

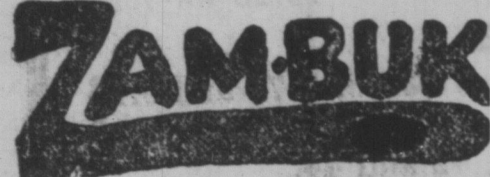
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SIR HIRAM MAXIM

We take from the British Weekly the following outline of the Autobiography of Sir Hiram Maxim, of "Maxim Gun" fame, who has been said recently to have invented an arrangement by which submarines may be navigated under water without the aid of the periscope.

"He was born in Maine, the son of a farmer who had cleared his farm and erected the necessary buildings. The house was surrounded completely by a dense forest inhabited by bears. Maxim's father gave up the farm and started a wood-turning establishment in the neighbourhood, and there Maxim commenced his education in the little schoolhouse. But he was not specially interested in learning. He delighted in hunting the bears that were so plentiful in Maine at the time of his childhood. They weighed about four hundred pounds each, and had the finest fur of any bears in the world. They could be brought up as pets, but they were not safe pets, although they never attacked human beings unless provoked. The little family kept moving on from place to place in the neighbourhood, young Maxim attending the local schools and taking part in many adventures. They seem to have been extremely poor, at least in money. But Hiram Maxim had been teaching himself. He became expert in geography, and read with eagerness books on natural philosophy and astronomy. He determined to be a sea captain, and though he had no money to buy a chronometer he was quite sure he could make an instrument that would determine the latitude, and in this he succeeded. He was evidently a born genius in mechanics.

When he was little more than fourteen he was put to work at a carriage maker's, and was at first hungry all the time. His first master allowed him four dollars a month, but this was not paid in cash. He escaped to the house of his uncle twenty miles off, and very soon began to show his immense strength and his endless ingenuity. While he does justice to his mechanical achievements, he relates with even more relish the stories about his hunting and his boxing.

As a boxer he distinguished himself at once. He felt convinced that he would soon become a champion. This is highly characteristic. It has been said that youth often tends to despondency; that the hopes of youth go up and down like buckets in a well. There is not a trace of misgiving or sadness or fear in all this record. But I do not think that Sir Hiram Maxim can be particularly proud of the fact that when the Civil War broke out he did not join the army. He was told by an old clergyman that he was altogether the most promising young man in the town; that he was very hard working without any bad habits; that it might be all right for those less gifted than himself to go to the war, but that it was his duty to stay at home and work; also that he would find soldiering a very hard job indeed. So he made up his mind to give it up and refused to go on. All this is the genuine and standard apology of the shirker. In fact, he almost boasts that he never enlisted and that he never was in the service.

Moving from place to place and working hard, he showed himself a resourceful young man, painting and decorating carriages and roughing it generally. At that time all along the frontier between Canada and the United States everyone knew whom he could lick and who could lick him, and people began to discuss what place Maxim held among the fighters.

It soon turned out to be a very prominent place. The youth had marvellous strength and courage. He tells us that a doctor in the place where he was then staying—Christosome—had three pretty daughters, and one beautiful summer evening he walked

out with friends of the doctor's to visit the girls. Before arriving, they found the doctor, his hired man, and three girls all armed with clubs attempting to get a bull belonging to a neighbour out of the doctor's pasture. As the young men approached the young ladies ran home. Maxim suggested that they should leave the bull to him, and he would see what he could do alone.

"The bull, having been pursued with clubs, was in a great state of excitement, but soon cooled down and commenced to eat grass. I got over the fence very cautiously and approached the bull with nothing but my bare hands. The bull looked at me and gave a snort. I then sat down and commenced to pull the grass up with my fingers. The ground had never been ploughed and consequently was all hills and hollows, known locally as cradle knolls, which are not very favourable for speed either for horses or cattle. Without rising from the ground I gradually worked myself along in the direction of the bull, never looking at him when he was looking at me. He kept on feeding until I had got within twenty yards of him; I then made a dash for him, and before he could get up speed I had him by the tail, and taking advantage of the cradle knolls I made it very difficult for him to run fast, by pulling his hindquarters down the hills, so that sometimes he would be heading up the little hills instead of down. After this had been going on for some time he had seemed to think the matter over, and stopped and kicked. A horse kicks out quickly with great violence, and withdraws his foot at once; but the bovine species do not withdraw their foot unless it hits something; they keep vibrating it for a second or so. While this vibration was going on, I let go of his tail and caught hold of his foot, raised it about six feet in the air, and down went the bull. Before he could recover himself I had the thumb of my right hand up one of his nostrils and three of my fingers up the other. I caught him by the horns, twisted his neck so that he could not get up, and held him there until they obtained a long and strong rope. They tied the middle of this around his horns with several men on each side. When, however, I allowed him to get up, he ran away with the lot of them until I caught him again by the tail and got him out of the field."

