

THE BOMB

John Cameron flung down the magazine he was reading with a jaw.

"It's all rot!" he soliloquized. "Life isn't like these stories a bit. Nothing exciting ever happens now-a-days. These writer chaps simply draw on their imaginations."

John Cameron, you see, was young. You can't expect a clerk in a City office, only twenty-four years old, to realize that every day, every hour almost, something is happening somewhere among London millions—something more business than any story-writer even dreams about. Moreover, John was dull. The loneliness of a long evening in a dreary lodging sitting-room had got upon his nerves. So, with another yawn, he dozed his hat and overcoat, intending to go out for a walk.

"If life were a story," he muttered, as he shut the door behind him, "I should have a startling adventure. As it isn't, I shall simply have a stroll round the houses and a drink at the nearest pub. before I turn in."

And the gods of irony chuckled.

An old man, with long white hair and a long, white beard, lay in a room, with a bed in one of the rooms of a row of neat, small villas, all very respectable, and all exactly alike, that made up a typical street.

His frame was large; the outline of his bedclothes showed at a glance that in his youth he must have been a strong man of very massive build. In the lamplight he looked healthy enough, considering his age. His complexion was strikingly clear, though his mouth was twisted awry. But he never moved. All his body was absolutely still, except his expressionless eyes, which moved constantly, restlessly around so much of the room as a man could see lying on his back, month after month, day after day, month after month.

He was a hopeless paralytic, who could neither move nor speak; a pitiful wreck, waiting—waiting for release.

At a table by his side a girl sat knitting—a young, handsome girl of twenty-two, or thereabouts—his only daughter by his wife now long dead. The two were alone in the tiny villa, the nurse who shared the mournful task of looking after her father having gone out for her daily two hours' break.

Now and again the girl would pause in the plying of her needles to make some cheerful remark; for the invalid, though he could neither move or speak, had all his mental faculties, and could both hear and see. But it was dreary work talking to one who could make not the slightest sign of comprehension beyond a rolling of the eyes; and, accustomed to it though she was by now, Frances Stockton found it difficult not to let her cheery, affectionate smile fade away into tears.

It was so sad—so terribly sad—that Frank Stockton, of all men, her energetic father, the famous ex-detective superintendent of Scotland Yard, whose name had once been on everybody's lips, should be stricken thus.

Her reverie was interrupted by the ringing of the street-door bell, and she hurried down, wondering who the visitor could be, since it was not yet time for the nurse to be back.

"Good-evening!" said a dark-bearded man, with a slightly foreign accent, carrying a small black handbag. "Superintendent Stockton lives here, I believe?"

"Yes."

"Could I see him? I understand that he is paralyzed, but that his understanding is—still what you call unimpaired?"

"Yes," replied Frances dolefully. "But the doctor only allows him to see a few old friends. He mustn't be excited at all."

"Pray let me see him!" pleaded the stranger. "I knew him twenty years ago, and I am sure he would be—interested to see me."

"Very well. Perhaps you can cheer him up a little," she responded, and led the way upstairs. "Father here is an old friend," she said, by way of introduction, "come to talk over old times. I will give you ten minutes," she added, placing a chair by the bed. "Be careful not to excite him too much."

And with that she left them alone.

The stranger looked at the invalid and a cruel smile stole slowly over his saturnine features. Of course! I'm Despard, the dynamiter, and you got me twenty years for attempting to blow up the House of Lords. Well, I've done my time and my police supervision, and here I am, a free man, just off to America.

He paused, and fixed poor Stockton's restless eye.

"I know all about you—how you understand, but can't move or speak. The inspector I reported to told me, though he little guessed why I was so curious about Mr. Superintendent Stockton! But

you remember what I swore—that I'd get my own back, that I'd do for you when I came out! Well, I've come to do it."

He opened the bag and took something out.

"See here!" he said, holding the object up for inspection. "This is a bomb—a nice little bomb, specially made for you, Frank Stockton, by my own hands. And it is going under your bed, where no one will see it."

Deliberately starting the thing, he stooped and placed it under the bed as he spoke.

"In half an hour it will go off. For half an hour you will be able to lie there and think how much wiser it would have been to let me alone. Then you will be blown to atoms."

"It's no use staring at me like that," he said mercilessly. "I mean it."

Then, suddenly, an idea came to him, and, with a malicious grin, he leant over the bed.

