

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
COUNTER-JUMPER
by
W. F. FISH

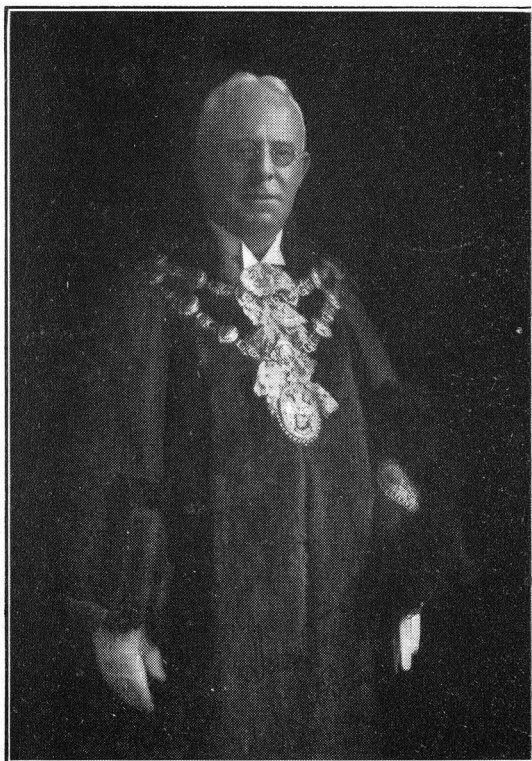
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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COUNTER JUMPER



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The Author in his Mayoral Robes.

THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
COUNTER JUMPER

IN TWO PARTS

ENGLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA

A Plain Story for Plain People

BY

W. F. FISH

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TO
MY WIFE,
A. T. F.

INTRODUCTION.

I N presenting this autobiography to the public I am actuated by no spirit of egotism. It is merely the plain, unvarnished story of my business and public career dating from the day I left school to make a humble start in the great commercial world, until the occasion, 43 years later, when I relinquished the Mayoral Chair, or, as it is more familiarly termed, the Chair of Van Riebeeek, of the City of Capetown. In doing so I somehow feel that I am opening up new ground, for, as far as I know, the theme—that is, the every-day life of a draper's assistant or "counter-jumper"—has not, up to the present, figured to any extent in literature.

We have, it is true, the experiences of the celebrated Tittlebat Titmouse, Esq., in "Ten Thousand a Year"; we have also the careers of "Mr. Kipps" and "Mr. Polly," by H. G. Wells, who, as is well known, commenced his distinguished career in the "Rag Trade" as a "Knight of the Yardstick," and there is the ever-green memory of Mr. Horatio Sparkins in "Sketches by Boz"; but the actual *trade* experiences of these gentlemen form a very inconspicuous part of the stories. There must be many hundreds of thousands of men living in every part of the world whose experiences have been similar to mine—that is, as regards the drapery trade—whose memories may be refreshed—if they require or desire them to be refreshed—by reading these pages.

My adventures as an apprentice in London may be of some passing interest to the youth of the present day, who, by comparison, will find that existing conditions are far easier than those obtaining at the time of which I have written.

I have not attempted to hold myself up as an example; far from it. I am, alas, too conscious of my own shortcomings, beside which, I have not written a sermon but an autobiography, just the plain story of my business career in England and South Africa, without embellishment or exaggeration. Here and there, perhaps, by way of variety, I have introduced a little of the humorous element, for even in the most uninteresting lives and occupations there is always more or less humour if we but seek it; and, in my opinion, life is cleaner, better, brighter, and happier for every smile that we can raise or capture.

Ramsay McDonald once said:—

“ No matter how diverse our principles may be, we are, nevertheless, approachable through those primitive pathways of genial good humour and friendliness which mankind have ever followed when they have felt a common purpose.”

I agree with him.

In all probability when Youth reads of my sordid Greenwich experiences it will remark: “ More fool he to put up with it.” Ah, yes, that’s modern youth all over. Times have changed, they haven’t got to “ Put up with it ” *now*. Occasionally, when I am in a reminiscent mood, and speak to my own dear boys of my hardships during those now remote days, if they don’t actually *say* what I have remarked above, it is more than likely they think it, which is much the same thing.

Conditions have altered, the great dividing line between employer and employed no longer exists and I rejoice accordingly; for Capital has realised that Labour is the most essential fact in the accumulation and utilisation of wealth, but, nevertheless, Youth still has *something* to learn from the experiences of their forebears, and would, perhaps, be better for a little of the discipline with which they were overburdened.

Not for one moment would I advocate returning to the old soul-destroying conditions of forty years ago—certainly not, but then neither am I a disciple of the modern pernicious doctrine of “*take it easy.*” With all our modern methods and labour-saving devices *individual effort* is *still* necessary. Strenuousness, efficiency, enterprise, and initiative, are as imperative to-day as ever they were and more essential to success than ever they have been.

I have attempted to tell my story just as I have lived my life, and if in so telling it I shall have been the means of helping others along life’s difficult journey, comforting them, perhaps when the path is so very steep and rough, then I shall be more than gratified. If the personal pronoun appears to figure too largely in the pages which are to follow, I can only crave indulgence and ask for tolerance. In a personal narrative—so *intimately* personal as this—the ego must, of necessity, be more or less in evidence, but in my case I trust not unduly so.

My grateful thanks are due to the proprietors of *Tit-Bits*, *The Cape Argus*, *The Cape*, *The Tatler*, *The Nation*, and *The South African Review* for having given me permission to reproduce certain articles from my pen which have, from time to time, appeared in the pages of their respective publications.

W. F. FISH.

SEA POINT, CAPETOWN,

1929.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF A

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CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST SITUATION.

THE parting of the ways between our school life and the commencement of the career we have decided to adopt—or, as is more often the case among the middle classes—the career we have been pitchforked into whether suited to it or not, is very sharply defined, and the momentous occasion lingers in our memories throughout our lives. In all probability it marks the most important turning point in our, until then, uninteresting and uneventful existence. It is the first mile stone of importance that we reach, the first ball in the over in our first great match.

The more fortunate youth (I use the word “fortunate” with mental reservations) is able to choose a career; well-to-do parents, if they are so minded and take that interest in their offspring which it is their duty to take, study a boy’s natural gifts and tendencies, educate him along those lines, with the result that long before the school-leaving age his future has been decided upon. But few are so privileged in this direction.

There are, of course, tens of thousands of clever lads, who, given their right sphere, would develop into brilliant men, and the world would be proportionately richer on this account. But, alas, they have not the opportunity and are destined to fill the drab rôle of city clerk, shop assistant, and so forth. Approached, perhaps, from the right angle or standpoint, these need not of necessity be “drab” occupations, every calling can be just as interesting as we care to make it, for

there is always the "Romance of Commerce," as so admirably set forth in the book bearing that name by Gordon Selfridge, but to a lad, let me say with mechanical instincts or having a legal brain, and these, of course, could be multiplied a hundredfold, any other calling must, of necessity, be more or less irksome, and when our daily task has this effect on us, when our heart is not in our work—as it were—it is difficult for us to attain any great measure of success in that particular calling. But, as I say, the rôle of city clerk or shop assistant need not necessarily be "drab" or uninteresting; and please understand I am not writing disparagingly of either of these occupations, far from it; I wish more of our lads would take seriously to commerce as a career. I am *proud* of being a business man and, as you will read, I have in my time filled both positions. Night schools and technical colleges open the road of success to all, but success is not achieved without labour, and the mere *wish* to succeed without the backbone of individual effort, counts for *nothing*. As Josh Billings says: "Don't let your wishbone be where your backbone ought to be." Naturally night study involves a vast amount of drudgery and the circumstances are not quite the same as in the case of the more fortunate youth whose career has been carefully planned from his small boyhood. Nevertheless, it will be admitted that the world's greatest successes are among those who have had a modicum of schooling, but who, by perseverance, pluck and determination, have educated themselves in the great battle of life and it is along these lines that real grit and courage comes in. I came across an excellent definition of perseverance a little while ago, it is this: "'Perseverance' is the son of *Faith*, the twin brother of *Pluck*, and the grandfather of *Success*." Think it over.

I can distinctly recall the occasion—as most of us can—when I arrived at this "parting of the ways." I had reached, or had almost reached, the advanced age of 15 years and was attending what was then one

of the largest schools in London—the Central Foundation School, Cowper Street, which lies off the City Road not far from Bunhill Fields where the famous John Bunyan is buried; and a *very excellent school it was*. At the time, I was in what was known as the Upper Fifth Form, which I suppose would be equivalent to what is now called the Junior Certificate.

On a certain Monday morning I had dressed for school as usual, having cleaned my boots overnight, and was making a hurried breakfast, for I had to catch the 8.15 train from Stroud Green Station, in the north of London, to the City every morning, for which purpose I was provided with a second class season ticket (second class because they did not issue third), with my satchel on my shoulder containing a very formidable selection of books which it was our custom to carry to “show off” a little before our rivals from the City of London School and, generally, to give an impression of studiousness. I was just leaving when my father, who was a commercial traveller and was just off on his weekly journey, called me: “My son,” he said, “I want you to call at H—s and Co., of Knightrider Street, this morning; they are advertising for a youth.”

I was positively staggered, such a thought as leaving school had never entered my mind.

“But father,” I remonstrated, “I’m not ready to leave yet; the chaps don’t even know I’m leaving, and if I leave now I shall lose the history prize.”

“Never mind ‘the chaps,’ my son,” said my father; “doubtless they will survive the shock. As for the history prize; well, my boy, I should have liked to see you win it, but you must be at H—s and Co. at nine o’clock sharp.”

All lads grumble and grouse at school life and school discipline; it is the inalienable prerogative of school boys to do so, but when the actual moment for leaving arrives, their hearts are usually pretty full and they discover that they have a strange and unaccustomed lump in their throats. Masters who were regarded as

martinets seem suddenly to have developed all manner of virtues. Boys who were regarded as bullies, cowards, sneaks, or were considered "too bloomin' cocky," become immediately quite decent sorts of fellows, and altogether a totally unsuspected love for the school and its inmates wells up within him as, with the cuff of his jacket, he furtively wipes away a tear.

I felt that I was being unjustly treated. There were several school matters to be cleared up. There were uncompleted impositions to be considered, for that latest labour-saving device of four nibs stuck into one holder had turned out to be a lamentable failure and masters had an almost uncanny intuition in detecting the use of carbon paper. Then again, the summer holidays were approaching, which I had arranged to spend at Sawbridgeworth, where fishing, swimming, boating, birds' nesting, nutting, and a little farming were the great attractions.

It was useless arguing the point with my father. He was not a hard or a harsh man, not at all, rather the reverse in fact; but his mind was made up, and most boys recognise the underlying justice in, "He who pays the piper calls the tune." Already I had had *some* business experience, for during the year I had given—or had been more or less coerced into giving my services free on Saturday morning—my hard-earned Saturday, mark you—to a wholesale sewing silk and tailor's twist house, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Silver Street as far as I can remember, where my work consisted of addressing envelopes, delivering letters and copying certain hieroglyphics—which I afterwards learned were the cost price—on to sundry boxes of merchandise.

Bidding the household "Good-bye"—this was always an impressive custom in my home, and on that particular morning there was as much warmth in my farewell as one would experience if sleeping on an iceberg at the North Pole—but it was the custom and custom is a difficult thing to break away from. With

a heavy heart I took my departure; caught my train, which seemed to travel all too quickly that morning. "Stroud Green, Finsbury Park (change here for Cannonbury, Mildmay Park, Haggerston and Broad Street), Holloway (they didn't even shout, 'All season's ready' that morning, which would have delayed things a little), Farringdon, Aldersgate, and Moorgate Street train."

My "season" only enabled me to travel as far as Aldersgate Street. From there that morning I walked to the City, through Old Street, St. Luke's, passing the Barbican, City Road, Moorgate Street, Cheapside, St. Paul's Churchyard, and, running parallel with the "Churchyard," nearer the river, is Knightrider Street. What romance the name conjures up? Knightrider Street, dating back to the days when knights were *really* bold and not mere company promoters and money accumulators; when chivalry, not currency, was the claim for such distinction. "Little romance about it now," I thought. At the upper end of it is Doctors' Commons, where David Copperfield served his articles with Spenlow and Jorkins. I could almost picture sweet little Dora tripping into her father's dry-as-dust-looking office completely upsetting poor David at his studies.

I soon found H—— and Co.'s place. It was a big, gloomy-looking warehouse (which London warehouse is not "gloomy looking"?), some five or six storeys high, with a platform and crane at the very top, used for hoisting or lowering goods. It proved to be a ladies' jacket, dolman, and mantle manufactory; for in those days women wore clothes and plenty of them and did not care to expose their nakedness or semi-nakedness to the vulgar gaze. Why, dear me, they even attempted to emphasise what Nature had insufficiently provided them with by means of "bustles."

As I entered the narrow, shabby doorway, bruised and chipped by the constant passage of many packing cases, I saw a printed notice on the wall, "*Office First Floor.*" There appeared to no one I could ask, but it

was evident that it was to the office I should proceed, and up that narrow, dark staircase I climbed, a trembling, nervous boy; a very different boy to the "cock of his class" of only three short days before. The hero of his form cuts a very unheroic figure when he applies for his first situation, and, as a rule, employers do not attempt to make the ordeal—for it *is* a great ordeal—less trying for him. Oh, if they would only cast their memories back to their own first start in the world!

Timidly I knocked at that office door and in response came a stern "Come in!"

I entered. At a very formidable-looking desk, surrounded by huge books and papers, sat a somewhat formidable-looking, stern-visaged man.

"He looks stricter than old Thompson" (which was my disrespectful way of alluding to my form master), I thought.

"Well, my boy, and what do you want so early in the morning?" The voice was not as severe as the expression on the speaker's face suggested it might be.

"Please, sir," I replied, tremblingly, "my father sent me for the situation."

"Ah, yes, to be sure; we are advertising for a junior. So you want to work, eh?"

I wasn't quite sure that I did, but answered in the affirmative. Then the usual questions were put. What school had I attended? What class was I in? Was I good at figures? Was I a well-behaved boy? Where did I live? What was my father? And could I draw?

My answers, very nervously given, seemed to be satisfactory. I was perhaps a little too enthusiastic in the matter of "behaviour," it was the only virtue I could be enthusiastic over.

"Well, I think you will suit," said the great but by no means unkindly man. "But I shall require something in the nature of a testimonial from your schoolmaster. Let's see, what's his name?"

"The Head Master is Dr. Wormall, sir,"

"Ah, yes, to be sure, Dr. Wormall. Well, my lad, you bring me a note from him, and you must also let me see your drawing book."

The "drawing book" seemed to mystify me. I wasn't applying for a position as an artist but one of a humble office boy or, to clothe it in a more dignified garment, junior clerk.

"And when can you commence?" he asked.

"Oh, after the summer holidays, sir," I replied.

"Oh, no, that won't do at all, my lad; we want you at once."

My heart sank. What of all the fishing excursions I had planned? What would old Farmer Houseden do without me while reaping was going on?

Noticing my evident distress, for boys of 15 haven't learned the art of disguising their feelings, he said in a kindly, fatherly way:—

"Look here, my lad, if all is satisfactory I will see what can be done; but, meanwhile, run off to your school and bring me your drawing book and a letter of recommendation from the head master."

"And—sir," I stammered, "what are you going to pay me?"

It seemed to me that this was too important an item to be overlooked.

"Hum!" he said, holding his chin between his thumb and forefinger. "To be sure, I had quite forgotten that. Well, for a start, we shall give you a salary of £1 a month."

"A pound a month!" It seemed almost *colossal* wealth. A railway season ticket for my daily journey from the north of London would make a very considerable hole in it, to be sure; and then, being a growing youth, I should need something in the nature of a mid-day meal; but a *pound a month. Glorious!*

CHAPTER II.

FAREWELL TO SCHOOL.

IT is a considerable distance from Knightrider Street to Cowper Street and I ran most of the way. Oh! that I had the same fleetness of foot to-day; but Anno Domini tells its story.

My first duty was to interview the head master in his study. As every schoolboy knows, the head master's study holds no very pleasant recollections unless they happen to be prodigies of learning, which I wasn't. As a general rule, head masters don't invite scholars to visit them to inquire into their state of health or to tell them how delighted they are with the progress they are making. Usually such visits are due to some despairing form master, who, having used every other means to guide the youngster along the path of virtue, in desperation sends the offender to the lion's den, from which painful precincts he emerges a sadder and an infinitely more rebellious boy.

In a school of between twelve and fifteen hundred boys the head cannot, obviously, remember each scholar by name.

"Well, my lad, and what is your name?" he asked, as I stood tremblingly before him.

I told him.

"And what form are you in?" he inquired.

"The Upper Fifth, sir."

"Ah, yes, to be sure; the Rev Mr. Thompson is your master, isn't he?"