When this job was finished the doctor said, "If I had been told that anyone could go into a field with a bull of that size, with nothing but his bare hands, throw him down and hold him, I would not have believed it, no matter who had told me. It is the greatest feat of strength that I have ever witnessed."

I wonder what Sir Hiram Maxim thinks, in the light of such stories as these, of his careful abstinence from the fighting in the Civil War.

However this may be, he was no coward, and encountered without hesitation the most formidable pugilists of the whole district. He went to help an uncle who had some engineering works in Massachusetts, and there he showed himself a master worker. Sir Hiram is not troubled by anything in the nature of mock modesty. His observations on his own triumphs are of the most flattering and complacent kind. I copy a few sentences.

"The next job given to me was a hundred blow-off cocks for boilers, and I made these quicker and better than any other man had ever done before. I beat the other men because I put the reamer in better condition, and regarded certain rules regarding turning the taper keys all at an exact and correct angle, so that very much less grinding was necessary."

"My uncle was away in Boston the whole of the day and only returned late at night. The next morning on seeing what I had done, he said, 'You have done more work and done it better than any draughtsman in this town could have done.'"

He went to Boston and there met with a philosophical instrument maker named Oliver P. Drake. Maxim who does not lavish compliments on his associates, says that Drake was a gentleman of the first water, and that he owed him a good deal of his success in life. He set to work immediately to improve the gas machines of those days, and he thinks the system has got into general use in the States, though he did not get it patented. By this time he was making in Boston five dollars a day, and was offered seven and a half in New York. On going there he was foreman and draughtsman at the Novelty Iron Works. There he came into contact with an all-knowing German caller Albert Lucias who played a practical joke on him. Maxim was not the man to tolerate this, and he immediately laid the aggressor on his back. He did this over and over again, till the German gave it up. "It was the talk of the place, and the next day, when he went into the pattern shop, the foreman pattern maker said to him, 'Never attempt to wrestle with a State of Maine Yankee; they are very strong and practice wrestling from their childhood up; it is the principal amusement at their schools.'"

Sir Hiram Maxim's record is much brightened by geographic sketches of individuals. He found in his works a certain Professor Grant, whose age he put down at forty or fifty. The next time the Professor came into the draughtsman's room they asked Maxim to examine him. He had not lost any teeth; he had plenty of black hair; his eyebrows and moustache were dark brown. He was six feet two in height, and weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds. His age was 84! This Professor had never drunk a cup of tea or coffee in his life, had never tasted alcoholic drinks of any kind, never had anything to do with tobacco, and had never had a day's illness—not even a headache. About a fortnight later the old gentleman had his first illness, and thereafter looked his age. He said: "Maxim, I am coming to the end of my tether." "Yes," said Maxim, "and that is the way a strong man should die. You will probably be in your grave inside of a week." And he was, for he died suddenly a few days later.

I must pass over a good deal relating to Maxim's locomotive headlights and gas machines generally. He soon proved his unique qualities, and every difficult order given to his firm was put into Maxim's hands. There are few dates in this book, but this was about 1874.

After that comes his attempt at making incandescent lamps. Maxim had a great belief in the future of electric light, and made a successful machine. But Edison had come to the front. Of him, Sir Hiram speaks very kindly. He says: "As everyone knows, he is one of the cleverest scientific men in existence, as well as a very clever business man with a very powerful backing. Edison had not gone very far in his experiments when he found that there was only one way under heaven to make and to standardise the carbon filaments for incandescent electric lamps, which was by heating them electrically in a highly attenuated atmosphere of hydro-carbon vapours. This I had done a year before." Edison seems to have reaped the profit, however. Maxim resented the attribution of the invention to Edison, and threatened to kill on the spot any man who asked about the lamp. "Is it Edison's?"