"It occurs to me," he said, "that you can't really mind, that you must be rather pleased to die, that there isn't so much in my revenge, after all, so I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll send your daughter in, and tell her to stay with you. And, then, I guess you'll suffer, Mr. Superintendent Stockton, enough to satisfy even me."

"Well, good-night!" he continued after a pause long enough for his diabolical plot to sink in. "You're in for a nice, agonized half-hour. And I must be off, or else that hoity-toity daughter of yours, who I could see, was in two minds about admitting me, will be turning me out."

Having picked up his empty bag, he opened the door and walked out. Frances, hearing him descend the stairs, came up to him.

"Good-night!" he said pleasantly. "I fancy your father has enjoyed my visit. By the way, you don't leave him alone too much, I hope?"

"Of course not!" said the girl, indignantly. "Someone is always with him."

"That's right. Well, I won't keep you, if you are going to sit with him now."

"What a horrid, horrid man!" she murmured, as she made her way back to her father. "I expect he was one of father's spies. And how impertinent of him to preach to me about not leaving him alone!"

What words can picture the agony in Frank Stockton's heart? Speechless, motionless, he lay upon his bed, a bomb beneath it, and his daughter sitting motionless by his side.

He strained his ears to catch the sound of the mechanism ticking, hoping that she might hear it, too. But the dreadful thing was perfect of its kind, so silent that even his anxious, overstrained ears could not hear it.

For himself he didn't mind; death would be welcome now at almost any moment. But for her—for Frances, his daughter, who had nursed him so devotedly to be fouly murdered like this! It was more than mortal man could bear!

If only he could make her understand! If only she would sit there knitting, knitting, knitting, and smiling, smiling, while an infernal-machine was ticking itself nearer and nearer to the fatal moment!

If only he could move! If only he could force himself to speak! But he couldn't. He was absolutely helpless; and the minutes were flying, and Frances was knitting and smiling, and the thing was beneath his bed!

Something must be done. Somehow he must do something. He couldn't—he couldn't—he couldn't lie there helpless, and know what was going to happen, what was coming relentlessly nearer and nearer every second.

Yet he could do nothing. Try as he might, he could neither speak nor move.

With his eyes fixed on his daughter's face—the expressionless eyes of a paralytic—he lay there, watching, waiting, praying.

The awful moment must be very near now, he thought. It seemed hours and hours already since Despard had gone, and he had said the thing was timed for half an hour.

As a matter of fact, barely four minutes had passed.

The veins on his forehead were standing out like knotted cords. His brain was working at a pressure that threatened to cause his head to burst.

He must do something—something to save his child! But what—oh, what could he do?

Concentrating all his will power on the task, he managed, with a frantic struggle, to win a brief victory of mind over matter.

Frances was still knitting quietly, unconsciously, still saying occasionally kind, commonplace things, of which he never heard a word.

With a suddenness that unnerved her, he forced his poor, numbed body to obey his brain, and flung himself heavily out of bed, in a final, supreme effort to get at the deadly thing which threatened his daughter's life.

But, alas! it was all in vain. He could do no more; his paralysis was too complete, and he lay there helpless upon the floor.

For a moment Frances feared that his end had come; that this sudden

spring had been his death struggle. But, kneeling beside him, she soon saw that her poor, stricken father was still alive.

"I can't lift you alone, daddy," she whispered. "Just lie there a minute while I run and find some body to help you." And she sped swiftly out of the room.

"She has gone! Heaven grant the thing may go off while I am alone!" he thought. And he lay there waiting eagerly for the explosion; but nothing happened.

Opening the street door, she glanced out, and beheld at that moment a young man passing.

"Forgive me!" she said. "I am all alone in the house, and my father, who is paralyzed, has just fallen out of bed. Will you help me to lift him back? He is a big man, and I can do nothing for him alone."

John Cameron raised his hat. "Certainly!" he responded, and followed her in. "This is an adventure of a sort, I suppose," he thought, as he went after her up the stairs.

"If you will take his feet, I will take his head," said Frances, pushing away the bed, which was some distance from the wall, that they might be better able to get hold of him.

She stared in horror-struck amazement at the thing that lay revealed.

"A bomb!" she gasped, turning white.

"Where?" cried Cameron, in a startled tone.