Saying this, he scanned a list he had before him, evidently a charge sheet of some sort.

"Um!" he mused, "I don't see your name down for punishment."

"No, sir," I replied, with a most virtuous expression on my face. "I've not come to be punished—"

I'm *never* punished, sir." (I thought he smiled as I said this, one of those wintry schoolmaster smiles.) "I've come to tell you, sir, that I've got a situation. I'm leaving school to-day, and the gentleman I'm going to work for has sent me to fetch my drawing book and a testimonial from you, sir."

"Oh dear! Oh dear!" he murmured to himself more than to me. "How foolish parents are to take their children away from school at such an early age.

"Very well, my boy, I'll consult your form master. You can call back in an hour's time."

My next duty was to bid farewell to the various masters under whom I had studied or had been supposed to study. No very bitter tears were shed; my immediate master seemed almost to heave a sigh of relief. It was somewhat disappointing, for I had made up my mind that my leaving would be regarded as something in the nature of a calamity, but they all seemed to accept it very philosophically, in fact almost *too* philosophically.

I waited for playtime to take a fond farewell of my particular chums and cronies; but there again, to my chagrin, I found them indifferent, not to say callous. One even approached me with the suggestion that I should lend him a "bob" in anticipation of my first month's salary; but as my total monetary resources amounted to exactly fourpence, including four ha'penny stamps, there was nothing doing.

Having received my testimonial, accompanied with the usual colourless, head-masterly advice, and having obtained the drawing book upon which so much of my destiny seemed to depend, I was walking, somewhat disconsolately, down the grand staircase towards the main entrance when I noticed what was known as the "Sergeant's den." Now this old sergeant deserves just a word or two in passing.

He was a Crimean veteran, as upright as a dart, with a tongue like a rasp, and was a martinet of the first magnitude. At nine o'clock each morning a bugle

sounded, when each form "fell in," the monitor carrying the form flag. We were armed with dummy rifles and were put through a series of military movements, such as:—"Form fours!" "As you were." "Even numbers take a pace to the rear with the left foot and a pace to the right with the right, odd numbers stand steady. Company, *form fours!*" "As you were," and so on, *ad nauseum*. We were taught to slope, trail, and order arms; we presented and shouldered arms; but we could neither load nor fire. We learned to "Prepare to receive cavalry," to "Form square," and all the time we hadn't a shot in our lockers. For some reason or another best known to himself, perhaps it was because of the colour of my hair, no one can account for prejudice, that sergeant always "had it in" for me. He invariably addressed and spoke of me as "Napoleon." I don't know that I bore any striking resemblance to the "little Corsican," neither did I at any time, as far as I can remember, show any signs of military skill or genius; but this I do know, that if ever there was a bulge in the line when the column was wheeling, a movement which I believe has long since disappeared from military drill, or if there was one unfortunate soldier out of step, that one was "Napoleon," and it was "Napoleon" who was held up to ridicule. I grew to positively dread that old sergeant's voice and devastating sarcasm and would make a very wide *détour* to avoid him, should I perchance catch sight of him out of school hours. But I was leaving school, to all intents and purposes I had already left, my heart was pretty full, and just for the moment I seemed to have a certain amount of affection even for the old sergeant.

"Shall I?" I mused. "Shall I say 'Good-bye' to *him?*" "No, I won't," I thought. "He'll only go and say something bitingly sarcastic, and I can't stand it to-day." I could see his grizzled old head in his den. He was writing. Outside in the corridor, resting in their racks, were the dummy rifles.

"Shall I?" I thought again. "Yes, I *will*," and I marched boldly into his small chamber.

For a moment he continued to write and then looked up. "Ah, Napoleon," he said, somewhat wearily. "What's the matter now?"

You see, no sooner did he see me than the first thing that occurred to him was that something was wrong. It was hard lines.

"No; nothing's wrong, sergeant," I hastened to reassure him. "I—I—I've just come to say 'good-bye.' I'm leaving school to-day, sergeant."

What a change came over the man. Instead of the biting, sarcastic retort I had expected, something to the effect that he only hoped I would make a better business man than I made a soldier; he was all gentleness and kindness. Placing his huge, rough hand on my shoulder, he drew me deeper into his den, and in a gentle, kindly, fatherly way, told me of all the dangers, temptations and difficulties I should encounter in the great world I was entering.

"Can it be the same man?" I thought.

"And now, my dear boy," he said in finishing, "I wish you always to remember this little verse."

No, reader, you mustn't laugh. I didn't laugh; as a matter of fact, I am not ashamed to confess I was nearer crying. Very gently that rough old soldier repeated this:—

"Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin;
Each victory will help you some other to win,
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus, He will carry you through."

No doubt the modern youth will describe this as "sloppy," but in the way it was given there was nothing "sloppy" about it. It was sound, kind advice; and although forty years and more have passed since "Old Sergeant" repeated that simple verse to me, the words still ring in my ear, and it is possible they may have had some influence upon me in my long and varied career. Who knows?

CHAPTER III.

THE OFFICE BOY.

PUNCTUALLY at nine o'clock the next morning I was at the warehouse in Knightrider Street armed with my drawing book and testimonial, both of which proving satisfactory, I was duly installed as junior clerk, or, in reality, office boy in the firm of H— and Co.

I speedily discovered that the importance attached to my drawing book was due to the fact that one of my multifarious duties was to sketch each new creation in the shape of jacket, dolman, or mantle, which the firm was placing on the market. Don't run away with the idea that I drew pictures of beautiful ladies with large, soulful-looking eyes several sizes too large for their faces, wearing "Our 6/11 hats." Oh, no; I wasn't *that* sort of artist at all. I *could* draw ladies' faces quite nicely, but the eyes were not large enough and the ladies themselves were never languid enough to appeal to the readers of drapers' advertisements. Mine was not a difficult task by any means; I had a sort of stock design—big bust and large bustle; the trimmings were the principle feature of the sketch, and in this my skill as an artist gave great satisfaction. In addition to this I was also invoice clerk, which had the effect of smartening up my painfully slow schoolboy methods of calculation, and general messenger, so you will see my time was fairly fully occupied as, seeing the salary the firm was paying, it should have been.

The firm's representatives would sell perhaps 500 of one line of jackets to one or other of the wholesale drapery houses in the City and, when completed, that particular wholesale firm's ticket, bearing its registered trade mark, would have to be attached to each garment,

giving the impression that they were the actual manufacturers. I became quite an expert in sewing on these tickets and in time could perform the task with a minimum number of needle pricks in my fingers.

True to his word, when the holiday season came round, the head of the business gave me leave. It was only a week it is true, in place of the customary school three weeks; still, it was something and, in a measure, it toned down the sense of injustice I had been labouring under. It was useless to kick against the pricks, that or nothing, and a *pound a month* was not to be trifled with.

My father—not as well off as he deserved to be, for he was a capable, well-educated man and particularly well-liked “on the road,” as the book which he produced “Side Lines” testifies—made me an allowance of sixpence a day for my mid-day meal, out of which, when not *too* hungry, I contrived to save fourpence with which to do a dash in Finsbury Park or the Seven Sisters Road in the evening. When the pangs of hunger became *too* great—and with a boy of 15 this sometimes happens, you know—I would patronise a certain vegetarian restaurant in Jewin Street where, on the top storey, I was able to get a three-course dinner for sixpence; but lentil steak, mushroom, and grilled tomatoes, while filling the aching void for the moment were, for a growing boy, somewhat unsatisfying, and I grew noticeably thinner. I next discovered in Paternoster Row a small place which, as I remember it, was conducted by some kindly Sisters of Mercy; whether they were Roman Catholic or Protestant I never knew and never shall know, but what I *do* know is this, they were doing God’s work and that is all that matters. At this place I got a plate of good, wholesome porridge with milk for twopence, and this became my mid-day meal until I left Knight-riding Street.

The work at H— and Co.’s was somewhat remarkable. During the “season,” which season preceded that of the wholesale houses, we worked till all hours

of the night, and frequently, to my father's annoyance when he heard of it, for, as I have explained, being a commercial traveller, he was usually away the greater part of the week, I caught the last train home; but the season once over, there was virtually nothing to do, and it was during this slack period that I made my first great business discovery. It happened in this way. One morning, all the heads being out, I made an inspection of the private office and just to see what it was like and how it felt to be a big man, I seated myself in the governor's revolving office chair, trying to imagine myself—as many a youngster has done before—the head of the concern, issuing imaginary commands and so forth. While doing so I chanced to see the purchases and the sales books on the office table, and the thought occurred to me, "Now if I add up what has been bought and what has been sold and then subtract the buyings from the sellings, well, the result *must* be what the firm has made." It was a positive brain avalanche and was an indication that my business instincts were developing.

Laboriously I made the calculations, with the result that the balance in favour of the firm stood at the colossal figure of thirty thousand and some odd pounds. Here was a discovery. True, such trifling items as rent, labour, advertising, interest, etc., had not entered into my calculations, but £30,000 stood out clearly and boldly before me.

"*Thirty thousand a year,*" I thought, "and out of that I am receiving *twelve*. Manifestly I was underpaid.

I imparted the glad tidings to my father when he was at home for the week-end. He ridiculed the very idea. He, too, was a business man and was not *too* pleased, I was disappointed to find, with my inquisitive tendencies. "Boys ought to receive more encouragement from their fathers," I murmured.

Knowing what I knew, or *thought* I knew, I boldly tackled the lion in his den.

“Well, my boy, what can I do for you?” asked the head as I stood somewhat nervously before him.

“Please, sir,” I answered falteringly, “I’ve come to ask for a rise, sir.”

“A *rise*, my lad, a rise,” he echoed in evident surprise. “A rise. Why, what are we paying you now?”

“A *pound a month*, sir.”

“Why, how do you get through all that money?” he asked.

“Please, sir, I have to give it all to mother, sir.”

“Well, you see, my boy, business is very bad, and we are thinking of reducing rather than of increasing salaries.”

“Oh, sir,” I blurted, “but you are making £30,000 a year.”

“Indeed!” he replied, “and how did you discover that, my man?”

Somewhat shamefacedly I explained my method of deduction.

“Um,” he said, reflectively, “you’re a smart lad, a very smart lad indeed. Until now I hadn’t the remotest idea we were amassing quite such a fortune, but the salary you are receiving is all you are worth to us at the moment, and now go and get on with your work, and” (as I was leaving the office), “my boy, when I require *you* to audit the firm’s books, I’ll let you know.”

There was evidently little hope of advancement with Messrs. H—— and Co. I was learning nothing and virtually earning nothing. I explained the matter to my father and he decided that I should leave.

Many, aye, many a time during the days that were to follow was I destined bitterly to regret having done so. But life is made up of many experiences; we must take the rough with the smooth, disappointments and successes, the years of famine with the years of plenty, and if in doing so we find happiness and contentment, then indeed are we fortunate.

I begged that I should be allowed to go to sea, but my father was convinced that the only line in life for which I was suited was the drapery trade. In later years, in a bantering way, I have frequently remarked to him that when the joyful news was communicated to him that another child was expected, presuming the new arrival would be a boy, he mentally garbed him in a black morning coat, placed a pair of scissors in his waistcoat pocket and, patting himself on the back (figuratively speaking), proudly said: "Thank God I have given the world another little draper."

In those days—I am speaking of 43 years ago—the high-brows of the trade were found in the wholesale city houses. There was as great a distinction between the youth in a retail establishment and his superior brother in the wholesale as there is between a Council school boy and a University student. The "wholesale" youth frankly regarded the poor, lowly, retail fellow as his inferior and openly snubbed or patronised him. The man who sells linen in 40-yard lumps is accepted as a merchant prince, whereas the 12-yard length man is quite outside the pale, he is merely a shop keeper. Oh! the paltriness of it all. And who is responsible for such odious distinctions? The 40-yard man probably commenced as a 2-yard man, and so on; as the old song used to express it:—

" But his father gained renown
As a tailor up in town;
And his ancient name was Brown;
Don't you know."

For that matter all men are traders and always have been. The lawyer sells his law, the sailor his knowledge of navigation, the banker his gold, the doctor his skill. Who then, I ask, draws these fine distinctions? But there, let it pass. It is generally admitted that for actual training—to gain an intimate knowledge of the business—the retail house is the better; for whereas in the wholesale the youth is placed in one

department and gains expert knowledge of that particular department only, the retail youth passes from department to department, which results in his gaining a knowledge of the whole. But from an assistant's point of view the wholesale is—or used to be—ininitely preferable.

My father interviewed the heads of most of the larger houses in Wood Street, Fore Street, London Wall, St. Paul's Churchyard, Friday Street, Bread Street and Cannon Street, but in each case found, that in addition to giving his son's services *free* for four years, a premium was required. True, the men "lived in," and of this I shall have more to say later on; but to pay a premium of £50 for being permitted to give one's services free for a period of four years is, or was, for that sort of thing isn't done in these more enlightened days, a doubtful privilege.

Meanwhile, in the absence of employment, for I was never a lover of idleness, I was already beginning to regret having left my £30,000 a year employers. My share of that amount was preposterously small, it is true, but still, it was something. In parting with it and being out of work, I had—as it were—sacrificed *something* in the shape of independence. And then—ah, and then came my Greenwich experiences which burned right down deep into my being and left a wound which in all the years that have passed has *never healed*. But Greenwich, little as it deserves the distinction, must have a chapter or two to itself.

CHAPTER IV.

GREENWICH.

MY father, having heard that a small drapery establishment in Greenwich, and *East Greenwich* at that, required an apprentice, applied on my behalf; and being able to claim *some* business experience, I was accepted on the condition that I should serve only two years for nothing, in return for which I was to be taught the business and was to receive free board and lodging. "*Free board and lodging!*" My very soul revolts at the thought of it to this day. It was a poor tuppenny-ha'penny show with three women and two men assistants. A poor, down-trodden, down-at-heel company.

We took our meals with the family and every mouthful we ate seemed to be watched and commented upon. To have asked for a second helping would have been as criminal in my employer's eyes as was Oliver Twist's application for more in the eyes of Mr. Bumble. When I had a spare penny, which was seldom, I would run over to a cheap restaurant—or I suppose I should call it a cook-shop—and buy a slice of steaming hot "spotted Dick." Oh, I'm not ashamed to confess it, not a bit. It isn't the start of the race, but the finish that counts. We don't view the landscape from the bottom, but from the top of the mountain; and after all, the start we make is governed largely by our parents. As a general rule—there are many notable exceptions, of course—it is not due to a young man's own efforts that he is privileged to enjoy a University education, but to the fact that his father is able to *pay* for it.

After business we were allowed to make use of the kitchen as a sitting and recreation-room, that is, what

recreation we could enjoy after our 13-hour day. We shared this room with Nancy, the maid-of-all-work, the only really cheerful soul in the establishment.

Our sleeping accommodation was provided in a drab, dirty-looking house in Trafalgar Road, where the two male assistants and I occupied one small, and almost filthy, bedroom. It was there that my first knowledge of unwholesome things was forced upon me. Until then—mind you I was barely 16 yet—I knew nothing of sex or of loathesome disease, but these two men opened my eyes to many unheard-of and unspeakable things; at least they were considered “unspeakable” then. Nowadays they are discussed between the sexes quite openly, but whether wisely or not, I am not sure. I was simply horror-stricken. Until then, I never knew what such things were; this was perhaps what “Old Sergeant” was alluding to when he had spoken to me of temptation. Living in such dreadful surroundings and in such squalour, how many times did I not think of the words of “The Prodigal Son”: “How many hired servants hath my father.” The allusion is, of course comparative; for *my* father’s domestic help, when we had any at all, consisted of one solitary maid-of-all-work and a charwoman who came once a week, which were soap-sud and cold mutton days.

In that soul-destroying place where I was to “learn the business,” we opened at eight o’clock in the morning and closed at nine at night, on Saturdays at eleven. On Thursdays, thanks to a society which was known as “The Greenwich Early Closing Associatoin,” the shops closed at five. The proprietors were under no obligation to do so, it was purely a voluntary act on their part, largely I think because they desired some little recreation themselves. Yes, we closed at five on Thursdays and usually got away at 6.30 sharp. Such hours would not be tolerated nowadays, and rightly so too. Shop assistants in those now far-off days were, as a whole, a poor, over-worked, down-trodden lot.

My "learning the trade" necessitated my cleaning the shop windows, sweeping the floors, dusting the stock boxes, attending to the lamps, and all the menial tasks calculated to destroy the soul of a high-spirited, not badly educated boy.

The proprietor was a fussy, incompetent, stout little man with the importance of a Whiteley and the ability of a flea. In moments of perplexity—and his whole life seemed to be one long drawn-out perplexity—he had a habit of sucking his thumb. He had served his apprenticeship or had at least been employed with the once famous old firm of Tarns, of Newington Causeway, at one time *the* most fashionable centre in London. He made periodical journeys to the City to buy, but this meant no greater liberty for us, the assistants, for his wife—a junior edition of Mrs. Squeers, of Dotheboys Hall ill-fame—took charge and, in place of whips, she used scorpions.