Even those who, like myself, understand nothing about machinery or chemistry will read with astonishment the story of Maxim's feats. He obtained an effect by the use of certain chemicals. When astonishment was expressed, he said that phosphorus is a violent and deadly poison, but that when combined with all the oxygen it will take up it is not a poison at all. "I put some of it in a glass with a little sugar and water, stirred it up, and drank it." Professor Sterling said: "If you never do another job in your life, this ought to immortalise your name."

About 1881 Maxim was engaged by the United States Electric Lighting Company at a salary of £1,000 a year, and had a large number of shares in the company which had established the Maxim-Weston Company in London, a company that was to have the control of all the Maxim and Weston patents for the British Isles. By this time Maxim was well known. It was announced in the English newspapers that "Hiram Maxim, the greatest electrician in the world, had been engaged to come to London to re-organize the Maxim-Weston Company."

I must leave to readers Sir Hiram Maxim's full and very interesting account of his great invention, the Maxim Gun. If I do not misunderstand him he says that the rights of this formidable invention were sold for £900,000. This was not the last of Sir Hiram's contrivances. He experimented in flying machines, but confessed that he was altogether too ambitious. Instead of starting out to build a machine about forty feet wide his machine was no less than a hundred feet wide. There were many other obstacles in his way, but he claims a qualified success. He admits that he lost money in this business, and he complains bitterly about the dishonesty of lawyers. In spite of all, however, Sir Hiram formed a very considerable opinion of English character and became a British subject. A strong attempt was made to induce him to contest a seat in Parliament, but he declined on account of his deafness.

He tells us in the closing chapters that he was lifted to the very pinnacle of fame by his automatic gun, and he says that he sacrificed all his fame by inventing a life-saving apparatus.

The life-saving apparatus came about in this way. Sir Hiram, about the year 1900, had a very severe attack of bronchitis. He consulted specialists in vain, and got no relief until he went to Nice and went through a system of treatment at Vos' Inhalatorium. The treatment was very long and very severe, but it was effective for a time. It was almost inevitable that Sir Hiram should invent an apparatus for inhaling, and he tells us that it was recommended by one of the most eminent of the Harley-street phys-

icians, and that hundred of thousands were sold and gave great satisfaction. Nevertheless he was told that he had ruined his reputation absolutely by prostituting his talents on quack nostrums. He stoutly maintains, however, the merits of his inhaler. It enables him to live all the winter in England, and large numbers are now being sold all over the world. In spite of this Sir Hiram evidently feels the ridicule of scientific men, and sums up by saying, "I suppose I shall have to stand the disgrace, which is said to be sufficiently great to wipe out all the credit that I might have had inventing killing machines." With all its faults, this is a book to be read. It is the life story of a man of prodigious physical strength and extraordinary mental force, dauntless, resourceful, daring, and yet cautious. There is much in Sir Hiram Maxim's career to explain the excessive satisfaction with himself and his work which is the note of his biography. As will be seen from the quotations I have made, his style is clear and vigorous throughout.

I am yours, etc.,
CLAUDIUS CLEAR.

M. L. GEORGE'S VIVID RETROSPECT

Men and Shells.—"The Chances of Victory are Still With Us."

The event of the day in the House of Commons has been the account given by Mr. Lloyd George of the work accomplished since May by the Ministry of Munitions. But before the Minister for Munitions was called upon other important public business had been transacted. The Prime Minister announced the successful withdrawal from Gallipoli of the troops at Sulva and Anzac, and Mr. Tennant gave some figures as to the British casualties in the Balkans.

The House was well filled for Mr. Lloyd George's expected statement on the work of the Munitions Ministry. The Minister of Munitions rose at 6 o'clock and it was almost 8 before he completed his speech. It was nearly all of a historical character, and it would no doubt have gained as a House of Commons performance if the first half of it had been more compressed. Towards the end Mr. Lloyd George addressed a direct and almost irresistible appeal to the employers of skilled labor in this country and to the trade unions, on the ground that skilled labour continues to be economically employed, and it received most attention in the subsequent debate.