"There!" she exclaimed, pointing. "My father is Superintendent Stockton, the famous dynamiter detective, and this has evidently been left here in revenge by a stranger who called a few minutes ago."

Without a moment's hesitation, John Cameron stooped, picked up the infernal-machine, and dashed out of the room.

Here was an adventure thrilling enough even for him!

His brain was quite cool. He recollected that he had often read that the first thing to do with a suspected bomb was to immerse it in water, and he remembered that, a few doors down, at the end of the street, there stood a drinking-trough for horses. To this he raced before he had never attained before, and plunged the deadly thing therein.

Leaving it there, he hurried back to the distracted Frances, and found her in tears by her father's side.

"He is dead!" she sobbed. "The excitement has killed him!"

He glanced down, and saw that the dead man's eyes were peaceful and content, that about the corners of his twisted mouth there was a suggestion of a smile.

I believe he knew the thing was there," he said quietly, "and has died happy to think that you were saved."

"I am sure of it!" gasped Frances, through her tears. "It must have been for my sake that he managed to fling himself out of bed. For him death could only be a truly happy release."

"Can I do anything for you?" John asked gently, after they had reverently lifted his body.

"Stay with me till nurse comes back! She won't be long, and then—"

As he crept into his bed that night, John Cameron revised his estimate of modern life. Exciting things did happen outside stories, after all. The only thing was, there were so many people in the world today that the odds were tremendously heavy against any particular individual coming across them.

But that was by no means the end of his adventure. The end came when, twelve months later, he married Frances Stockton; and even that, in some ways, was not the end, but only the beginning of another series of happy adventures that would cease only when, in the fulness of time, they went the road that, sooner or later, all mortals must go.—London Answers.

STRATEGY WASTED.

Ferguson was wending his way homeward from the club, sorely troubled in his mind over the curtain lecture he knew was in store for him, and casting about for some means of evading it.

Suddenly a bright idea evolved itself. He would slip into bed and get quietly into bed without awakening his wife.

Accordingly he stole gently upstairs, carefully undressed outside the door, and crept into bed with his face towards the outside. He mentally congratulated himself upon his success thus far and went to sleep.

When he awoke it was a dark, foggy morning, and after lying still for a few minutes, and not hearing any sound, he concluded that his wife was still asleep. He then determined to arise very quietly, carry his clothes outside the door, dress there, and go to business without waiting for breakfast.

He was successful in this, and meeting the servant girl downstairs he said:

"Eliza, you can tell your mistress I expect to be very busy to-day and therefore I didn't stop to have breakfast with her this morning."

"Goodness sir!" said Eliza, "missus went away yesterday morning to her mother's, and said she wouldn't be back till this evening."

THE NEW BRITISH BUDGET

HITS THE MONIED AND LANDLORD CLASS HARD.

Motors, Clubs, Death Duties are all Drawn on—Man of Small Income Escapes.

The changes introduced into the fiscal system by the British Budget of 1909-10 are so numerous that a brief synopsis of their effect will be found useful. The items of taxation are mentioned in the order adopted by Mr. Lloyd-George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Duties on private motor-cars.—A new graduated scale of duties on private motor-cars and motor-cycles is proposed for the United Kingdom (including Ireland, where hitherto there has been no tax on motor-cars). The scale is as follows:—Under 6½ h.p., £2 2s.; under 12 h.p., £3 3s.; under 16 h.p., £4 4s.; under 26 h.p., £6 6s.; under 33 h.p., £8 8s.; under 40 h.p., £10 10s.; under 60 h.p., £21; over 60 h.p., £20. Death taxes, one-half these rates. Motor-cycles, £1. No change in rates on motor-cabs; existing exemptions on trade vehicles continued.

Duty on Petrol.—Three-pence per gallon on petrol and "other spirits used for motor vehicles." A rebate to be granted of half the duty to motor-cabs and omnibuses.

INCOME TAX.

Income Tax.—The rates of poundage on earned incomes up to £3,000 per annum remain as at present—viz., 3d up to £2,000, and 1s. over £2,000 and under £3,000. On all other incomes now liable to tax the rate will be 2d. In the case of incomes under £500 a new abatement will be allowed of £10 for every child under 16 years of age.

A Super Tax.—On incomes over £3,000 a super tax of 6d. is to be levied on the amount by which it exceeds £3,000. Income tax exemptions and abatements are in future to be restricted to persons resident in the United Kingdom.