It was a shop front-dressing establishment, that is to say, first thing in the morning goods of every description were placed outside on the pavement and one of my duties was to take a watch "on guard," for the people of East Greenwich, or I should say *some* of the people, for there *were* nice people there too, as you will find in every neighbourhood, no matter how mean that neighbourhood may be, had a nasty habit in those days of walking off with a piece of calico or a piece of anything else if it were convenient. Later on we grew wiser and chained the goods to the chair or stool on which they were placed.

My few red letter days—and then only "red letter" by comparison—were those when I was sent to the City to execute special orders. In the larger retail houses the youth who performed this task was known as the "City Trotter"; his duties were with the wholesale houses. I shall have more to say on this subject later on. Another apprentice was put on what was termed "matching," and he was required to visit the retail firms in the West End to match or purchase smaller

items for customers who, not finding what they required, had agreed to allow the firm to procure it for them. At Greenwich I was wholesale and retail man as well. I would start off from Maze Hill Station with a very formidable list of "specials" with instructions to proceed straight to "*Jerry's*," which was the somewhat inartistic name given to a certain large general wholesale and retail establishment in Shoreditch which catered almost exclusively for the smaller retail houses, and a very, very useful house it was too.

On one occasion, Fulton—this was not really his name, and although he has long since added up his cash book and gone to his account, I will not mention it—in giving me my list of special orders, instructed me to bring back with me "a dozen of white wadding." Now a dozen packets of wadding, although by no means weighty, makes a parcel of considerable bulk. I executed this order at a certain large wholesale haberdashery house in Falcon Square—Olney Amsden's as a matter of fact—and when I saw the size of the parcel I gazed at it in utter amazement. It was about a yard high. "Hadn't you better make it into two parcels?" I said. This was done and I edged sideways out of the place.

In Cheapside I hailed a bus going to London Bridge Station, but the conductor refused to stop, shouting at me from the footboard: "You don't want a bus, mate, you want a panttechnicon!"

I trudged along through the Poultry, down King William Street, over London Bridge to the station, but when I reached the barrier the ticket collector refused me admission on the ground that I had no right to carry such huge parcels in a railway compartment, the place for that was in the guard's van; but I had no money for "guard's vans" and the result was I was compelled to walk the ten miles home or, let me rather say, that apology for a home.

"Why are you so late, sir?" were the first words I was accosted with.

"I had to walk all the way from the City," I replied, not too pleasantly, I fear.

"Why?" demanded my employer.

"Because the ticket collector wouldn't allow me to pass the barrier at the station," I answered. "He said the parcels were too large to take as personal luggage."

"But what have you got in the parcels? I never ordered anything of such bulk as that."

"A dozen packets of wadding, sir."

"You stupid fellow," he said, angrily; "I told you to bring 'a dozen of wadding,' that means a dozen yards, *one piece*. It will take us two years to sell that lot."

It was unfortunate, I admit; I had paid dearly for my ignorance, but how was I to know what he meant? To this day, however, I have not forgotten that a dozen of wadding means one piece of twelve yards, and no one will ever convince me to the contrary. We live and learn and, after all, as the hen-pecked man said: "It's all in a *wifet*ime."

I made no friends in the place. If at the end of the week I had a shilling I would go to my home in the North of London, if not, then I would walk along the dismal Lower Charlton Road to Woolwich and listen to the band of the Royal Horse Artillery playing "The Merry Christchurch Bells." This came very vividly to my mind only a few months ago when, as Mayor of the City of Capetown, I received a certain captain of the Royal Artillery, who had been detailed for special defence work in South Africa and whose time having expired, had brought his successor round to introduce him to me.

"And where have you been stationed?" I asked the newcomer.

"At Woolwich," he answered.

"Ind—e—e—d," I exclaimed, reminiscently, and instantly in memory I was back in those soul-destroying Greenwich days, and I could see myself—a poor, some-

what shabby-looking little figure tramping along that lonely road.

“Woolwich,” I repeated. “Well, well, well; and do they still play ‘The Merry Christchurch Bells’ on Sunday morning?”

At this both gallant officers commenced to hum or whistle the, to me, familiar tune and marched round the Mayor’s Parlour.

Could I ever have thought of such a thing in those dark Greenwich days of 40 years ago? Had it been possible in all probability I should not have been *quite* as unhappy as I was. But I don’t know—I don’t know; it’s a wise Providence that hides the future from us, for if we knew what the future held in store many of us would not have the courage to fight it through.

My Greenwich experiences take a lot of telling; so much was crowded into that one long, long year I spent there that it may be better to allot another chapter to them.

CHAPTER V.

STILL AT GREENWICH.

I was remarking upon the manner in which I spent the very few hours of leisure that fell to my lot.

As I have told you, the only evening in the week we had off was Thursday, and having no friends—my room companions being much older than I and vile-living fellows at that—I was left entirely to my own resources. What became of me after business my employer neither knew nor cared. Sometimes I would wander round the beautiful Greenwich Park, walk over Blackheath and Shooter's Hill, get down to the slimy banks of the mighty Thames to see the great ocean liners as they passed to and fro. I would visit Greenwich Hospital where I became somewhat of an authority on the Nelson relics. Sometimes, when in funds, which was seldom, I would take a trip on one of the Thames steamboats as far as London Bridge and back, imagining myself on a voyage to the Antipodes. By way of variety and, I confess, somewhat shamefacedly, I sometimes visited a little music hall, and, for the time being, I fear, forgot the old sergeant's parting advice:—

“Yield not to temptation.”

But don't be hard, don't be too critical; remember I was a very lonely lad, left entirely to my own devices, and found solace in the warmth, comparative comfort and amusement of that small Hall of Varieties. No, superior mothers, don't cast your eyes Heavenwards and remark:—“depraved little rascal,” be charitable and remember I had not a soul to guide or advise me, there was no-one in Greenwich who cared one straw what I did or what became of me.

To me, even to this day, it was a wonder I didn't go right straight away to the Devil, there was nothing to stop me. Surely there must have been some kind, loving protector, or influence, watching over me, for

Heaven knows the temptation was there if ever there was temptation. The suggestive songs of the period, the immodest dress—oh, I am no prude and could witness it all now quite unmoved and probably think how insufferable stupid it all was, but just think of the effect it must have had upon a lad of sixteen. Fortunately, drinking and smoking had no attraction for me, for which I say, fervently, “Thank God,” for I tremble to think what might have been the result if they had. Then, another thing, save for my bare entrance fee of sixpense, I seldom had any surplus cash, so what the Devil can’t pay for the Devil can’t have.

The Greenwich Early Closing Association—already referred to—organised an outing to Bexley. Now Bexley was my mother’s birthplace, she had died when I was a small chap of eight, but had frequently taken me down to her old home where we stayed with my somewhat stern old Granny, and despite the latter drawback—the fly in the ointment, as it were—I had very happy recollections of that pretty and at that time, old-fashioned little place with the picturesque river Cray running under the quaint and ancient-looking bridge in the very centre of the village, along the banks of which river my father had courted my mother. An old world romance now.

The price of the excursion was half-a-crown, which amount I borrowed from one of the assistants, relying upon an appeal to my father to permit of the repayment of the debt.

Naturally, being young, it was my ambition to sit next to the driver of the conveyance, and, necessarily, my next desire was to handle the reins. I made overtures to that gentleman who was of the real Sam Weller type; we changed seats and gaily I drove that merry party along. The stopping place was, of course, an inn. As I alighted, my own driver, and the drivers of the other vehicles surrounded me and I was required to “pay my footing.” Here was a dilemma, I hadn’t a penny on me!

“Excuse me a moment,” I said.

They demurred a little, but recognising the truth of

the axiom that you cannot get blood from a stone, they at last consented to a ticket of leave being granted to me while I canvassed for a further loan. Having raised the wherewithal without the remotest idea of how the debt was to be liquidated, I paid my footing and thereafter enjoyed the outing.

On the return journey I had some difficulty with my dissolute bedroom companions who had imbibed too freely, and I can still recall my horror and disgust at having to sleep in a room with two intoxicated men.

These details are not nice, I know, but life itself isn't *all* nice, is it? and my object in writing is to present things as they were, and not as we should wish them to be. In my opinion, although the boys of to-day are careless in many respects, although, as a whole, they are not Church or Sunday School lovers, although there is far greater freedom between the sexes, they are, generally speaking, purer minded.

I have always had a gift for fancy writing and lettering. At Cowper Street they used to encourage us to illuminate our homework books, or "journals" as they were called. I remember once one of the form masters, with whom I was anything but a favourite, and who was, that morning, more than usually sarcastic, remarked: "If your work was as accurate as it is beautiful, I should have some hope for you."

The artist is not necessarily a sound mathematician, and the doctor may not be very well versed in the science of navigation. At all events I was proud of my art, such as it was, and while I tried to improve in accuracy and efficiency, well—there you are—it seems you can't have it all ways.

My employer discovered this gift of mine and straightway proceeded to put it to some profitable account. He laid in a stock of ticket-writers ink, cardboard, brushes and pens, and never was there a place more re-splendent with tickets and show cards than when I was with him. Everything in the place carried some striking expression, with the result that business improved, for

good shop tickets are unpaid (particularly so in my case), silent, and ever-present salesmen. Although silent, they are, using the word paradoxically, "speaking" *all* the time, and the more original the wording, the more they appeal to the customer. I had thought, prompted thereto, no doubt, by the other assistants, that I should write a very special ticket to be worn by the proprietor himself, but could never summon up sufficient courage to do so. Occasionally, late on Saturday night, I was rewarded with sixpence by way of encouragement and in part payment for tickets which would have cost my employer at least thirty shillings to produce, but such unwonted generosity seldom came my way.

The added prosperity did not tend to shorten but rather to increase the hours of labour, neither did it lessen the insufferable drudgery of it all. The shocking "Living In"—the so-called board and accommodation, grew worse and worse. It was daylight robbery, nothing more or less, for board and accommodation were part and parcel of the contract entered into. Logically speaking, I had as much right to steal my employers goods as he had to cheat me out of my food. But I didn't do so.

It was one beautiful, sunny Saturday morning in Spring. I remember it well. I was engaged in dressing that wretched door. Each piece of stuff I carted outside bore some remarkable expression from my newly established ticket factory. There was the prospect of a fifteen hour day before me. Can you wonder that I sometimes get impatient when I hear eight-hour-day men alluded to as "toilers?"

It was seven hours beyond the allotted span that labour now requires. Yonder, some 12 or 15 miles distant, right on the other side of London, was my home, and the homes of friends who knew, loved and believed in me. For a moment my spirit revolted. "Why should I be content to remain a mere drudge, an overworked, poor bullied creature, whose very soul is not his own?" I thought. Why, the tram conductors enjoyed more liberty than I. The men of the Royal Horse Artillery,

with long legs, clanking spurs and shell jackets, laughing and talking as they passed, enjoyed a glorious life compared with mine. Their's were *manly* lives, mine was pitifully *unmanly*. There and then I determined to run away. The "Guv'nor" was at breakfast, this was my opportunity; and, straightway, as fast as my legs could carry me, I ran to that wretched hovel of a bedroom in Trafalgar Road—oh, the *pity* of it, that such a glorious name as "Trafalgar" should be tarnished by being coupled with such a noisesome den; why, the cockpit of the "Victory" must have been more inviting. I changed into my Sunday clothes and commenced my long and tedious journey. I had no money, but was buoyed up with the thought: "I have *left! left! left!* I had left East Greenwich, with its ghastliness behind me, *for ever*. At least, so I thought, we shall see. What a walk it was, not a mouthful to eat, various street fountains along the route furnished me with liquid refreshment. The long, dreary New Cross Road seemed to be never-ending. I had some friends in that neighbourhood, but had sufficient intuition to know, even at that tender age, that Saturday morning visitors were not welcome in a busy home. I became almost ravenous with hunger but had not the wherewithal to appease it.

It was only after I had reached the vicinity of my home in Stroud Green that I realised the position I was in and began to wonder what sort of reception I should receive. In order to delay the unpleasant interview as long as possible, I determined to call on some dear friends of mine with whom I was on terms of deep affection. The mother of the family—a dear little Scotch woman—always called me: "Her bonnie laddie" and I loved that little mother as though she were my own. To her I confided my story and received all her motherly sympathy. "Poor wee laddie," she said, "it's a shame that your father should have put you to such a place."

Late that night I went home saying nothing of what had transpired. I was too frightened. The next day I accompanied my father to church, spending the afternoon and evening with my friends of the night before.

I was aroused early on Monday morning by a loud knocking at my bedroom door.

"Time to get up, my son, time to get up, you'll be late!"

"I'm not going to work to-day, father, I've left."

"Left!" he echoed in amazement, "left! get dressed at once, sir."

A very unhappy half-hour ensued. I explained, as far as my limited vocabulary would allow, the drudgery and humiliation of it all, the long hours, the insufficient food, the disgraceful sleeping accommodation, my contaminating companions. Boys didn't discuss sex matters with their fathers in those days—it's a pity they didn't. But the dear fellow, as a rule a gentle and kindly man, was, on that occasion, as firm and as unyielding as a rock.

"You will go back at once," he said angrily, "you will apologise to your employer and promise never to do such a thing again. Here is a shilling for your fare. I can't allow you to play fast and loose with your training in this manner." It was then I longed for the sympathy and compassion of a mother, for I am certain that no mother would have allowed her boy to return to such appalling conditions. Ah well! Thoughts of running away to sea, joining the army and a hundred and one things passed through my mind, but it all ended in my returning to Greenwich.

There was a noisy interview with the principal, noisy on his side, I mean; most ineffective men depend upon noise and much speaking to carry them through. I was perfectly calm and collected, more than half wishing that he would not allow me to return to his employ, in which case, despite my father's anger, I should have left, but untrained and inexperienced as I was, I was convinced that my employer had placed a valuation on my gift of ticket-writing and was not so eager for me to leave. In that case art—if you can call so prosaic a gift "art"—was my undoing, and resulted in still greater unhappiness.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT GREENWICH.

THUS my career went dismally and depressingly along. It all seemed so hopeless, so utterly devoid of anything in the nature of prospect, so entirely demoralising. "Learning the business," forsooth! If sweeping floors, cleaning windows and lamps, and carrying heavy parcels was "learning the business," then I stood an excellent chance of becoming a first-class porter. I was rapidly graduating in the college that leads to nowhere. I was in a blind-alley occupation with chaos at the end of it. If bitter humiliation means sound business training, then, indeed, the advantages were entirely in my favour.

I remember once being sent with a five-yard length of two-yard wide linoleum—common rubbish it was too—I was told to deliver it at a house of a customer somewhere in Blackheath. It was a good five-mile walk. Rebelliously I set out on my journey with that long gas-pipe-looking roll on my shoulder. As I walked on, and on, and on, the roll, owing to the poor quality of the linoleum, or, to be more correct, I suppose I should say oil-cloth, commenced to bend in the centre and by the time I had reached my destination, it drooped down in front and at the back of me like a letter "A." The wretched stuff had cracked right through the centre. The customer refused to accept delivery and—per force—I was compelled to carry it back to the shop again where another stormy scene ensued.

"Could I help the common quality of the stuff?" I asked.

"No," was the reply, "but you should have seen that a roller was put down the centre."

What did I know then about rollers? and besides a wooden roller would have increased the weight. The firm did not lose over the mishap though, it was cut down the centre, and instead of being two yards it became one yard wide and because of this fetched a slightly higher price. I rather think that the ticket I wrote for it was the means of selling it:

THIS
ABSOLUTELY
FLOORS YOU
per 2/6 yard
LINO THAT
LASTS.

Occasionally the dull monotony of it all was cheered by a piano organ which played outside the place. "See-Saw" was then the popular song of the hour:—

" See-saw, see-saw, now we're up and down,
See-saw, see-saw, now we're off to London
Town."

To be followed by:—

" Sweet dreamland faces passing to and fro;
Bring back to memory days of long ago."

Or something of a more frivolous nature such as:—

" Oh you girls, you naughty young girls,
Why don't you try to be good, be good."

Sometimes, again the organist would treat us to:—

" 'Tis only a panzy blossom, only a withered
flower."

No, you musical highbrows of to-day, don't sneer; these songs are all back numbers now, but can you tell me of anything more tuneful to-day? I don't think so, but then, you know, I haven't your cultivated ear.

And then came Christmas Eve; Christmas Eve in Greenwich forty-three years ago was not *very* far re-

moved from the Christmas Eve of Dickens' days. There was the earthy smell of potatoes in the atmosphere. The brightness of the holly berry with a touch of mistletoe. The butcher's shops exhibiting the huge carcasses of prize cattle from the Agricultural Hall, Islington, with rosettes and prize tickets still on them, a poor reward for being fit to kill, and the unwearying and unceasing "buy, buy, buy," of the butcher.

