the steeple, his eyes were glaring into mine and his hot breath was on my face.

I felt my senses rapidly leaving me, when by my hand, by accident struck my tool-box and instinctively as it were I clutched a wrench. With a last effort I raised my hand, struck him with all my remaining strength full on the temple—and then I remembered no more.

When I came to myself I was lying in bed, and Ruth's eyes were looking down on me with just such a look in them as an angel's might have; but she said no word and I sank into unconsciousness again.

It was weeks before I was about again or heard what happened at the top of the steeple. It seems the struggle had been seen by the people in the street below; they could do nothing but look and wonder and wait. They had seen me strike Jack and then fall back senseless in the saddle as his arms released me; and then, to their horror, they had seen him slip off his platform and drop like a stone, rebounding off the steeple, and fall a shattered heap on the stone pavement almost at their feet. He must have slipped his life-line in the struggle—but luckily mine saved me, and with great difficulty I was safely lowered down and carried home.

Well! there's little more to tell. They buried poor Jack; and three months later the wedding-bells were rung for me and the sweetest bride that ever brought a man from the gates of death back to a life that has been all sunshine.

325 miles in the day is the record for a sailing ship, 550 for a steamer.

FARM-FIELD AND GARDEN

BURNED MANURE.

Every farmer has had more experience than he desired with "fire-fanged" manure. The cause of it, how to prevent the heat action, and how much damage the manure heap actually suffers from it, are questions that most farmers have had occasion to discuss somewhere along the line of their farming experience.

The hay-like lightness of fire fanged manure and its mouldy appearance naturally give the impression that it has in it but little of value as food for plants; yet as an offset to the impression made by the appearance of the article we will at times find farmers who declare that they had just as good crops from it as from the best of barn manure.

Who is right on the question of value? To discuss it intelligently, let us begin by determining the cause of firefng. A development of heat always accompanies it, and in point of fact it is the heat which produces it, but what produces the heat? It is caused by the gas oxygen, which is one of the elements of the air we breathe, uniting with elements found in the manure pile, producing slow combustion, which develops the heat we find there, and the dark, charred appearance each of which are the natural products of combustion. It is this same oxygen that by the same slow process of combustion when taken into our own lungs combines with some of the food elements that digestion has given to the blood, those of a fatty nature, and so develops that temperature necessary to keep up the union between the soul and body which we call animal heat.

From manure piles where there can be no combustion there can be no heat, and where there is no air there can be no combustion. It follows, therefore, if we can keep the air from our manure we can prevent it heating, and consequently burning or "fire-fng."

There are three ways of doing this by keeping it so moist as to extinguish combustion at its incipient stage, to pack it close either by keeping cattle or hogs tramping it or by having the piles so deep that the pressure will exclude the air, and still a fourth method is sometimes practised, that of having the pile so shallow or small that the temperature is kept below the combustion point.

Now, passing from the cause of firefng and the prevention of it, let us consider a moment the effect of it on the value of the manure heap. The action of the oxygen on the nitrogen which enters into the composition of the burning process, this is really all the essential loss our manure heap has undergone.

The absence of moisture, which has been dried out by the heat, is in reality no loss, as far as its plant food value is concerned, but the worse change then in our manure is that it has lost much of its nitrogen, the phosphoric acid and potash contents being the same in quantity after it has been firefnged as they were before.

Now we are prepared, if our reasoning thus far is correct, to determine the value of this variety of manure to the farmer. We have not a table of analysis at hand, but it is safe to say that the nitrogen constituent of barn manure is about equal in value to the phosphoric acid and potash elements combined. On this basis of value badly firefnged manure is, cord for cord worth about half as much as that which is in its natural condition.

If it be asked, how then do we judge of its value in the market, any farmer find the same value in it as that which has never been burnt the answer is the same in kind as that to be made to those who state that on their crop, leached wood ashes have as good an effect as sulphate before; this can be done by adding fish waste, night soil or some chemical rich in nitrogen to the manure heap, such as nitrate of soda or sulphate of ammonia.

BEST METHODS OF CULTIVATION.