SUCCESSION DUTIES.

The Death Duties.—The scale of Estate duties is "steepened" for estates exceeding £5,000, and the maximum of 15 per cent. will be reached at £1,000,000, instead of £5,000,000. The new scale will be: £5,000 to £10,000, 4 per cent.; £10,000 to £20,000, 5 per cent.; £20,000 to £50,000, 6 per cent.; £50,000 to £70,000, 7 per cent.; £70,000 to £100,000, 8 per cent.; £100,000 to £150,000, 9 per cent.; £150,000 to £200,000, 10 per cent.; £200,000 to £400,000, 11 per cent.; £400,000 to £600,000, 12 per cent.; £600,000 to £800,000, 13 per cent.; £800,000 to £1,000,000, 14 per cent.; over £1,000,000, 15 per cent. The Settlement Estate Duty will be increased from 1 to 2 per cent.; legacy and succession duties where the beneficiary is a brother or sister, or descendant of a brother or sister, will be raised from 3 to 5 per cent., and in the case of all other persons the rate will be a uniform 10 per cent., instead of ranging from 5 to 10 per cent. The 1 per cent. legacy or succession duty will in future be charged on "lineals" and spouses, in cases where the estate exceeds £15,000; but in cases where the amount of the legacy or succession does not exceed £1,000, whatever the size of the estate from which it comes, exemption will be allowed; and it will be allowed if the legatee is a widow of the deceased, or a child under 21 years, if the legacy does not exceed £2,000. The rules as to valuation for purposes of Estate Duty are modified. Agricultural property is to be taken at its "market value" instead of at 25 years' purchase; stocks and shares are in all cases to be valued at their market prices. The period during which a gift inter vivos is liable to duty is extended to five years.

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Licenses.—The scale of duties for the full publican's license begins at 50 per cent. of the annual value, subject to a minimum based on population; £5 in rural districts, and in urban areas of less than 2,000 persons; £10 in urban areas between 2,000 and 5,000; £15 between 5,000 and 10,000; £20 between 10,000 and 50,000; £30 between 50,000 and 100,000; and £35 in London and other towns over 100,000.

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A \$60,000 FUNERAL.

Millionaire to Spend Thousands in Death Trappings.

A well-known French millionaire, whose death is expected shortly, has given instructions that \$60,000 is to be spent on his funeral.

The coffin, which cost \$4,000, has been ready for two years. It is of costly woods, with bronze mountings carved by celebrated artists. The funeral cortege will be more magnificent than any seen in the history of the Republic. Four thousand employes will walk behind the coffin, preceded by an outrider in gala costume and 200 bank messengers in livery. The mourners will be driven to the cemetery in Louis XV. coaches, with powdered lackeys, wearing knee-breeches and three-cornered hats sitting behind. Everyone must wear white gloves.

The religious ceremony, which will be celebrated at the Madeleine, will be very imposing. The musical part of the service will be performed by the best musicians from the opera and other theatres of Paris. The interment will take place at the Pere Lachaise Cemetery. The coffin will be placed on a pedestal, and about 5,000 mourners will file before it and sprinkle it with holy water. On a grand stand near by orators will deliver speeches on the charities and virtues of the dead millionaire.

It was at first thought that these conditions presented no special difficulty, but when the undertakers' coachmen and mutes were informed that they must wear archaic gala costumes and shave off beard and mustaches they called an indignation meeting of their comrades. On Monday evening 300 undertakers' men unanimously passed a resolution refusing to wear any but the usual livery, and threatening to expel from the union any member who lends himself "to any mutilation of his gifts of natural adornment."

WORK OF LAKE SEAMEN.

Transportation of 45,000,000 Tons of Ore Yearly.

Of the annual list of deaths among the organized seamen of the Great Lakes 75 per cent. is from violence. Drowning, of course, takes the majority of these, but death through accidents aboard ship or at dock is not infrequent. Falling from spars, getting pinched into the hold, accidents in the boiler rooms, all contribute to the annual list of fatalities. Rough work means a rough fate for the men who follow it, and most of the work on the lakes is rough to an extreme. The handling of iron ore is no child's play, and it is in hauling the commodity that the bulk of lake shipping finds existence.