Then there were the street stalls with their glaring and evil-smelling naphtha lamps. The gorgeous confectioners' shops with their giant pink and white peppermint walking sticks, to say nothing of the pastry-cooks' shops, exhibiting tempting mince pies and ready-made plum puddings.

We opened at seven that morning, for, from a shop-keeping point of view, Christmas Eve was the harvest home of the year. As usual, I took my watch as outside manager or policeman. How I envied the artizan who, at mid-day, was free, for I could see no end to that miserable day. As a matter of fact, as it subsequently transpired, there *was* no end to it.

My special chum, the son of my dear little Scotch mother whose "bonnie laddie" I was, was employed in the "wholesale" in the city, and, consequently, knocked off at one o'clock. He had, by arrangement, come to Greenwich to wait for me and take me back with him to his home, for I had been invited to spend Christmas with his people.

Ten p.m. struck, we were still open.

Eleven o'clock, and still stragglers came in.

At eleven-thirty, the Guv'nor, who was showing signs of exhaustion, said to me:

"Just run down and see if Jones's are closing yet."

But, alas, Jones's showed no signs of closing.

At one o'clock on Christmas morning, while the carol singers were calling on Christians to awake, which couldn't apply to Christians who had never been to sleep, we closed the doors of the shop, all of us utterly and completely fagged out. Before we left, in addition to

Christmas wishes, I was presented with half-a-crown by way of a Christmas box. I had arranged that my friend Sandy should sleep with me, but when he saw that miserable hovel of a bedroom, he positively refused to sleep there and, inconsiderately, I thought, remembering the hours I had worked, insisted on walking home. We walked all through the night, passing on our journey many bands of carol singers and, at the time, I felt I never wished to hear of those "Herald angels" again as long as I lived. "Christians awake," to a Christian who has had no sleep, has very little charm. We followed the same route that I had taken on my run-away excursion some months before. There was just this difference though, whereas on the previous occasion I had no money, I now had half-a-crown, but no means of spending it. Then too, the pangs of hunger were not worrying me quite so much this time, but by way of equalising matters, after my 17-hour day and no sleep, I could hardly keep awake.

Somewhere in the neighbourhood of the "Angel," Islington, we found a coffee stall where, at a cost of three-pence we refreshed the inner man and proceeded on our journey down the tiresome and uninteresting Holloway Road, from thence into Seven Sister's Road, and at length, thoroughly worn out, we reached my friend's home. From a physical point of view it was the sleepest Christmas I have ever spent. This was virtually the end of my career at Greenwich. My father was forced to admit that the hours were *rather* too long, but still I was made to continue until, in sheer desperation I ran away again, and this time refused—yes, positively *refused* to return. It was open mutiny, I know, but surely there are occasions when even "mutiny" is justifiable.

It was like this. A duplicate was missing from my counter book. I was asked to explain it and could only say that I had sent it with the cash to the desk. My employer raved and stormed, virtually accusing me of stealing. Well, faults I know I had in abundance, but dishonesty was not one of them, and, young as I was, I

bitterly resented the impeachment. Meanwhile the "Guv'nor," who had been relieving in the cash desk, found the missing duplicate with the cash wrapped inside, comfortably resting in his waistcoat pocket. Evidently, just as it had been handed in he had been called away to attend to some other business, had placed it in his pocket for the time being and had forgotten it. He attempted something in the nature of a clumsy apology, but my feelings had been outraged, I had been humiliated before the assistants and no apology would suffice. When one has received a blow in the face a tardy apology doesn't remove the sting and in addition to everything else, I wished to leave the contaminating place.

I demanded my immediate release from bondage and demanded further the sum of one shilling wherewith to pay my fare home, for I couldn't contemplate the prospect of another wearisome and hungry walk.

Thus ends, then, the second chapter or phase of my career. The memories of Greenwich are, with me, unhonoured and unsung. From that day to this I have never seen the place, save when I have passed it outward bound on board some ocean liner, and neither do I wish to, for my unhappy and sordid experiences there burned right down deep into my very being. One doesn't want to be reminded of the unhappy incidents in one's career, let us rather seek the sunshine in life, we can find it if we wish to. Maybe, at times, it is obscured by passing clouds, but we can, if we will, turn the clouds about and the silver lining will be revealed.

CHAPTER VII.

A HAPPIER TIME.

BY this time—trying as my experiences had been—I had gained quite a large amount of valuable business knowledge but, so far, had not completed any definite period of training. I could not say, as young men in those days were proud to say, before universal higher education had caused young fellows to be ashamed of a business career, that I had “served my time,” in other words, that I had been through an approved term of apprenticeship.

After a long and weary wait, during which I felt thoroughly ashamed of being out of employment, my father discovered that there was an opening for a partly trained youth (by this time I was about 16½ years of age) in a large drapery house in the East End of London, and there, rough as it was, I spent the very happiest years of my life. It may be it was merely in a comparative degree, placed along-side the dreadful shop I had been in, very probably it was, but for all that, despite the strict discipline, despite the meagre—or perhaps I *should* say, mediocre fare—for, in justice I must say there was always plenty, I found the conditions prevailing there very agreeable.

My services were accepted on the basis of two years for nothing, “Live In,” with the prospect of making a little pocket money in the shape of premiums or “spiffs.”

These “spiffs” were in the nature of a commission placed on old or unsaleable stock by the responsible head or buyer of the department. Say, for instance, a certain line of goods was not selling, rather than reduce the price, a small hieroglyphic or private mark would be made on the ticket which indicated to the salesman that

in selling it he would benefit to the extent of a ha'penny, a penny, or even threepence a yard, the result usually was, that the *unsaleable* usually became the *saleable*. By this means the experienced and more expert salesman would make quite a respectable amount each month, while juniors, like myself, were privileged to pick up the crumbs.

These premiums or spiffs were all arranged in private characters. Say, for instance, the firm's private mark was represented by the word "Industry," to make it figure out correctly an "E" would have to be added and it would be spelt thus:—

I N D U S T E R Y & X
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 repeat C i p h e r.

An assistant would sell twelve yards of silk at, say, $4/11\frac{3}{4}$ (two yards didn't make a full dress in those days), bearing a premium of a penny a yard. He would make out a small ticket thus:—

12 silk, $4/11\frac{3}{4}$ I.

In other words "twelve yards of silk at $4/11\frac{3}{4}$ id. equals 1/-." "Sign," he would shout, a shopwalker would appear on the scene, check the calculation, sign the premium and the lucky assistant would be richer by the amount of *one shilling*, which, with others, would accumulate until the end of the month, when their value would be paid to him less the amount of his fines.

This system has its advantages and its disadvantages; the advantage being that it is the means of disposing of unsaleable stock, while the disadvantage lies in the fact that unless something bearing a premium can be sold, the assistant is not too pleasant to the customer. That is to say, unless the customer takes what the assistant desires her to take, then she is or may be, according to the temperament of the assistant, indifferently served. Still, on the whole, in those days, it seemed to work very well and was unquestionably the means of preventing an accumulation of bad stock. There now, I have given away a great trade secret.

At this place, with its large staff of assistants, I mixed with many youths of my own age. There were a large number of apprentices and we slept in one large dormitory on the sixth story which was the very top of the building.

In those days large and successful merchants and manufacturers apprenticed their boys to the trade to be taught the business and to have the rough corners knocked off them, believing—as I believe—that it is not good for a youth to proceed straight from school to his father's concern; that they should go through the mill, so to speak. A man who has never been subjected to discipline, is never fit to exercise discipline.

It didn't matter whether a youth came from an orphanage or from a luxurious home, he received the same gruelling in and out of the business. We had farmers' sons, merchants' sons, sons of manufacturers, doctors, parson's and policemen's sons; it made no difference who they were—and to do them justice, they did not wish it to—they all passed through the mill.

My reception by the apprentices was somewhat chilly at first, they seemed to consider that in not having to serve the full time I had, as it were, entered by a side-door, but this prejudice speedily faded away, and I was quickly one of them.

The greatest terror to the newcomer is usually the senior apprentice. As a rule he is a martinet of the first water, and takes particular care to see that the duties which he in his times shirked, are faithfully performed by the beginner. The latter, seeing this important-looking individual hovering about, accosts him.

“Please, sir, what shall I do now?” he asks.

“Ah, let's see, you're the new apprentice, eh?” says the great man. “Well, we are stocktaking, you know, and p'raps you had better get on measuring those 400-yard reels of cotton.”

The unfortunate youth commences on the task and discovers when he has finished that the first reel con-

tains only 399½ yards. In great distress he reports this to his taskmaster.

“ Ah,” says Mr. Nobody, judicially, “ those manufacturers again, I must claim upon them, just remind me when you see me again, will you, my man?” for in the meantime he has spotted a vigilant shopwalker bearing down on him and discreetly disappears.

The unfortunate youngster commences to rewind; the cotton becomes hopelessly entangled and, in despair, he weeps.

The manager who happens to be passing at the time, stops to enquire the cause of his distress. The youth explains his difficulty.

“ But who gave you this ridiculous task?” he asks, a covert smile playing round his lips.

“ I think it was one of the managers, sir,” replies the youngster.

‘ Ah,’ says the great man, “ I must interview him, you don’t happen to see him about, do you, my lad?”

The small boy looks round, sees a form behind a pile of goods shaking a fist threateningly at him and, scenting trouble, replies in the negative, at the same time thinking it rather “ unmanagerly ” for a manager to shake his fist at a subordinate.

Another important man comes along—a junior of the fist-shaking senior—and he puts the boy on to dusting the eyes of the needles and counting the pins on each sheet to see that they number a hundred. Sometimes by way of variety he is sent with a message to the housekeeper in the living-in portion of the building to the effect that she is to have an egg flip and two pieces of nicely-buttered toast ready for Mr. Harold Brown at 11 o’clock, and returns with a message from that lady that if she has any more of Mr. Harold Brown’s impudence, she will report him. And so for a few days the ragging goes on and the better a youngster takes it, the sooner it ends. By stages the boy passes through each department. From the haberdashery to the laces, from laces to hosiery, from hosiery to manchester, manchester to dresses, dresses

to silks and then, if time permits, he is, or was, taken through the ladies' outfitting; thus, at the end of his four years he has a fair working knowledge of all departments.

It was an entirely new world to me. There was very little menial work there. As juniors we were "On Squad," that is to say, on alternate weeks we were on duty at 7 a.m. to dust the stock boxes, and once during that week we had to polish one of the many shop windows on the inside (there was a nice distinction between the outside and the inside, the outside was the porters work). But then the son of Jones of Manchester had to do the same thing, and Forsythe, whose father was the head of a large wholesale concern in Friday Street, performed the same task. Oh, they grumbled, yes, rather; you bet they did, not at the nature of the work though, but because it necessitated their being out of bed earlier in the morning.

Whether it was because they knew me to be the son of a commercial traveller and considered because of this I should have an innate knowledge of how to get about, I don't know, but I had not been there very long before I was promoted to the position of *City Trotter*, whose work I briefly referred to when relating my Greenwich experiences.

CHAPTER VIII.

CITY TROTTING.

LET me say at once that no youngster in a large London retail establishment likes the job of City Trotting. True, it carries with it a comparative amount of freedom, but in busy seasons it is a very exacting and strenuous task. Two journeys to the city every day in rain, fog, or snow, was no sinecure. In foggy weather I have frequently returned with black rings round both eyes and no doubt with a corresponding quantity of carbon in my lungs, but, through it all, I had wonderful health.

At Greenwich it had meant one glorious red-letter day a month, save and except the wadding-carrying incident. As I have said, in my new place the journey had to be taken twice a day.

The *modus operandi* was as follows. At 9 o'clock each morning the Trotter visited each department and took his orders from the various heads. This one would require a special piece of silk, another wanted something in corsets, the manager of the baby wanted wool of a certain shade. The gloves, hosiery, laces, furs, curtains, all wanted some special line which they had undertaken to procure for some exacting or difficult-to-please customer who, from a stock valued approximately at £100,000 could not be suited. The instructions were invariably: "Bring it back with you."

"But," I would sometimes remonstrate, "its a physical impossibility for me to bring *everything* back. It can't be done." "Oh, but you *must*, the customer is calling for it this afternoon."

The result was I would return at mid-day laden like a donkey, positively festooned with parcels.

The method was to proceed direct to the city. I was permitted to take a bus at a cost of "tuppence," but preferred to walk and use the money for my more personal needs. First, the wholesale drapery houses in Fore Street, London Wall, Wood Street and Aldermanbury were visited and the orders, when procurable, duly placed. Next I would proceed to Cheapside, Bread Street, Friday Street and Old Change with the scholars of St. Paul's School playing in their cage-like playground. This, of course brought me into the neighbourhood of Cannon Street and St. Paul's Churchyard and occasionally near my first love in Knightrider Street, where I had made my astounding discovery in the matter of profits.

This alone was a fairly hefty morning's work. Having made the round the reverse process would take place. Each house where an order had been placed would be revisited to collect the parcel. Thus I would pick up a packet of ribbon at Hitchcocks, a length of silk at John Howells; some artificial flowers at Pawsons, a piece of sateen at Cooks, a parcel of lace at Stafford Northcotes, and so on, visiting Sharp Perrins, Scott Sons, Spreckley Whytes, Copestakes, Morleys, Vyases, Dents, Olney Amsdens, Rylands, Foster Porter's, Bradburys, and so on. By the time I had finished collecting my parcels, I resembled a lighthouse surrounded by rocks, and would wend my way, disconsolately, back to business—or rather, to the other business—for surely I was a living example of business.

Naturally every day was not equally as busy. There *were* occasions when there was very little to do, and, being employed by so many heads, no one, save myself, knew exactly the volume of work I had in hand. On such days—shameful as I feel in admitting it—I would spend a quiet hour reading in the "Churchyard" gardens amid the ruins of Old St. Pauls, conjuring up visions of Soloman Eagle and the licentious Rochester. If, as sometimes happened (very rarely), I felt like a little outing on my own, being on good terms with most of the buyers of the various departments, I would

ask them, as a favour, to make up an order for me, which, to their everlasting credit (so I thought then) they did. No, my conscience never troubled me at all. I carried in my mind a sort of mental balance sheet. For several days I had carried more parcels than I should have done and an easy day I regarded more in the nature of compensation. Oh, it was wrong, I know, but I am not claiming that all that I did was faultless, far from it. A faultless boy would surely be the most insipid creature on God's earth.

It is forty years ago since I left England to seek my fortune in South Africa (I am still seeking it), but my "Trotting" experiences gave me such an intimate knowledge of wholesale drapery London, that to this day there is hardly a short cut that I cannot remember and visualise, and on the various occasions when I have visited the "Old Country," I have found myself almost as much at home as I was those many years ago when I wandered through the city laden with parcels and looking like a dejected pack mule. Incidentally, it was due to one of the heads of one of those city houses, as a matter of fact, Bradbury, Greatorex, of Aldermanbury, that I got my first situation in South Africa. But I must not anticipate.

As a rule I was on excellent terms with most of the salesmen in the many houses I called at. Some of them, it is true, were not *too* sweet when I had a matching line and required samples. Generally speaking, salesmen detest pattern-cutting. "Sister making a crazy-work cushion?" one would ask.

"What the dickens do you do with all the samples?" another would demand, "surely you must eat them?" But while the salesman dislikes cutting them the unfortunate Trotter loathes asking for them, and so the obligations from that point of view are mutual, inclining possibly a trifle in favour of the salesman.

It was seldom that I met with anything in the nature of an insult or of a discourtesy of any kind, for I have always found in business that just as pleasant as you care

to make yourself, so you will find others inclined to be pleasant. But the most unprovoked insult that was ever offered to me, and its sequel still rankles in my memory, was the following:—On one occasion, among my many special orders was one for six yards of Roman satin. Why “Roman” I can’t say. In those days it was used for furniture covering, and one house in London specialised in it. I forget the name of the firm but it was somewhere in Aldermanbury. I had visited the department, bought the required length, and in due course had returned to the entering room to collect the parcel. As was the case with most of those city entering rooms they seemed to be situated right down in the very bowels of the earth, possibly in order that gravitation might be employed in sending the goods from the departments.

I stood waiting for a few moments but there appeared to be nobody about, so to introduce a little joyousness into the place I commenced to whistle. It was a habit of mine in those far-distant days and not a bad one either.

I was quite enjoying this brief respite from the hurly-burly outside, when suddenly, a voice, seemingly from above, arrested my attention.

“Look ’ere, carrots, stow that there whistling, can’t yer!” I was positively dumbfounded at this unprovoked and gratuitous insult and, raising my eyes, beheld a very diminutive, bullet-headed boy in a very high entering desk, looking almost malevolently down upon me.