The speech, unfolded an encouraging record of national energy in the workshops, and, in this aspect of it, was of a buoyant character, though no one who heard Mr. Lloyd George would say that he attempted to please the House by adopting a tone of optimism. The invaluable services of distinguished business men to the Ministry of Munitions were cordially acknowledged—indeed, Mr. Lloyd George declared that it would have been impossible to organize the Department without the help so given. He made the startling disclosure that when the Germans were turning out 250,000 shells a day we were turning out 2,500 in shell and 13,000 in shrapnel.

When the Ministry was formed it proceeded to ascertain the causes of the insufficiency of munitions, and, step by step, to remove them. By means of State census and State control existing machinery was so used as to increase the output prodigiously and there was corresponding improvement at Woolwich under the stimulating pressure of the new Department. To supplement existing sources of supply the Minister established 40 local Munitions Committees, which in their turn set up national shell factories. At least 100 firms which had never produced munitions before had engaged under the auspices of the Department in turning out shells and the components of shells.

Need of Big Guns

In the recent operations on the Western front there had been an enormous expenditure of shells, and there had been no complaint of shortage. The whole of that expenditure had been replaced within a month; the Department would soon be in a position to supply an equal quantity within a week. We had come rather late to the conclusion that big guns on a larger scale were essential to victory, and up to midsummer last big guns in great numbers had not been ordered. The heaviest siege gun we had at the beginning of the war was now the lightest. It was only the heaviest guns that would enable us to demolish the German trenches. For these heavy guns there was now adequate provision.

We had also been "rather late" in realizing the great part of machine-guns in this war. The production had been delayed by the want of skilled labour; but our requirements for the New Year were now well in sight. Similar work had been done in the provision of rifles and the various equipment for trench warfare. In this connection there had been valuable experimental work, which

Mr. Lloyd George thought it would be imprudent to discuss.

Call to Release Skilled Men

Having indicated some of the directions which the Minister of Munitions had effected considerable public economics, Mr. Lloyd George declared that yet more important economics could be achieved by altering the proportion of home and foreign orders. But our foreign orders could be reduced and our home orders increased only through a greater supply of skilled labour. Even now machinery for the production of machine guns was standing idle because there was not the skilled labour to work it. But for the new factories contemplated the Ministry required 80,000 skilled men and 200,000 to 300,000 unskilled men.

Nothing could be more mischievous than to suggest that we were over-producing war material. Only 8 per cent. of the factories employed in turning out guns were working on night shift, for the others had not the skilled men to enable them to do so. The Minister gave a vivid and emphatic summary of his efforts to emphasize the trade unions to allow unskilled men and women to take the places of skilled men now engaged in unskilled work, so that the skilled might be released for essential national work. He appealed to employers to take the initiative by setting women and unskilled men to do work which they well could do, but which was now absorbing so much skilled labour.

GERMAN CAMP IN ENGLAND

A Neutral's View

Mr. John C. Vander Veer, the London editor of the Amsterdam Telegraaf, who, with a number of American Press representatives, recently visited the camp for German prisoners of war at Dorchester, has sent his paper the following account of his visit:

There are 3,400 prisoners in the large barracks which, before the war, was used for cavalry, and the numerous newly-built wooden huts near the large old Roman camp, the prisoners' play ground. Among them are 1,000 captured at Loos, many of whom are very young. One told me he was only 19 last week. There are also a few sailors, from German submarines, and there is one from the Blucher and another from the Mainz still wearing on their caps the names of their ships. Allowed to talk freely in German with the prisoners, I asked them to speak frankly, and all questioned declared they were satisfied with their treatment, with their accommodation, and with the quality and quantity of the food. They said "The British treat us kindly." Only one tall, proud Prussian guardsman refused to answer, and looked scornfully. The prisoners manage the internal affairs of the camp themselves. Their commandant praised the kindness and tact of the obliging British commandant, who, with only a couple of officers, some sergeants, and about 20 soldiers, supervise this large camp.

One German sergeant, on complaining that the soup was rather thin, found that the British commandant agreed with him, and it being found that the fault lay with the German cooks they were replaced. I saw a large clean kitchen containing a mass of fresh appetizing meat. Every prisoner receives daily half a pound of meat with vegetables, which I tasted myself, and fresh bread—"as good as cake" one prisoner described it. They prefer bread, but it is most difficult to get here, though the British commandant has tried to do so. The majority of the prisoners occupy large rooms, which accommodate about 30, though there are many smaller rooms for about four or six men, and they are allowed to choose their own room comrades. All the rooms are airy and well warmed. There are stoves with plenty of coal and some of the rooms seemed to be overheated, but each set of men consulted their own liking in this matter. Each man has a mattress and three blankets.