Forty-five millions of tons taken from Duluth and Superior and distributed at South Chicago, Cleveland, Ashtabula, Erie, Conneaut Harbor, and other receiving ports is a fair year's work. The United States Steel Corporation, under the name of the Pittsburgh Steamship Company, has a fleet of 112 modern vessels in this traffic, of which seventy-seven are first-class steamers. The spring means transportation of grain is a fairly big item, but the slogan of the lakes is: "No ore, no work." From the earliest days of the season to the last there is a procession of ore boats from the head of the lakes, carrying to the smelters the products of the northern mines. Ore boats are to be found waiting for the ice to loosen in the spring, and it is they that brave the last hard storms of autumn. Up on Lake Superior every autumn a couple of ore carriers are expected to be cast away and their crews lost. But the call for iron and steel must be answered, no matter what the cost in men and boats.

"A hard life!" repeats the lake sailor when asked the question. "Yes, hard enough. But what's a sailor going to do but sail?"

DISINFECTION OF SCHOOLS.

English School Makes Satisfactory Test Sprinkling Floors.

The Buckinghamshire Education Committee, England, have received a report from their science master (Mr. Marsh, B.Sc.), whom they authorized to carry out a series of experiments on the disinfection of school floors, with a view to reducing the effects of epidemic and other diseases. From an elaborate series of tests Mr. Marsh deduced the conclusion that sprinkling the floors with a solution of cyllin resulted in an average reduction of 75 to 85 per cent. in the number of living bacteria in the dust. What this means is shown by the calculation that each ounce of dust contains 50 to 80 millions of microorganisms. The committee authorized a continuation of the experiments, and the further results have now been made known. Twenty-four schools were selected in which spraying with cyllin was done after every day's afternoon school. These were paired with 24 other schools of the same type, and as far as possible in the same districts, where no disinfectant was used. A year's trial showed that the average attendance in the 24 disinfected schools was better than the others by 76 per cent. This is equivalent to an increased grant over the whole county of £500 per annum. The head teachers of the disinfected schools report very favorably. There is little trouble in the process, dust is lessened and shelves and books are cleaner, the health of both teachers and scholars is generally better, and flies and moths are reduced. The cost of the process for 24 schools was about £30, and as the estimated increase of grant was £51, there should be a balance of £21 to the good.

ARE YOU A SPECIALIST?

It Sometimes Pays to Know One Thing Well.

An applicant for a job who says he can "do anything" is generally requested to go and do it—somewhere else. There is no such thing to-day as an all-round man.

When the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo was about to open its gates to the public, the walls of the beautiful Hall of Music, where the most famous musicians in the world were engaged to exercise their arts, were found to reflect a decided echo. Telegrams flew over the country at a rapid rate, and followed a small, insignificant-looking gentleman from Chicago to Seattle. Finally they caught him, and a week later he inspected the Hall of Music.

"What is the composition of this wall?" he asked the contractor.

"What kind of wood is that in the sounding-board?" he inquired of the architect.

He asked a hundred questions, and then called for two pieces of steel wire, 15ft. long. These he stretched between two posts at one side of the hall.

"Now," he said, "you will have no more trouble. Make me out a cheque for a thousand dollars!"

That man had studied acoustics all his life. He could not have earned \$10 a week in an office; but he knew more about acoustics than anyone else, and was paid proportionately for his skill.

LAND TAXATION.

It is proposed (1) to tax the owner of land, the value of which has risen through the enterprise of the community, or neighbors, to the extent of one-fifth of the "strictly unearned increment," starting from the value at the present moment. The tax will be payable when the land is sold. Corporations will pay at stated intervals. (2) A tax of 1/2d. in the £ will be imposed on the capital value of land "not used to the best advantage," including mineral land. It is to be charged on unbuilt land only. (3) A 10 per cent. "revision" duty is to be imposed on benefits derived from the determination of leases. Special abatements will be made in certain cases. These new taxes necessitate a reconstruction of the method of valuing property.

The Spirit Duties.—To be raised 3s. 9d. per gallon.

Tobacco.—The duty on manufactured tobacco to be increased by 8d. per pound, with equivalent additions to the duties on cigars, cigarettes and manufactured tobacco.

DANGEROUS.

"Will you give me something to drink?" he asked, faintly, of the nurse.

"Certainly sir," said the nurse, offering him a glass of water.

He put up his hand feebly.

"Give it to me in a teaspoon, please," he whispered huskily, "till I get used to it."