“*What* did you say?” I demanded angrily.

He repeated his remark verbatim.

“If you say that again, I’ll punch your head,” I shouted. He *did* say it again and as he said it descended to the floor.

“Now,” he said, “carrots, what d’yer mean by whistling in my orfice ”

“*Your office,*” I sneered, and with that we set to.

In the middle of our contest the manager entered.

“Here, what does all this mean?” he asked.

Before I had time to reply that bullet-headed boy poured out such a volume of lies that I stood aghast,

I was simply tongue-tied at the bare audacity of his statements.

“ I shall report you to your firm, sir,” said the manager, without even calling on me for an explanation.

A day or so later I was summoned to the gov'nor's office—an ordeal known as being “ carpeted ”—where I was solemnly warned that the *next* time I was reported for fighting harmless boys employed in city warehouses, I should be dismissed, which proved to me, even at my then early age, how *unjust* reputed *justice* can be, she was even more blind than she is credited with being, and I left that private office smarting under a sense of injustice and wrong.

The incident which was responsible for taking me off the road and making me a departmental man again, happened thus:—Let me remark in passing, though, that to place an apprentice on the “ Trotting ” job without giving him something in the nature of a *quid pro quo*, is, or was, manifestly unfair, for in doing so he was deprived of his only means of making anything in the nature of an income in the shape of “ spiffs.” Naturally this was of no importance to those who received liberal allowances from their fathers in the shape of pocket money, but I received no such allowance. With all the walking that my work entailed, shoe leather became a by no means inconsiderable item and Anderson's 7/11d. boots, made while you wait, and before your eyes, was the best I could run to.

Premiums—spiffs—ah yes, even in those days and in that particular place there were usurious capitalists. Towards the middle—or say, after the first week of the month—most of us were penniless, but having a few premiums in hand, we would approach some house financier with a view to converting our paper money into currency. “ Half price ” were the best terms we could get, and for the advantage of getting ready money, five shillings worth of spiffs changed hands for half-a-crown. It was good, sound business for the financier, a gain of 1,200 per cent. per annum, but the prospect of a night

at the theatre or a visit to the Indian and Colonial Exhibition was worthy of any sacrifice and the deed was done. This trafficking in premiums was afterwards stopped by the firm, or, rather an attempt was made to stop it, but the whole time I was employed there it was a recognised thing among us.

As Christmas drew near we "Trotters" scented harvest time in the shape of Christmas Boxes. Oh, I know it was a vicious principle, but it was a recognised one and in those days I was not out for reform. There was no nicety about it, it was an established custom on our part to call upon the various houses with which we had done business during the year, proceed to the counting house and acquaint the responsible official with the fact that we had called for the Christmas Box for so and so, always mentioning the name of the firm we were representing. Most of the larger houses prepared a list, and according to the volume of business done through the particular trotter, so the value of the Christmas Box would be assessed. Thus, when I called, the responsible clerk would run his finger down the list and when the name of the particular firm was reached, would throw the coin across the counter. Generally speaking, it was very ungraciously done, no good or seasonable wishes accompanied the gift and I rather think it was regarded more or less in the nature of blood money.

I had made quite a long round of calls with varying success, but, on the whole, satisfactory. As might be expected an occasional snub here and there, where the business done wasn't considered sufficient to warrant any special recognition, was inevitable. I was nearing the end of my mission and one of the very last calls I made was at a wholesale French Cashmere agency in Bread Street. On stating my delicate business, to my surprise I was politely conducted to the counting house, where, to my amazement, I was handed a box of choice cigars. I say choice, but in those days, I judged quality by the amount of red and gilt on the bands. It fairly took my breath away. So far a shilling and in a few isolated cases

a half-crown had been the most I had received. *But a box of cigars!* Good gracious, my fellow apprentices would have the time of their lives. So overwhelmed was I with my good fortune that I made this my last call.

That evening, and for some evenings after that, all the apprentices, from the youngest recruit who had scarcely reached the stage of brown paper, to the man who would soon be out of his time, were smoking those opulent-looking cigars, and I was the popular man of the moment, except among a few who were sick. But a box of 50 is not inexhaustible, and when finished my purchased popularity was on the wane. I have since discovered on my journey through life, that "purchased popularity" usually ends disastrously. It's the same with credit-giving in business. The man who opens a business and gives easy terms of payment to his clients is a prince of good fellows, his shop is crowded early and late, but when the bank begins to press, when the principle of "big fleas have little fleas" begins to operate and he has to put the screw on his credit-loving customer, ah! then the band begins to play, and he has the mortification of seeing the client who formerly patted him on the back and told him what a splendid business man he was, taking his ready-money to the fellow who runs a cash concern at the corner, and the overdue account for goods received and possibly already worn out, remains unpaid.

It was about a week after the last cigar had been smoked when the buyer of the silk department sent for me.

"Oh, young man," he said, "what has become of that box of cigars that so-and-so sent to me?"

"To *you*, sir?" I echoed in blank dismay, "why, they gave them to *me*, sir.

"Don't prevaricate, my lad," he said sternly, "I have received a letter from the firm in which they refer to a box of cigars they sent to me by you. Now where are they?" This, then, was the secret of their courtesy and generosity. I had been used simply as a

carrier and had been profuse in my thanks for the mere privilege of delivering a parcel.

“I am afraid, sir, they have all been smoked,” I stammered. That man never forgave me. He could not report me to the manager because the firm disapproved—and rightly so too—of buyers receiving presents, on the grounds that such things were merely bribes, either for value received or value to be received. Shortly after this—to my infinite delight—I was relieved of my City Trotting job and another trotted along the route that I used to trot.

CHAPTER IX.

LIVING IN.

THE "Living In" system has always been subject to much criticism and in these latter days has almost ceased to operate. Undoubtedly, as in the case of Greenwich, it was frequently abused, unprincipled employers trafficking in the very food they had undertaken to supply in part payment for services rendered. I shall always consider, though, that this system was by far the safer for young men, there being more or less supervision after business hours. It is this supervision that has caused the greatest resentment, but, personally, if I were to apprentice a son of mine to the trade in London, I should feel infinitely more at my ease in the knowledge that he had to be in before a certain hour at night, and that his week-ends had to be accounted for. After all, at it's worst, it was only an advanced stage of boarding school life, where in place of books and lessons we were taught commercial methods.

I freely grant it left much to be desired, but most of the larger business houses in those days went to considerable trouble and expense to make their assistants happy and comfortable after the work of the day was over. In the house where I was employed we had a very excellent billiard room which contained also a large bagatelle table for the use of the apprentices, and many an exciting battle of the balls have I fought on it.

The large and commodious dining room, where daily there were three sittings for meals, was also fitted as a library with an excellent selection of books. The bedrooms, if not exactly luxurious, were at least clean and were the nightly scenes of much revelry.

The food was not exactly *too* dainty or appetising. For breakfast thick slices of bread smeared with so-called butter and a cup of sky-bluish tea. Those of us who had any money were allowed to purchase eggs and bacon from the cook in the kitchen. After the payment of premiums, those who had not sold out or mortgaged them all, were in funds for a day or so and patronised the kitchen very freely, two rashers of bacon and two eggs at a cost of 7d. Then by rapid stages it would dwindle down to one egg, and, finally, we were reduced to prevailing on the cook to fry our bread in the fat of someone else's order. At that time we had rather an attractive-looking cook and we boys used to cajole her with kisses. Naturally this bread frying could not continue for any length of time, the more opulent members of the staff who could afford the luxury of eggs and bacon every day, began to notice that the trimmings were curtailed, and, after the first week, if it were winter time, we were driven to toasting one side of those unappetising slices of bread before the dining room fire.

Frequently have I risen at six o'clock in the morning and walked to Spitalfields market, which was quite close by, to buy a pennyworth of watercress for breakfast. *Watercress for breakfast, ugh!*

Dinner at 1.0, for which we were allowed half an hour, usually consisted of a joint. If served hot, no pudding, if cold, then sweets—of a sort—followed.

Tea at 5.0 (time 20 minutes) and supper after closing time, just bread and cheese and a glass of water. Not feeling inclined for supper at 8 or 8.30 p.m., most of us would cut off a fairly plentiful supply, place it under the bed pillows and at midnight, or thereabouts, would enjoy a good tuck in. Ye Gods! what digestions we must have had, surely it is hardly surprising that I suffer to-day because of those youthful indiscretions.

The post of librarian was filled by a senior assistant and carried with it an honorarium, or salary if you prefer it—of £10 a year. This amount was generously paid by the firm from the fines imposed upon and paid by us.

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“Fines!” there were fines for everything. We were fined for being five minutes late in the morning, fined for failing to call a shopwalker when you couldn’t sell a customer something she never intended to buy. Fined for working in your shirt-sleeves after 10 a.m. Fined for being out after 11 at night. Fined if the index of your cash sales book was incorrectly added up at night. In fact, it would be difficult to name anything that one couldn’t be fined for. These fines were deducted from the total amount of our premiums, and, once or twice, I had the mortification of being faced with a debit balance, that is to say, instead of the firm having to pay me out, the fines exceeded the amount due to me and I was actually in their debt, which was carried forward to my debit until the next date of payment. It was an iniquitous business, of course, for beyond the £10 paid to the librarian, we were never informed as to what became of the balance which must have been a very considerable amount. Unfair and drastic as it was though, it had this effect, that in all the years that have passed between, I have never forgotten the faults they were the means of emphasising, and ever since have studiously striven to avoid them.

The librarian left. The poor fellow wished to get married. Couldn’t get married and “Live In,” firm wouldn’t allow it. It cost more for a man to live out and they didn’t encourage their assistants to get married, and seeing the miserable salaries which ruled in those days, perhaps it was just as well. The appointment of librarian was by the popular vote of those who lived on the premises. The post was vacant, and, being a lover of books, I placed my position before my fellow apprentices, suggesting that I should offer myself for the vacancy. They promised their loyal and whole-hearted support. There were two other candidates and the senior staff from which these two were chosen, ridiculed the idea of a junior—and an apprentice at that—being appointed.

It was at this time that my gift for ticket-writing

was used for my own particular benefit and, surely, no candidate for parliamentary honours was ever better billed than was I.

<p>“ Use Your Leisure in Literature. Vote For FISH.”</p>	<p>“ Read, Learn & Inwardly Digest. FISH He’s the LIBRARIAN who will Cater for Your Needs.”</p>
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“ Plump for
FISH
Youth Must Lead.”

<p>“ If You’re not Sure Ask FISH He’s read it.”</p>	<p>“ A Vote for FISH Is All We Wish. Don’t Forget.”</p>
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It was the first election I had ever fought. I have fought a good many since, but doubt if in any of them the same enthusiasm was brought to bear.

After business we enjoyed a fair amount of license and no exception was taken by those in authority when these posters and many others appeared on the walls of the dining and billiard rooms. They also decorated the passages.

Had we dared I believe my enthusiastic supporters would have posted them on the plate glass windows of the shop; in fact, one ultra enthusiastic youngster did make overtures along these lines to one of the heads, but never repeated his request.

We organised a meeting in the dining room at which each of the candidates expressed his views. My supporters took good care to pack the house, with the result that I received a vote of confidence, which reminds me of the story told of a very nervous public man who depended upon a little encouragement from his audience when it fell to his lot to speak.

On one occasion he was called upon to address a larger meeting than usual and, in consequence was more

than usually nervous, but hit upon what he thought was an excellent idea.

He engaged a man and said to him: "Now look here, you must sit immediately below the platform as near me as you can. I will hold a bag of peas, and each time I feel the need of an interjection, I will drop one pea on your head."

The night of the meeting arrived and he commenced his oration: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I am here this evening to address you on the subject of Municipal reform (pea) Hear! Hear! City Councils are far too unwieldy (pea) Hear! Hear! If I had my way I would abolish the present system———Hear! Hear-Hear! Hear! Hear! Hear!

"Stop it, you fool," he exclaimed in an agitated tone of voice, "can't you see the blessed bag's burst?"

The election resulted in my return by a large majority and, thenceforth, in addition to premiums, averaging when not discounted, about ten shillings a month, I was in receipt of a regular income of £10 a year. No, don't smile; £10 a year to a lad receiving *nothing* is untold wealth. And then the privilege and importance of holding the keys! The mere thought that I was at liberty to dip into every book in that, by no means inconsiderable library, was joy unspeakable to me. Hitherto, my reading had not gone much beyond the "Boys' Own Paper" stage, which, let me remark, was by no means indifferent literature. In my small library to-day are the first six volumes of that famous journal, the most honoured and the most prized books I have in my possession. They have been out of print these many years and nothing would tempt me to part with them. I have read those old stories again and again to my children, and(to this day, as it was wont to do many years ago, my voice breaks as I read aloud the vicissitudes of poor erring "Tom Drift" in that fascinating story by Talbot Baines Reid; "The Adventures of a Three Guinea Watch." Of those books I might say in the words of brave Charley Newcombe, the hero of the story, when,

as a retired army captain he tells the story of the old and battered watch to his children on his son's 14th birthday :—

“ And here he lies in my hand, children, and if you love him as much as I do, you must be very fond of him indeed.”

Yes, this expresses my feeling exactly towards those dear old volumes.

“ Poor stuff,” you will say, but I don't know; they were the means of implanting a love for reading in me and if only for that reason alone, I must ever be grateful, for books are surely our most faithful and most uncomplaining friends, silent and loveable companions.

But I must confine myself to my experiences as a Ten-Pound-a-Year-Librarian. From my election onwards a new world of literature was opened up to me. I commenced by devouring the works of Miss Braddon. No, don't sneer and say “ Family Herald ”; I had no one to guide or advise me in my choice of books. At least, you will admit that it was pure, wholesome and interesting reading, which cannot be said for the sexual rubbish which pollutes and disgraces the name of literature today. Yes, I simply revelled in “ Henry Dunbar,” was mystified by “ Lady Audley's Secret,” fell in love with “ Aurora Floyd.” Then I discovered Mrs. Henry Wood. “ Ah, another back number,” you will remark. Yes, perhaps you are right, but good, clean, interesting stuff for all that. “ The Channings,” “ Roland York,” “ East Lynn,” “ George Canterbury's Will,” “ Dene Hollow,” and all the rest. I literally devoured them all, and am amazed, remembering our long working hours, how I found time to read as much as I did.

And then came Dickens, and of all his works “ David Copperfield ” took the firmest hold of me, as, for that matter, it did on the famous author himself. David's bottle-washing experiences were strangely reminiscent of my own sordid memories of Greenwich. His visits to Doctor's Commons took me back to my Knightrider Street days.

What a change came over me ; the somewhat racketty apprentice was rapidly developing into a positive book worm. Thackeray followed, and while I thoroughly enjoyed " Vanity Fair," " Pendennis," " The Newcombes " and his many other works, I never loved him as I loved and still love Dickens. Dickens surely appeals to the heart of the London and Kentish man most of all, and seeing that I first saw the light of day in the great Modern Babylon, and that both my parents were Kentish people, it is, possibly, understandable. I became acquainted with and grew to enjoy the works of Walter Besant, my favourite being " The World went very well then." Out of that remarkable work of his, " All sorts and conditions of men," arose that wonderful People's Palace, which has proved to be such a boon and a blessing to residents in the East End of London, and of this I have a little incident to relate.

CHAPTER X.

STILL LIVING IN

IT must have been in the year '88, or thereabouts, that the late King Edward, then Prince of Wales, visited the East End to lay the foundation stone of the People's Palace. A year later Queen Victoria traversed the same route when she opened it. The East End excelled itself in street decorations. The Royal route lay through Aldgate, Whitechapel, Mile End, then to the right through Burdett Road, Bow, and back through Commercial Road and so on to Buckingham Palace.

The decorations were on such a lavish scale that my fellow apprentices and I rose early on the morning of the great day and made a tour of inspection.

In Burdett Road there was in those days (I don't know whether it is there still, for it is many years since I was in that neighbourhood) a public house called "The Queen's Arms," the enterprising proprietor of which had, on that occasion, caused a banner to be suspended from his premises on which this somewhat remarkable welcome was printed:—

"Welcome to the "Queen's Arms," where the Prince of Wales took his first drink."

I am unable to say or even conjecture what Her Most Gracious Majesty thought of this loyal outburst from an ultra loyal John Barleycorn, but many a man has been knighted for less. A little lower down on the opposite side of the road an ambitious little barber displayed this sign:—

“ Long live the Queen and may God bless her,
Is the heartfelt wish of GREEN—HAIRDRESSER.”

Well done, Green, nothing less than a Baronetcy should have been yours.