I am very much interested in the idea that deep cultivation of trees is very injurious to them, writes Mr. John Chamberlain. All stirring of the soil is in itself a benefit to a crop, but it is easy to disturb the roots of a plant or tree if the plow or hoe goes down deep and so do it harm. I am sure that cultivators do not watch such things at all carefully as a rule, and so they may be destroying a great many small roots without knowing it. There is a great misapprehension among farmers as to the real thing accomplished by cultivation, so that in many cases there would be very little of it done if it were not necessary to kill the weeds.

Practically all of our commonest weeds are tap rooted and if allowed to get a good start must be torn out deep down to kill them. On the other hand, all of our garden vegetables and field crops are very shallow rooted, with the exception of root crops so that deep cultivation is injurious to them. The obvious way out of this dilemma is to cultivate very shallow and often. Any seed from seed is killed by merely breaking it in two, if done before it gets past its first stage of growth, so that shallow cultivation answers every purpose. Let us plow unplanted soils deep, but cultivate the surface only.

STORIES OF THE THRONE

ABOUT HER LATE MAJESTY AND HER SON KING EDWARD.

The Victorian Era in Figures—Interesting Relations About His Majesty King Edward—Personal Items.

The Victorian Era has taken its place in history. It dawned at twenty minutes past two on the morning of June 20, 1837, and closed at half-past six on the evening of January 22, 1901. It lasted 23,233 days, 557,386 full hours, 33,443,170 minutes, and 2,006,590,200 seconds. All but 546 1-2 hours of it were in the nineteenth century. It helps us to realize the importance of the Victorian Era in history when we remember that only thirty reigns of the same length would take us back to Julius Caesar.

SAID SHE WAS DEAD.

Four years ago one of the best known papers in Paris came out with the startling story that Queen Victoria was dead, and that she had been dead for eighteen years! It was asserted that the Queen's death had been kept secret for reasons of State, and that only two or three persons in the Empire knew the secret. Her Majesty, it was said, was personated on certain occasions by a woman of humble origin who bore a striking resemblance to her.

The Duke of Norfolk must have been obliged to smile at himself in his capacity of dictator to the ladies of England on the matter of mourning. He has been a widower for some years, and his sisters who are his only feminine advisers, belong to a group of ladies who observe, on religious principles, an almost quaker-like plainness of dress.

WHAT THE KING OWNS.

It is understood that the King will vacate Marlborough House, which he has been so long associated, and that the building will be occupied by the Heier apartment. Built on the site of the ancient pheasantry of St. James' Palace, from designs by Wren, for the great Duke of Marlborough, it was first occupied in 1710.

The King is proprietor of the beds of all British tidal rivers, such as the Thames, the Mersey, the Tyne, and others. He also owns that part of the shore all around the coast line which lies between high and low water mark.

WHY NOT KINGDOMS?

Queen Elizabeth was commonly spoken of as Queen of Virginia, Virginia and Carolina were kingdoms under the Stuarts. Massachusetts was recognized as a "sister kingdom" by Cromwell's Parliament. Nova Scotia was also a kingdom. It is suggested in the London Times that Canada, Australia, and New Zealand should be raised to the dignity of kingdoms.

King Edward VII. is the first British monarch since the days of James II. who has taken a personal interest in golf. His Majesty has held the cup of the St. Andrews in a game by several times during his reign, and at Cannes; and he has enjoyed the game on one or two private links, more particularly on that of the Grand Duke Michael, in the home counties. Hence it is that the proposal is already being made that at a suitable moment his Majesty should be asked to associate himself with the game in the most distinguished honorary capacity possible.

NEARLY LOST HIS LIFE.

A Paris correspondent relates a curious episode in the life of King Edward VII. Prince of Wales, which would have resulted in his death. Prince had engaged a box for the evening at the Odeon Theatre, and ordered dinner for himself and a friend which was served at the restaurant of the Odeon. The Prince was seated at the next table, and when the Prince received a visit from the Prince de Poix, who was so full of praise of a play which was to be presented that evening at the Opera that the Prince of Wales renounced the dinner, and dined at his hotel.

At the time when the Prince was seated at the Restaurant the restaurant was a bomb exploded under the table which was reserved for him. The well-known author, Laurent Tailhade, who was seated at the next table was seriously wounded by a splinter, and lost the sight of one eye. The criminal was never discovered, and so far as the Prince was concerned the police judged it advisable to keep silence.