In some of the rooms there are hired pianos. The prisoners have their own orchestra and frequently have concerts. The instruments have been received from home or supplied freely here, and they are allowed to play German national songs. In one large room there is an inscription in German: "We fear no one on earth but God." Most of the men wear their own uniform and there are various regiments represented among the prisoners. There are many small men from Silesia, and there are some with Danish names. Some receive their new uniforms from home, while worn outfits are replaced by splendid new suits of clothes. Everyone is given a warm overcoat, two flannel shirts, and two pairs of woolen garments upon arrival in the camp, also handkerchiefs, tooth and hair brushes, a comb and strong shoes are supplied, and prisoners who undertake the work earn about 6s. weekly. Cooks and latrine-men are also paid well.

Except for cleaning their rooms, there is no compulsory work for the prisoners. They find plenty of amusement for themselves. Some of them

play football at the Roman Camp, and three times weekly there were long marches outside. They looked very healthy and many were cheerful. There were 17 patients in the hospital during my visit. A few were recovering from wounds, and others were suffering from the effects of the hardships of the campaign. One young fellow was suffering from kidney trouble as the result of inhaling gas. I asked him if it was the result of German gas. "No; German gas kills," he replied. Another man who had been many months lingering between life and death, suffering from typhoid, declared that British care had saved his life, and with eyes full of tears expressed his gratitude.

The prisoners have arranged various classes of instruction for themselves. A young German jurist captured at Loos on the day on which he expected promotion was teaching Egyptian history to a large class, and the blackboard contained significantly the word, "Mesopotamia."

The prisoners are decorating their rooms for Christmas. They are to be allowed to bake special cakes, and they will be given a special dinner. They are allowed to write home twice weekly. They have just received 1,500 parcels, which is the daily average now. They have a large canteen at which refreshments can be obtained at reasonable prices. It is significant that recently some German ambulance soldiers who were told they were to be sent home refused to go, saying they preferred to stay at the camp. They were compelled to go, however. Germany complained that the prisoners at Dorchester during the inclement weather were still living in tents, and in consequence of this complaint, representatives of the Swiss Red Cross Society came to inspect the camp. They found all the German prisoners housed in barracks or in wooden huts, but the British officers and soldiers were themselves living in tents. "By Jove! the English treat their prisoners well," remarked an American colleague, and we all agreed.

CIVIC IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE OF CANADA

(Special Bulletin from the Commission of Conservation)

The Conference of the new Civic Improvement League of Canada, to be held in Ottawa on the 20th inst., is likely to be one of the most important municipal gatherings that have ever been held in the Dominion. The Conference will be held in the large Railway Committee Room of the House of Commons, and representatives are likely to be present from all the nine provinces. Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and other large cities will be officially represented. Among the principal speakers will be Sir John Willison (Chairman), and the Hon. J. W. Hanna, Provincial Secretary of Ontario.

It is anticipated that municipal questions will be dealt with under three main heads, namely: Municipal Government and Finance; Immigration, Unemployment and Public Health; Housing, Town Planning and Local Improvements. It is agreed that there is urgent need for discussion of the many civic problems that have already arisen and are likely to arise in the future as a result of the war. Great interest has been aroused in the new movement in all parts of the Dominion and there is extraordinary unanimity with regard to the need for a national organization to study and discuss municipal problems.

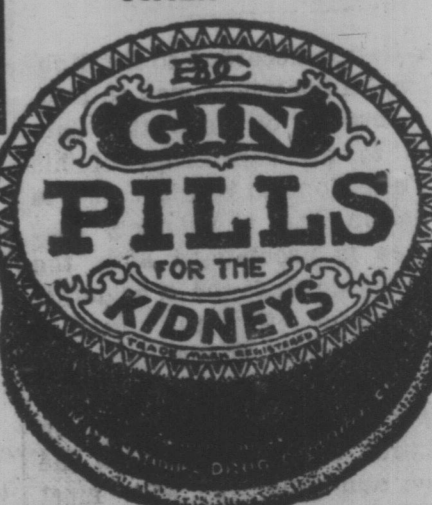
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