We had house concerts which the various heads would occasionally grace with their presence. It is really wonderful the amount of talent you will find among the staff of a large business concern. Then there were the almost nightly *unofficial* concerts in our bedrooms which were flagrant breaches of the regulations and frequently resulted in each of us being fined. But youth and high spirits are inseparable—or should be—and the vice of singing at unauthorised hours is, surely, one of life's minor misdemeanours. If we had more singing, obviously we should have less swearing, but still I will admit that there should be moderation in all things, and somewhat boisterous concerts continuing long after midnight were not a form of entertainment to be encouraged.

Boxing contests were a popular form of recreation during the winter evenings; in fact, after business, our “Living In” quarters resembled, for all the world, a huge boarding school. Despite the long hours, despite the strict business discipline, despite the poor food, as a whole, we were as happy as happy could be.

On one occasion one of our fellows brought in no fewer than 20 free passes for stalls at the Avenue Theatre, where Arthur Roberts was performing. It seemed to be a gift from the gods. It is, as everybody knows, a by no means inconsiderable journey from the East to the West End of London, and our cheapest method of transport was to walk. Applying for late leave, which was granted, we walked to the theatre, presented our tickets, and were informed by a liveried official that we must place our overcoats and hats in the cloak room. “What will it cost?” demanded one of our company. “Half a crown each,” replied the official.

“ Good Heavens! *Half a crown each!*” It was the middle of the month, we hadn't HALF A CROWN between us, so slowly and painfully we left those marble halls and wended our way back to the East, where on this occasion the *unwise* men came from. Arthur Roberts was never a favourite of mine after that, but I am convinced of this, that had the circumstances been brought to the knowledge of the talented author of “ Fifty Years of Spoof,” he would have seen that we were admitted.

About that time Minnie Palmer was performing at the Strand Theatre in a play entitled “ My Sweetheart.” We all fell in love with pretty little Minnie and her golden ringlets. She was the Mary Pickford of her day. Naturally it was a hopeless passion, but I raised sufficient money through certain departmental financiers to see that play no less than five times, and each time was more hopelessly in love than ever.

Many years after, when living in a remote South African dorp (Dutch for “ village”), to my surprise and no little trepidation, “ Minnie Palmer,” of all others, was billed to appear in “ My Sweetheart ” at the local town hall. My wife, with my two girlies, was away from home, and, as was my custom on such occasions, rather than risk the dangers and difficulties of housekeeping, and be at the mercy of our Ethiopian handmaiden who masqueraded under the title of “ cook,” I had, for the time being, taken up my residence at one of the local hotels. The day of the performance arrived, and the afternoon train—we had three trains a week then—brought the once famous “ Minnie ” and her company. I was seated at dinner that evening when the hotel proprietor conducted a lady into the dining room, and, possibly, remembering that I was a Londoner, no doubt thinking that his guest, whom he introduced as “ Miss Minnie Palmer,” would be more at home in my company, seated her *next* to me. For a moment my heart went “ pit-a-pat,” but oh, it was soon over. “ Surely,” I thought, “ this distinctly middle-aged, somewhat

buxom-looking woman is not the lady of my dreams? She surely cannot be 'My Sweetheart'?' I am not writing disparagingly, far from it, but time has its revenges, as my own white hair testifies.

"And are *you*," I asked, "*the* Minnie Palmer who performed at the Strand Theatre in such and such a year?" I did not add "And with whom I and a dozen of my companions were desperately in love." It would have been too compromising.

"Yes," she replied, with a charming smile, "the very same."

"And does *this* refrain still run through the play?" I went on, saying which I commenced to hum what is to me a never-to-be-forgotten melody, and, as I hummed, she joined me and all the diners sat and gaped at us.

I attended her performance, but it was a complete disillusionment. There were the same golden ringlets, the same vivacious smile, but alas, I had seen her in every-day life, and the enchantment of twenty years earlier was all dispelled.

Some few months ago, it was my great privilege as Mayor of Capetown to entertain at luncheon the late Arthur Bouchier, who so soon after was called upon to make his last bow before the curtain of life. At the conclusion of the meal, in the little speech of welcome I made, I related to his great amusement both of the foregoing incidents, and, in the course of his reply, he assured me that the next time I visited England I was at liberty to visit the Strand Theatre as his guest, as often as I cared to. The poor fellow was not destined to return; only a few months later he fell a victim to pneumonia in Johannesburg, but for old times' sake, when next I am in London, if ever I am, I shall visit both of the theatres I have named.

In those days, when in funds, we patronised the old Cambridge Music Hall in Commercial Street; oh I know it is a shocking admission to make, but I am writing the plain, unvarnished truth without embellishments of any sort. I claim to have been no better

and no worse than my contemporaries, and have no apologies to offer. If you don't care to read of my indiscretions, then just skip these pages as I have no doubt you will skip many others, that is if you are as wise as I take you to be. This was in the old "Chairman" days, when the gilded youth of the period, found some distinction in sitting at his table and standing him an unlimited number of drinks. Knowles was the Chairman of the "Cambridge"; many will still remember him. "Ladies and gentlemen," he would say, "James Fawn will appear next."

"Who?" came a chorus of voices from the gallery.

"Order up there, order," and the bibulous James, or Jimmy, as he was called, dressed as a policeman, would capture the large audience with:—

"If you want to know the time, ask a policeman,
The proper Greenwich time, ask a policeman."

The next turn would possibly be the *great G. H. McDermott*, the last of the Lion Comiques, who, as the notorious Dilke divorce case was the talk of the town, brought down the house with:—

"Charley Dilke upset the milk,
While taking it home to Chelsea."

There we heard the celebrated Harriet Vernon as "Sappho" and Harry Randall with—

"I'm the ghost of John James Christopher
Benjamin Binns,

I was cut down right in the midst of my sins."

Oh dear no, there was nothing vicious about it; true, we *might* have spent our leisure more profitably, but after all, we are only young once, and young life should be full of brightness and happiness, life should be full of joy, not only the joy of recreation, but the joy of work. The old folk may moralise while the young folk "live." I have reached the stage myself when I am prone to preach and draw comparisons between this decade and my decade, and the comparison usually favours the latter. Hypocrite that I am, I know full well that the young people of to-day are no better

and no worse than we were forty years ago. Their outlook is so entirely different.

I don't know that we were worse for these occasional evenings out. We couldn't afford them very often, possibly once in two months. Most of the songs we heard were committed to memory and were introduced into our house and bedroom concerts. And now let me show you the other side of the picture.

There were two distinct sections among us "Livers In." There were those who preferred the more joyous side of life, or, to be more correct, what *they considered* to be the more joyous. I have my doubts. Some would have called their view of joyousness "racketiness," but I take exception to this, and prefer the word I have used, "joyousness." The other section were religiously inclined. Somehow or other I seemed to fluctuate between the two. Well I can hardly say "fluctuate" exactly, nor "hesitate," because whichever section I chanced to be in, I was wholeheartedly with them. I think my attraction to what, for use of a better word, I will call the "religious party," and I use the term in no light or frivolous way, was largely governed by the fact that at the time I was in love—yes, violently in love—and what youth of 18 hasn't been in love—with one of the cashiers, pretty little Marie Holmes. To catch her smile I would attend church at St. Mary's on Sunday night and morning. I escorted her to religious revival meetings, missionary meetings, temperance meetings, and at length she prevailed upon me to join a Bible Class of which she was a member. Allied to this was a society known as "The Spitalfields Lodging House Mission," of which, at her instigation, I became an enthusiastic member and in which capacity I got an intimate insight into the real slum life of London.

I can still picture myself taking an active part in the prayer meetings which were held in the vestry of Spitalfields Church, and joining soulfully and enthusiastically in "God be with you till we meet again" or

“Lead, kindly light,” and honestly feeling that I wanted and desired the light.

If ever there was a real Christian girl, it was Marie, but my dual nature was a complete enigma to her. She could never understand how, after an evening spent at the Bible Class with her, I could take part in a noisy bedroom concert. She accepted my protested repentance time and time again, and though I continued to do yeoman service with her at those East End soup kitchens this could not, somehow, destroy my natural buoyancy and vivacity, and, after a time, she would forgive me no more, and we drifted apart. In my small library I have a handsome volume of Farrar’s “Life of Christ,” the title page of which is inscribed thus :—

PRESENTED TO
WILLIAM FREDERICK FISH
BY THE MEMBERS OF
THE COMMERCE HOUSE BIBLE CLASS
AND SPITALFIELDS LODGING HOUSE
MISSION,
WITH BEST WISHES FOR HIS TEMPORAL
AND SPIRITUAL WELFARE,
ON HIS LEAVING ENGLAND FOR AFRICA,
JANUARY, 1890.

Marie wrote to me once after I left England, but I fear I failed to reply to her letter. I heard later that she went to the Mission Field in China (she was always inclined for missionary work) and fell a victim to the Boxers in the rebellion. Poor, poor Marie; she was a true worker in God’s vineyard if ever there was one, and years ago went to the Saviour she loved and served so well.

Another episode connected with my life in that part of London was the “Jack the Ripper” outrages. As you will realise, I was living practically in the very centre

of them all, and can still recall the horror and gloom they cast upon every one of us. It is not my intention to recount the sordid details of those fiendish outrages, although the memory of such horrors can never be eradicated. They are as clear to me as though they happened yesterday instead of forty odd years ago, for out of morbid curiosity we made a point of visiting the scene of each ghastly crime. There is a humorous side even to tragedy, though, and possibly the doings of "The Jack the Ripper Syndicate" may supply this.

CHAPTER XI.

“THE JACK THE RIPPER SYNDICATE.”

(A side light on the most appalling crimes of last century, something of which not even Scotland Yard was aware.)

POSSIBLY if we had named it “The Jack the Ripper Detection Syndicate,” or the “Amateur Detective Company Ltd.,” it would have sounded less gruesome, for, by the title, it might easily have been supposed that it was a syndicate formed to assist that unknown miscreant in the perpetration of his foul crimes. But, at the time, it seemed to us that the name was all that could be desired, and being, as it were, a private limited liability company, the title never became public.

Many will still remember the shocking and ghastly outrages which occurred in the East End of London in the late 80's, which were perpetrated by a fiend who was self-designated “Jack the Ripper.” This ghoul, it will be recalled, attacked only one class of woman—the very lowest class of prostitute, that is if there are degrees in prostitution, and, daring as his atrocities were, he succeeded in completely baffling the whole of the expert detective staff of Scotland Yard.

From time to time, during the years that have passed between, it has been stated that the authorities knew who the foul miscreant was. At one time it was stated he was a medical student, at another that he was a sailor who was revenging himself for some injury he had received from the class of unfortunate he murdered.

Then it was said that the depraved creature was a distinguished medical man from Harley Street who was

committing these horrible murders for purposes of research, and the last report I read—not many years ago—was to the effect that he was a homicidal maniac who was confined in some criminal lunatic asylum. Personally I don't believe the identity of the monster was ever discovered, and that Scotland Yard is as baffled to-day as it was over 40 years ago when these dreadful crimes were committed. Rewards amounting to some thousands of pounds were offered, but failed to bring the murderer to justice.

But I do not propose to deal with the nature of these murders, although I have visited the scene of each, neither will I venture an opinion as to the motive which prompted them; but only with our attempt—a genuine *bona fide* attempt, mind you, which was made to assist the police, and, incidentally, to claim the reward. It's no use beating about the bush and pretending it was otherwise. Money was the root principle of all our efforts.

A meeting was held in one of the many bedrooms, where it was decided that a syndicate should be formed, the result being that "The Jack the Ripper Syndicate" came into being. There were twenty present at the meeting and it was resolved that the company should be limited to that number. It was further resolved that twenty shares should be issued at 2s. 6d. each, 1s. 3d. on application, the balance on allotment; and as applications and allotment took place at the same time we had to stump up there and then, which, at the end of the first week in the month, caused considerable financial embarrassment.

The capital of the syndicate was required for the purchase of ten pairs of rubber-soled sand shoes at 3s. 6d. a pair, while the balance (15s.) was reserved for a cab fare to convey the murderer, when captured, to the police station.

The twenty members were split up into pairs, five pairs for each alternate evening. Number one pair was to work Aldgate, number two Houndsditch and Petticoat Lane, number three Commercial Street and Spitalfields,

number four Whitechapel and Mile End Road, and number five Commercial and East India Dock Roads.

A solemn obligation was entered into that under no circumstances would we divulge the objects, plans, or clues of the syndicate.

Fortunately for us, or unfortunately perhaps, as things turned out, one member of the syndicate was acting “locker-up” at the time, and consequently we were able to come and go after business hours pretty much as we wished and without fear of being fined for being out after hours. One night my half-section and myself—Smith was his name—he had only been in London three weeks—were on duty in Lemn Street. We had secreted ourselves behind the hoarding of a building in course of erection, when we heard footsteps, and through a crack in the boards saw a man and a woman approaching. “Smith,” I said, somewhat shakily, “this must be the man.”

“*Y-e-e-s*,” shivered Smith, “he looks a blood-thirsty chap, doesn’t he?”

“Let them get on a bit ahead,” I whispered, “and then we will follow them.”

So we allowed the foul fiend and his probable victim to proceed about a hundred yards, and then cautiously crept out of our hiding place.

The man was the notorious “Jack the Ripper,” right enough; the very way he walked indicated it. Any moment, we felt sure, he would take out his long knife, and then we would both rush forward and arrest him in the very act of murder. It might be better though to allow him to actually *kill* the woman, because then there would be no doubt about it, and we should not only draw the reward, but should have the additional pleasure of seeing the crime committed.

Why did he take so long about it though? He had passed a dozen places where, save for us, he could safely have dispatched his victim. On and on they walked, and at length reached a small church or chapel. Stealthily we crept, nearer and nearer. Quite close to the chapel an empty waggon was standing; we climbed

on to it and were within some ten yards or so of the assassin. He and his victim walked up to the door of the small building. "Smith," I gasped, "can't you see what he's up to? He's going to take her in there and murder her. Let's get nearer."

Cautiously we left the waggon and stole silently up to the church steps.

"Mary, my love," the "villian" was saying, "I was certain I had forgotten to lock the door after the service to-night. You see I was right, my dear. Well, we'll lock it securely now."

Saying which he turned the lock, slipped the key in his pocket, and he and his "victim" turned homewards.

Noticing Smith and I standing there, he said, in the kindest possible manner: "Ah, my boys, you oughtn't to be out at this late hour, you know. Get away home, there's good lads, or Jack the Ripper may catch you." *Little he knew* that as far as we were concerned he might have been that gentleman himself.

This was our first disappointment. By all the rules of detective lore that man *should have been* "Jack the Ripper," but he simply wasn't, that's all. At that late hour he had no moral right to be anybody else, and he turned out to be a mere tame church official.

"At least £2,000 gone West," I murmured, as we retraced our steps.

Similar experiences befel other members of the syndicate, but our enthusiasm never waned or relaxed, and still those dreadful murders continued.

It was reported that Brown had been seen in deep conversation with a policeman in the neighbourhood of Spitalfields Market. This was a flagrant breach of our articles of association, wherein it was specifically laid down that this being a private effort communication of any nature with the police was strictly prohibited. A Board meeting was held to discuss the situation, when it was resolved that Brown should be retired from the company; but he obstinately *refused to be retired*.

“ I was only asking the bobby to give me a few clues,” he protested, “ I should have handed all he gave me to the syndicate, and I refuse to go unless I am paid out in full.”

This was hardly fair, for, after all, he had had his full share of those sand shoes, and it had already been decided that when we captured the murderer lots should be drawn for the remaining assets. Seeing that he had wantonly broken the rules, properly speaking he had no claim at all, but we thought, seeing that we stood to make *thousands*, it was wiser to choose the least line of resistance, and so we paid him out, deducting the sum of one shilling for wear and tear.

We continued our nightly vigils, and each evening saw us start off for our respective hunting grounds. There being now only nine couples and one odd man, we turned a duet into a trio. Evans and his partner ran after a cab all the way to Poplar, only to discover to their disgust that the inmates were merely joining a ship which was sailing early next morning for South Africa.

And the mystery was as far from solution as ever.

The cause of the second split in the syndicate was due to the fact that a murder had been committed in a certain court which it was the duty of two of our members to patrol and they could not satisfactorily explain where they had been at the time. It was £2,000 *absolutely thrown away*.

The final break-up of the syndicate was due to a *call* made by the secretary for an additional half a crown each. It is doubtful whether the whole of the shareholders could have put up half a crown among the lot of them, and, as the secretary seemed somewhat hazy as to why this second call had become necessary, we quite naturally concluded, the month being well advanced, that he required the money for his own private purposes, and, there and then, decided to close down as a syndicate, but to continue our detective operations privately in pairs.

As my half-section said to me:—

“ You see, as a syndicate, we should have shared the £2,000 between 19 of us, which would figure out, roughly, at £100 each, whereas when you and I catch the beggar we shall share the whole bang lot between us.” Smith was rather hot stuff at figures. His father was something in a bank, so perhaps that accounted for it.