AN HOUR WITH UNCLE SAM

PERSONAL AND BUSINESS NEWS ABOUT THE BUSY YANKEE.

Neighborhood Interest in His Doings—Marble is said to exist in twenty-four States.

According to a bulletin issued by the census officer the population of Alaska is 63,592.

The abandoned farms in Rhode Island number 219, according to the State's official catalogue.

The output of coal in Washington State for 1900 was about two million two hundred thousand tons.

The retired list of the regular U. S. army includes 764 officers on half pay averaging about \$3,000 each.

The number of saloons in Ohio last year was 10,348, an increase of 4776 over 1899. The license receipts were \$1,864,612.

The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions has in contemplation the foundation of an industrial school in the Philippines.

Reports from all over Northern Wisconsin indicate that this will be a phenomenal year in the white pine lumber industry.

American exports of bicycles were more than \$77,000,000 in 1898, only \$4,820,000 in 1899, and a trifle over \$3,000,000 in 1900.

A large bronze statue of John Brown, with drawn sword, holding a negro child, is to be erected in Lincoln Park, Chicago.

The army and navy expenses of the United States since the beginning of the war with Spain have amounted to more than \$400,000,000.

The population of Philadelphia is 1,293,697. The population in 1890 was 1,046,964, the increase in ten years being 246,733, or 23.57 per cent.

It was considered that cotton would not grow north of Texas. During the year past Oklahoma's cotton crop brought nearly \$6,000,000 to her people.

Texas has now become the "Empire State of the South," having nearly a million more inhabitants than Georgia, which has heretofore had the proud title.

The Canadian French are said to comprise over 23 per cent. of the population of Rhode Island, and from 10 to 12 per cent. of the other New England States.

There are signs that the immigration of Northern families to the South, which has been notably large for the past five or six years, will be larger this year.

Plans have been adopted by the Temperance Committee of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church for a national campaign of education on the temperance question.

The largest amount paid for a single crop of cotton during the recent boom is said to have been paid to Joseph H. Smith, a well-known planter of Athens, Ga., who received \$100,000 for 2,000 bales.

The Rev. William Kirk Guthrie has been made associate pastor of the First Presbyterian church of San Francisco. He has been a protege of the Rev. Dr. Mackenzie, pastor of the church. The young preacher is a grandson of the famous Dr. Thomas Guthrie of Edinburgh.

BUILDING STONE

A German Process by Which It is Made to Order.

An establishment for manufacturing building stone by a new and promising process has begun operations in Germany, with every prospect of success. The process is exceedingly simple, only lime and sand being used. The proportions are from 4 to 6 per cent. of lime to 94 to 96 per cent. of sand. The materials having been mixed thoroughly and shaped into blocks of the desired size, the latter are thrust into a boiler that is subsequently closed hermetically, and subjected to the influence of steam at a pressure of from 120 to 150 pounds to the inch. This operation lasts about ten hours. The consolidation of the lime and sand is effected not only by mechanical force, but by chemical action. Nor is this chemical action the same as that which occurs in making mortar. The calcium of the lime unites with the silica of the sand to form entirely new compounds. These are of a flinty character, and give the stone a peculiar hardness.

It is claimed that a greater output of sand-and-lime stone than of brick is possible with the same investment of capital. Drying sheds are not necessary. The plant can operate all the year round. The stone is harder than brick and there is no waste through breakage. It has a higher compressive strength. The granulated cinder from blast furnaces can be used instead of sand.

SNAKES AND BEASTS.

During the year 1899 no less than 24,621 human beings were killed by the bites of venomous snakes in India. The number was larger than in several preceding years because, it is thought, of the floods, which drove the snakes to the high lands where the homesteads are situated. Wild beasts during the same year destroyed 2,966 human lives, tigers being responsible for 899 of the victims, wolves for 338, leopards for 327, while the remaining 1,402 were killed by bears, crocodiles and other animals. The destruction of cattle amounted to 89,238 killed by wild beasts, and 9,449 by snakes. These statistics are from the government report of India.

Little money in the world is to be had for a good 10 roomed house. One-fifth of an acre of young fruit trees. The in another town is the offer at a low price. A Real Estate Broker, Aylmer, Ont.

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