I can tell you that additional £900 made all the difference. We had been fairly keen before, but were now doubly enthusiastic. There wasn't a portion of the East End we didn't explore, and carefully noted likely spots for the next murder. One night, after an unusually strenuous search, we reached the side entrance—the “ living in ” entrance to the establishment—and, to our intense excitement, found pinned on the door, just as described in the papers, a rough, crumpled piece of paper, on which was rudely printed in red—probably the blood of his last victim—this message:—

“ I'M GOIN 2 KERMIT 2 MURDERS
TOMORRER NITE AT S'M.
LOOK OUT 4 THE MAN IN A CHEK
SOOT AND CAP.

JACK THE RIPPER.”

I tore the paper down at once and secreted it in my pocket.

“ Here's a piece of luck if you like,” I thought.

“ Smith, my boy,” I said, “ shake hands. This time to-morrow night, all being well, please God, we shall be worth exactly £1,000 each.”

“ Yes,” he answered, somewhat dubiously, “ but where and what does ‘ S.M. ’ stand for?”

“ Smith,” I retorted, “ don't try to be a bigger fool than nature has made you. Haven't you *any* brains? It's as plain as a pikestaff. What *can* ‘ S.M. ’ stand for but “ Spitalfields Market ”? He was simply knocked in a heap.

“ Man,” he said, “ what a brain you've got. Of *course* I see it now. What an ass I was.”

We could hardly contain ourselves for the next 24 hours. I made up my mind to give notice to the firm the day after the capture and to take an extended holiday, possibly a Continental tour. At 19 one needs a complete rest and change.

Smith, who always had an eye for business, spoke of putting *his* share into a small shop that he knew of, and at the same time marrying a little girl in the lace department, who, he explained, would be a great help to him in the business.

Night came at last, and at 11.30, by special arrangement with the acting locker-up, Smith and I, closely muffled and wearing syndicate sand shoes, which we had paid sixpence a pair for when the company's assets came into the market, sallied forth into the night.

Noiselessly we crept down Commercial Street, and, leaving Spitalfields Church on our right, slipped noiselessly into the market buildings, concealing ourselves behind a great pile of empty fruit baskets. There are always people about a London market both day *and* night, but that night, somehow, there appeared to be more than usual.

The church clock struck *one*; and at that very moment we saw the figure of a man emerge from one of the side stands and creep furtively into the passage way. This was our man undoubtedly; there was murder written all over him, his very walk gave him away, and, what was more, he was dressed just as his blood-written note stated he would be.

“Come on, Smith,” I whispered, shakily, “now's our time. You tackle him from behind.”

With this we slipped noiselessly out and rushed at our man. As we did so there appeared to be simultaneous rushes from all quarters of the market.

“B-b-but w-w-what's all this?” we gasped; for there were Somerville and Jones, Tucker and Ball, Brady and Miller; in fact, every member of the defunct syndicate was there. And, in the centre of us all, simply convulsed with laughter, was Brown, the man we had expelled.

We returned disconsolately to our quarters, and a few days later, when our outraged feeling had, in a measure, subsided, and Brown had partially recovered from the hammering he had received, we summoned him to attend a meeting of what had been the original syndicate, when, by means of threats and a little judicious torture, we compelled him to disclose his wicked plot.

“Well, you fellows,” he said, “it was like this. I felt very sore when you turned me out, so made up my mind to get my own back. I knew the time you chaps used to return from your midnight prowls, and wrote out about half a dozen notices all alike. As I saw you coming along in pairs, I kept pinning them on the door one at a time, and then hiding until the next couple came along. Every one of you took the bait splendidly, and then—Oh well, you know what happened after that.”

No, Smith didn't start in business and never married. That little girl in the laces Brown married, took her to Australia, and to-day he owns one of the largest businesses in that country.

The strangest thing about it all was, though, that the last of the “Ripper outrages” synchronised with our famous vigil in Spitalfields Market, so, after all, we may have done *some* good. Possibly the scoundrel saw the large crowd which was out tracking him down, and thought the scent was getting too warm. Who knows?

Being strongly of opinion that we had been instrumental in stopping the terrible crimes we wrote to the Scotland Yard authorities explaining what we had done, and suggesting that, although they might not feel inclined to pay over the whole £2,000, we should be quite satisfied with say, £500, but we were never favoured with a reply. And when, nowadays unsolved mysteries are being discussed, my blood still surges within me when I think of the scurvy trick played upon us by that, to-day, successful Australian merchant.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER BUSINESS HOURS.

THE actual building of the firm with which I was employed was some six stories in height, and we apprentices slept at the very top of it in a dormitory not inappropriately named "The Angels." Whether this was on account of our unfailing irreproachable conduct or was due to the fact that at that altitude there was nothing between us and Heaven, I cannot say. Our quarters were reached by means of a very narrow wooden staircase, which would have been a veritable death trap in the event of fire, for, save for this winding staircase, there was no other means of exit at all. It is true there was a very amateurish fire escape, but as this could only be operated from two floors below, those of us who slept above it, should a fire have occurred, would have been, beyond a doubt, incinerated. We used to have periodical practices with this primitive affair. It was really a long, bottomless sack. It was fastened on the inside of one of the upper windows by means of a stout iron bar. The man or woman who wished to be saved from a fiery death had to mount the window sill, lower his or her body into the sack, extend their elbows, and then let go. At the first attempt the nervous strain was almost as great as an airman's first venture with a parachute. For the moment one seemed to be launched into nothingness. The flight, or descent rather, was regulated by one's elbows. The more they were extended the slower would be the fall. It was on a certain Saturday afternoon. We closed at two there as against eleven or twelve midnight at Greenwich. I was spending the week-end at home and had dressed suitably for the occasion. By this time I had risen to the dignity of a black morning coat. In this age of

comfort first, boys will laugh at the mere thought of a youth of 19 wearing a tail coat and silk hat, but it was considered quite the right and proper thing then, and without the least pretence to vanity, I must confess that I rather fancied myself. I am bound to admit though, that when to-day I see my own boys—who are about the same age as I was then—dressed in their khaki shorts and shirts, ready to make the ascent of Table Mountain, that theirs is the more rational dress and is an indication of a healthier and more vigorous life. Possibly to-day there is a tendency to go to the opposite extreme though, and I sometimes think that carefulness in dress is an indication of orderliness in our affairs. I may be wrong, of course, and must try to think in the present generation, even though I am writing of the past.

I was running down the narrow stairway and noticed some unusual commotion in the bathroom. "Bathroom" is merely a courtesy term; it was merely a place in which we could wash our hands and faces. If we required a bath we were compelled to use the public wash-houses at a cost of sixpence, which most of us could ill afford.

Fire escape practice was going on. This savoured of adventure; the temptation was too great. I too must make the descent, and, without waiting to divest myself of my new tail coat, I mounted the window sill, and, assisted by the man in charge, dropped myself into that bottomless sack. There were two men stationed at the foot, who, by carefully raising the canvas as you neared the end of your flight, allowed you to alight gently on your feet. It had been raining heavily and that London street was covered with thick, slimy London mud. A huge crowd had assembled there, for the Londoner loves anything out of the usual or anything that savours of danger or disaster. That afternoon the bottom of the so-called escape was held by the senior man in my department and another weird-looking individual, who, on account of his extraordinarily long neck, we had named the "Pelican." He was an objectionable sort of fellow. There are men who before you hardly know them you

instinctively class as objectionable; there's an indefinable something in their demeanour that suggests it. The "Pelican" was one of these. When he came to the firm he was placed in our (the apprentices') bedroom. We not only resented his presence but also the action of the authorities in daring to put any man other than an apprentice in what we considered our peculiar preserve. We held an indignation meeting and resolved on his forcible removal. The next night, when the "Pelican" was sleeping the sleep of the just, or, in his case, as we thought, the sleep of the *unjust*, we lifted him bodily in his bedclothes, dragged him down the winding staircase,, opened a bedroom door below, and cast him and his bedclothes bodily on the floor. Naturally there was a great to-do about it. Every occupant of our room was carpeted, fines were imposed, but the powers-that-were recognised the futility of sending him back to our room, and thus the affair blew over.

Whether the "Pelican," noticing who was coming, scented revenge, or whether my senior in the business wished to humiliate me in my pride of dress, I do not know, but instead of raising the canvas as I neared the ground it was held in a perpendicular position, and out I rolled in that dreadful, greasy, slimy London mud.

The crowd laughed and jeered at my mishap as only a London crowd can laugh and jeer, while I was simply bursting with anger, partly and primarily from humiliation and partly on account of my spoiled clothes. The evicted "Pelican" was literally doubled up with laughter, as was his companion. I dared not strike my senior; it would have been gross insubordination, but in the case of the "Pelican" it was a totally different matter. Dirty and mud-stained as I was, in a moment I was on my feet, and, giving him a sounding smack on the face, dashed through the open doorway and up to my bedroom, where I changed into my ordinary business dress, and a fond father was robbed of his son's company for that week-end. I dared not let him see my ruined coat, for, although I sent it to the cleaners, it never lost those London grease spots.

I mention this incident in a casual sort of way, in passing, as an introduction to the subject of Fire Insurance, for, young and inexperienced as we were, we were not unmindful of the grave danger we should be in in the event of fire, but in those days of overbearing employers, to have mentioned so important a matter at headquarters would have been tantamount to dismissal.

"I say, you fellows," said one of the apprentices after a discussion on this topic, "my dad is in a fire insurance office and has insured my box and all my clothes for £100. If there's a fire here and my box and clothes are burnt, they'll pay me out that sum." The fact that in all probability he, *with* his box, would have perished, didn't seem to occur to him, as, for that matter, it didn't occur to any of us.

Naturally this fired us all with the desire to insure *our* boxes. Our informant brought us the necessary application forms, which, together with half a crown, the raising of which sum necessitated interviewing one or other of the various premium buyers, we duly completed and posted.

"What a glorious thing if there was a fire," I thought. "Fancy a *hundred pounds*. I hadn't the remotest idea that I should have to prove the possession of a hundred pounds' worth of clothing. As a matter of fact £6 would have paid for the whole of my wardrobe. I would tot up what I thought an average London apprentice *should* have and allowed my imagination to run riot. A dress suit, morning coat, three lounge suits, shirts, socks, ties and so on, but, try as I would, I could not arrive at a larger sum than £50, but it was all right, the company would insure my property for £100 and would have to pay £100.

After this we waited, all *longing* for a fire! Why didn't they hurry up? The insurance man's son couldn't explain at all, but after some weeks of suspense we each received a letter from the insurance company enclosing half a crown and stating how deeply they regretted being unable to accept any more risk in respect to our particular place. The youth who was responsible for our

great insurance plan had a bad time for some weeks after, and the only compensation was that it was late in the month and we actually had money in hand.

There was a horse-racing episode, too, which is worth relating. As you will see, I am striving to emphasise our follies as well as our virtues, and so far the latter have not been very conspicuous. Naturally our follies were more in evidence after than during business hours.

A new assistant arrived. I forget his name, but that doesn't matter. He affected a horsey fashion in dress, a suit of exceptionally large check design with cap to match, and a huge horseshoe scarf pin. It soon became common talk that he was an authority on horse racing. One night, after we were all in bed, he came to our dormitory from one of the lower rooms to do us a good turn, so he said. As a matter of fact he had, as he put it, a wonderful "tip" for us. Now most of us, although in many ways not *very* particular young gentlemen, drew the line at gambling. Horse racing, to us, was going a very long way along the road to ruin.

"Look here, you chaps," he said, "if you want to make money I can put you on to a 'dead cert.'"

"What's that?" we all asked eagerly, for, naturally, each one of us being in a perpetual state of hard-up-ness, wanted to "make money." We should hardly have been human had this not been so.

"Well," he said, "this is in confidence, mind you, I have a personal friend who is a horse trainer and he has given me the tip to back 'True Blue' for the Jubilee Stakes. He says it's a dead snip. I can get thirty to one against it; that's to say for a bob you stand to win thirty shillings."

"Glorious!" I thought, and have little doubt that the others thought so too, but it seemed so *wicked* to even *think* of backing horses.

"Well," he went on, "if any of you care for a flutter, you can give me your money and I will put it on for you. Goodnight." Saying which, he disappeared.

“No,” I thought, “I mustn’t do this, it’s wrong.” But he had set my brain on fire. “Why for *two shillings* I might make *three pounds*. It would be distinctly foolish *not* to take advantage of such an opportunity.

We had a round bedroom discussion on the subject and were unanimously of opinion that gambling was *wrong*. That “True Blue” might *not* win. But with me the great temptation became greater and greater, and the next morning I had quite made up my mind to *plunge*. Resorting to the usual method of raising the wind, I found the racing man in his department, handed him my two shillings, which, in a thoroughly business-like manner he entered in his pocket book, and then, labouring under suppressed excitement, never disclosing my great secret to a soul, I waited impatiently for the day of the race. A spirit of unrest seemed to pervade the whole of our dormitory, a spirit of expectation appeared to be in each one of us, and gradually it leaked out that *every one* of us had backed “True Blue” in sums ranging from *one* to *five* shillings.

On the day of the race we waited eagerly for the evening papers, and when we heard the newsboys shouting “Hextry Spechul, *Winner of the City and Suburban!*” we could hardly contain ourselves, and sent one of our number into the street (at the risk of being fined) to buy a paper, but alas, in the result the name of “True Blue” did *not* appear. Furthermore there appeared to be no indication that it had been ever entered for the race.

We interviewed the tipster, who informed us that he was sorry but that particular horse had been scratched two or three days after we had backed it. Being young and inexperienced, we contended that not having had, as it were, a run for our money, we were entitled to the stakes back, but there was nothing doing. We were sadder and wiser fellows. One of our chaps, foolishly we thought, blurted out the whole story in his home, with the result that his father wrote to the firm and complained. An inquiry was held and our betting friend

was instantly dismissed, which perhaps, in all the circumstances, was the very best thing that could have happened for all of us. One vicious person among a number of inexperienced youths, most of them fresh from school, can have a very devastating effect upon their morals. Anyhow, from that day to this, with one solitary exception, which I shall relate in due course when I reach my South African experiences, I have never backed a horse since, and neither do I wish or intend to.

CHAPTER XIII.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS AND SOME REFLECTIONS.

THE summer holidays were always looked forward to with sheer delight. We were entitled to a fortnight a year. In the month of June the holiday list was sent to each department and was dealt with in order of seniority. Thus, the buyer or head of a section had the first choice of dates, while the youngest had to accept any time which had not been chosen between the beginning of July and the end of September. As far as we non-paid men were concerned, the firm was distinctly the gainer by these holidays. To begin with, they were always arranged—and rightly so too—for the very quietest months in the year, and as we received no salary, they were richer on account of not having to supply us with food and accommodation while we were on leave. As a matter of fact, from a strictly equitable standpoint, we should have received something in the nature of an equivalent, but this never happened, and to have suggested it would have meant sudden death. How I ever managed to get away at all, I don't know. At times I did make a commendable effort to save, but, after all, what *could* a lad of 17 or 18 save out of such a meagre allowance as mine or from the few unmortgaged "spiffs" which he had left at the end of each month? Still, I *did* manage to save a *little*.

I remember, it was in the year '87, I think, trips to the Paris Exhibition and back were advertised for 33s. 3d. The great friend of my North London days, "Sandy," the friend to whose mother I had poured out the sordid story of my Greenwich days, and who was now living in Worthing, had arranged with me that we would cut out every expense in the shape of pleasure,

save as hard as we could, save until it hurt, as it were, and take that Paris trip.

We *did* save; instead of the usual Saturday night at the theatre or music hall—there were no bioscopes in those days—we would spend our evenings reading or making wonderful designs in macramé work. Sundays would find us taking long walks away into the country. But as August drew near our visions of Paris became more and more remote, and when the actual, long-looked-forward-to day arrived for me to take my leave, my total savings amounted to exactly 37s. 6d. and Sandy's to 41s. 3d. No, we did not appeal to our respective fathers. His was a wealthy man, mine was not. We didn't say or even *think* as the modern youth does, "Oh, Dad will pay!" In my friend's case doubtless his father would have paid and, at the request of the dear loving little woman whose "Bonnie Laddie" I was, would have paid for me too; but I had some sense of pride, and while I never hesitated to accept the hospitality of their home, where I knew and felt that I was always a welcome guest, I could never accept anything in the nature of monetary help.

Naturally, we were terribly disappointed, but with our joint savings of 78s. 9d. we spent a very happy time at his beautiful home on the South Coast with his pleasant and kindly people, where we at least had the satisfaction of knowing that we could *almost* see the coast of France. So my dreams of Paris were over.

The prelude to a holiday took the form of a concert in our bedroom and the lucky prospective holiday-maker was expected to stand treat, ill as he could afford it, usually consisting of a fairly plentiful supply of cakes and buns from Lockhart's, opposite, while the liquid refreshment was chiefly cocoa. Some enterprising manufacturer had placed a new cocoa on the market, I think it was called Homeopathic Cocoa, which was retailed at 4d. a packet. We each bought one of those small methylated spirit stoves, you know the sort I mean, a small brass arrangement with a sort of inverted tripod

on which you placed the kettle and then lighted the little saturated pad beneath. It was horrible stuff, and what with the smell from the burning spirit, combined with that from the Homeopathic Cocoa, the atmosphere was shocking; but in those days none of us were *too* nice in the matter of our eating and drinking; had it been otherwise, I fear we should often have been on short commons.

My last holiday, before leaving England, was spent as usual with my friends at Worthing. I had, by dint of strenuous saving, supplemented by my earnings as librarian, been able to purchase a somewhat gaudy-looking—I suppose in these modern days we should say a jazz-looking—blazer, with cap to match, and a pair of cheap—*very* cheap—white shoes with brown strappings. In the shop window, marked 4s. 11d., they certainly looked remarkably cheap; but cheap shoes and sea water do not make life-long companions, and while walking over the wet cobbly beach on the day after my arrival the soles parted company with the uppers. Disasters never come singly; the next day, when walking on the pier, out for a little “mashing” as we used to say then, the wind caught my new cap, took it well out to sea, and thenceforth I was both capless and shoeless. I had taken my silk hat with me for Sunday use and for the remainder of my holiday was compelled to forego the pleasures of the seashore because, perforce, I had to wear my topper in all weathers and for all occasions. “Why didn’t I buy another cap?” Ah, yes, to be sure; I thought you’d ask that question. Well, to be perfectly frank, I hadn’t the money, and in those days, *fortunately*, credit wasn’t quite so easily obtainable; and another reason is, I abominate credit. I won’t enlarge upon my silk hat experiences, but since then I have never been partial to them. On occasions, it is true, I wear one, but each time I do so, I see myself again as a landmark on that Sussex shore. The youth who returned thoroughly sunburned could always lay claim to having had a good time; and in order that there should

be no doubt about this, it was our custom to spend a couple of hours each day lying on the beach with our faces exposed to the burning rays. "Vanity of vanity," said the preacher, "all is vanity."

From the last few chapters you will be able to gather that despite long hours, exacting shopwalkers and managers, despite unpleasant customers—and I'm inclined to think that woman shows her very worst side when shopping—despite usurious "spiff dealers," we were by no means unhappy; on the contrary, as I have already remarked, it was there, in the heart of the East End of London, that I spent the four happiest years of my life. I have dealt at length with the "living in" system, because in these later days it has fallen into disrepute, men claiming, and perhaps rightly so, that they are entitled to a wage that permits of their complete liberty after business hours and at the same time allows them to live in decency and comfort. I am not disputing this and have no desire to labour the point, but the remembrance of my own "living in" days, despite the poor food and indifferent accommodation, still lives with me as a happy and pleasant memory. They *might* have been better, I freely grant, but in the old days things might have been better in the Army, the Navy, the schools and the factories; one thing is certain, we were singularly free from care and anxiety. Not very long ago when, as Mayor of Capetown, a deputation of shop assistants waited upon me urging me, as Mayor of the city, to keep aloof from the controversy then going on relative to compulsory Saturday afternoon closing, a measure which, as a business man, and I believe a sound business man, I strongly disapproved, I related some of my own early experiences.

"Ah, yes, Mr. Mayor," replied one, a man quite as old as myself, "but times have altered since then. This is the day of the assistant, the employers have had their innings."

"Indeed!" I replied. "Is that so? Well, my friend, let me tell you this, in all probability if you had

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not held such views you would have been an employer and not an assistant to-day."

The man who is out for grievances can usually find them. I deplore long hours. I unhesitatingly *condemn* employers who *rob* their assistants by providing indifferent board and accommodation. I have no time for bullying or browbeating employers, and hold the view that the assistant has every right to sell his knowledge and ability in the highest market and, indeed, to endeavour to raise the market value of his commodities which are, usually, his only asset. I am one with them in striving for shorter hours of labour, given that while they are *in* business they are *all* business; but from an employer's point of view, I should also expect loyalty and co-operation, some little sacrifice, and a spirit of give-and-take where the interests of the business, which, after all, provides them with their living, are involved. All mines are not gold mines and prosperity does not always follow on well dressed windows and large stocks. To-day, the inconsiderate employer is decidedly in the minority, if not from choice then from a utilitarian point of view. If for no other reason, he has learned that even regarded only from an economic standpoint, it does not *pay* to treat an assistant badly; that one's business methods are scrutinised and commented upon by the public, and that humanitarianism counts a great deal in the reputation of one's business. No commercial man can *afford* to ignore it, and hence, in a measure, the interests and welfare of the assistant are safeguarded. I am not sure that the position has not been reversed, and that to-day it is the assistant and not the employer who is the aggressor. What is most needed is loyal co-operation between the two. Assistants must not be unmindful of the fact that the head of the concern for which they are working was himself an assistant once. In all probability he worked very much harder than they work, for his success isn't *all* luck, as we are so fond of thinking and saying. Probably the only luck he has had, has been a capacity for hard and

sustained work, so if you spell "*luck*" "*work*," possibly you will be nearer the mark. No, don't say, "Very foolish of him to work so hard." He never looked at or thought of the clock when there was work to be done, in fact he never spared himself; with the result that when he opened his own little business, partly with his own small savings and partly with the support of some wholesale house which had carefully followed and noted his career, his success was a foregone conclusion. Is it surprising, then, that he, remembering his own struggles and his own unwearying energy, is perhaps a *little* irritable when he detects anything in the nature of shirking? Let us at least be *fair*. As a rule, to-day, the average employer is the very first to appreciate and reward good, honest, thoughtful service and regards with distrust the man who is always ready to leave ten minutes before closing time.

There are *no short cuts to success*, in nearly every case it is the result of solid hard work, careful thought, foresight and, in the early days when the spade work is being done, *rigid economy*.

If one aims at a successful business career, then one must be prepared to forego many of the little incidental pleasures along the road. If a man makes his business his hobby, then it will become his greatest and most absorbing pleasure. We are not all constituted alike, there are those among us who love outside pleasures and have no ambition to become their own masters, they choose accordingly, but when they grow older and see the man who was at one time their junior in the business, the head of a large and flourishing concern, which by his own pluck, energy and enterprise he has established, well, they mustn't grumble. One can't have it both ways. I am no *kill-joy*, *far from it*, and those who know me will verify this. I am not suggesting that life should be all work and no play. Oh, dear me, *no*. Relaxation and pleasure are as necessary to our well being as hard work and concentration are to success, but they should *not* be our one, all-absorbing quest. We

should endeavour to strike a happy medium with the scales dipping, if anything, a little in favour of *more work*.

WE are not all equally gifted, we have the *one talent*, the *two-talent* and the *three-talent* man and each can do his best according to the measure of his ability. The "one talent man" would do well to remember the words of the great Joseph Chamberlain, who, before he became one of England's greatest statesmen, was himself a successful *three-talent* business man!

"Keep going. Energy is the power behind the wheel; the force that keeps the great life machine in motion; the individual's greatest asset and the nation's safeguard against impoverished vitality."

Let us dismiss from our minds the corroding thought that our employers are our natural enemies. They are no such thing. If we wish to, we can learn from them the real secret of success. If they see that we are careless and indifferent, can you wonder that they take no interest in us?

CHAPTER XIV.

BUSINESS LIFE AGAIN.

PERHAPS the most trying period in the life of a counter-jumper is stocktaking. True, in the larger business houses it is all done departmentally and its irksomeness is determined largely by the particular "squad" you happen to be in; but no matter in what department you may chance to be, or whether, as is the case in smaller businesses, you are in *all* departments, it is always a trying and worrying time.

Every article in the place has to be measured, or counted, or weighed, as the case may be. The cost of unsaleable goods has to be written down and taken into stock at a figure which will permit of a fair margin of profit being gained during the ensuing year. The original cost doesn't or shouldn't figure in the case at all, only *values* are considered. Naturally, if there were no writing down in values, then the losses would be negligible, but meanwhile there would be an accumulation of bad and unsaleable stock which ultimately spells disaster, for however capable and careful a buyer may be, all his horses are not winners. After a bad year there is a tendency on the part of the responsible head of a department to look with an indulgent eye on doubtful stock in order that his department may show up as well as possible on the balance sheet. But it is a dangerous practice. Every *business* man will tell you that the first loss is the best and cheapest loss, for goods not written down which should have been, are still less valuable when next stocktaking period arrives, and it is then that the trouble begins. To my way of thinking, the only proper way to regard value is to consider what it would realise if placed on the open market. By this, I am not suggesting a forced sale. If a man pays 2s. a yard for a material to sell at say 2s. 11d., and meanwhile the same line can be purchased at say 1s. 3d., then obviously, the value of the material he paid 2s. for has

declined to 1s. 3d. and his cost must, or should be, written down to the lower level, or otherwise he is dealing in fictitious values which has been the downfall of so many so-called business men.

After the stock has been measured or counted, as the case may be, it is then, what is termed "given down," that is to say, one man calls out the length or number of the article while another takes it down on a stock sheet. Necessarily, in a large establishment, these "stock sheets" run into many thousands and each department is responsible for working out and checking its own. We were each handed so many of these lists before we left at night and were expected to bring them back completed in the morning; the result was, before the task was finished, we became quite expert in making calculations and very accurate, in our additions. It's really surprising the number of short cuts in arithmetic one discovers when engaged in this tiresome task, and to make *too* many mistakes was considered bad form. The lists completed, they were handed by the head of the department into the counting-house where the necessary adjustments were made, all the books balanced and, finally, the balance sheet and profit and loss account produced. Usually the work of stock-taking meant a month's hard work and during that time, I fear, customers were not as welcome as they should have been; they were regarded, more or less, as necessary evils; for every yard sold, from a piece of material measured, meant "marking back," while pattern seekers received bare civility.

The slogan of every business man should be "*customers first.*" I would, and, as a matter of fact, *have* caused this to be printed in large characters and prominently displayed in each separate department. Customers are the *root principle* of every business. All the advertising, all the display, all the well bought and carefully kept stock are of secondary importance to *customers*. I have known men who have been such splendid stock-keepers that they would resent their fixtures being dis-

turbed. They were stock *keepers* in every sense of the word, or I should say, in the most ridiculous sense of the word. The purpose of an assistant should be, primarily, that of *stock seller* and, between whiles, a stock keeper.

The value of a good salesman cannot be over estimated. A salesman who can make a customer feel at home, a salesman who can create the impression that *nothing is a trouble*—and there are such men, you know, you will find them in every establishment as you will find customers who prefer to wait until they (the obliging assistants) are disengaged so that they may be served by them. Oh, I know; for have I not been through it all? Do I not know every phase of it?

Young men in business should cultivate a smile; a smiling salesman has an enormous pull on customers and on his employers, too. By this I don't mean anything in the nature of undue familiarity. Oh, dear me, no; not at all. But just a pleasing, welcoming smile. If he sees an old customer then make it a smile of recognition, for most customers like to think they are remembered; it is well, therefore, to cultivate a good memory.

Stock-taking was usually preceded by the annual winter sale; this gave buyers of departments, who had perhaps over-bought, an opportunity to reduce their surplus stocks, for each department had a certain amount of capital allotted to it which on no account might be over-spent, save with the consent of the gov'nor or the directors, as the case might be. Some buyers, with funds in hand, would make purchases of "job" stuff especially for these "annual clearance sales"; but, as a whole, I must confess, honest reductions were and are made. For no business is built up by dishonest methods; as has been said, "You may fool some of the public some of the time, you may fool others *all* the time, but you cannot fool *all* the people *all* the time." If for no other reason, dishonest business methods do not *pay*. A firm may cheat a client once, but as a rule, they do not get another opportunity.

As a sale brought a larger volume of business, it necessitated a larger staff of assistants, and then it was that I first came into contact with what is known, or used to be known as, "sale hands," in reality the *derelicts* of the trade. These men were engaged for two or three days in the early stages of the "selling off." No testimonials were required and no questions were asked. As a whole, they were a mournful-looking, down-at-the-heel-looking lot. Among them were men who had held responsible positions, not a few who had been their own masters, but who, through drink, or other causes, had fallen from their high estate and had become the mere flotsam and jetsam of the commercial world; truly a most depressing sight, which, young as I was, made me wonder whether that was *my* destiny. And I used to shudder, yes, positively *shudder* at the thought. During sale time, I suppose on account of the extra strain placed upon us, we were provided with beer at supper time. Beer is a beverage that never appealed to my taste; there is little virtue in the admission; had I liked it, I should doubtless have taken it, but *not* liking it, I used to *sell* my glass to some thirsty sale hand for a penny premium and thought I was well compensated. The thirst of these men, as a whole, seemed insatiable, and I have seen one man buy as many as ten penny glassfuls. One hadn't to ask what had made him a sale hand.

Occasionally one would be detected in theft, and I can well remember quite a superior-looking young fellow, altogether *too* young for a sale hand, being marched up the centre of the shop between two policemen. He was taken to Worship Street Police Court and was sentenced to *six months hard labour*. The mere thought of it made me positively ill.

The preparation and dispatch of the season's catalogue was another heavy piece of work involving, as it did, endless care in the arrangement of electros or illustrations. There was the careful proof reading, for a mistake in one figure might easily have caused great

trouble and loss. For an article advertised at a certain price must be *sold* at that price. We were paid so much a thousand for addressing them, which meant more night work, and then came the wrapping and dispatching, for which work we were *not* paid. An army of Commissionaires was employed to deliver these in the London districts, who mapped out the various routes for distribution, but when—as happened on one occasion—a bundle of fifty of them was found on the banks of a canal, the Corps of Commissionaires was *not* too popular.

We were very, very busy young fellows in those days, but, unlike Greenwich, it was not drudgery; we were all perfectly happy even though the clock often pointed to eleven before we left at night. It was never too late for a little singing or a boxing competition in our bedroom, and so the wheels of life went round very pleasantly, working, learning, singing, laughing, praying, up to all manner of mischief both in and out of business, and as happy as the day was long.

The most serious trouble I got into while employed there arose out of a parcel of expensive furs which I had to take on approbation. A customer who gave an address somewhere in the neighbourhood of Regent's Square, had written to the firm saying that she had recently arrived from India, had heard that they (the firm) were famed for their furs, and requesting that they should send a nice assortment of boas, collars, capes, muffs, and so forth. It sounded all right. An assortment, approximating in value to £100, was packed and I was sent with the parcel, receiving strict instructions that on no account was I to allow the parcel to go out of my sight. In whichever room the person wished to examine them, I was to go.

I reached the house, rang the bell, which was answered by a man in livery. I explained my errand and was evidently expected.

“I will hand the parcel to her ladyship,” said the man, who I took to be the butler.

“My orders,” I replied, “are not to allow the parcel out of my sight.”

“In that case then, young man, you had better take the first bus you can find and take your goods back to your shop, for her ladyship is in bed, and I hardly think she will care to have a bit of a counter-jumper in her bedroom!”

This was said somewhat offensively; but, somehow or other, it struck me as being perfectly logical, certainly the lady could not steal the furs if she were in bed. I was anxious to do business for the firm, and, in addition to this, on some of the articles there were premiums as high as half-a-crown, which was no small consideration bearing in mind my almost perpetual state of impecuniosity.

“Very well,” I said, reluctantly, “you had better take the parcel to her. I will wait until she has made a selection.” Saying which I proceeded to enter the house.

“No, young man,” said the butler, “you had better wait outside. Her ladyship is very ill and the house must be kept very quiet,” with which he closed the heavy door and I stood and waited. It didn’t occur to me, that if her ladyship were *so* ill, she would hardly be requiring furs, but we are not always as mentally alert as we might be.

“Her ladyship is taking a long time to make up her mind,” I thought. Altogether I waited an hour and then, in desperation, rang the bell. It was not answered. I tugged at it again; there was not a movement anywhere. I broke out into a cold perspiration; there was something wrong. “The best thing,” I thought, “will be to call a policeman.” I did so and explained the situation. “Ah, young fellow,” said he, “I think you’ve been sold a pup. Them people only come to this ’ouse yesterday.”

He dare not enter the place without a warrant and I accompanied him to the police station. Having told my story to the inspector in charge, he issued the necessary order and Robert and I returned to the house in

Regent's Square, to which, by means of skeleton keys we gained entry; but, alas! there was no sign of "her ladyship," the butler, or the furs. It was evident that while I had been waiting patiently at the front, they had left by the back door.

I was almost frantic; in my desire to do business, I had disregarded instructions, and had evidently been victimised by two very clever criminals.

I will draw the curtain over my interview with the manager and subsequent appearance before the *guv'nor* himself. The memory of it all, even after this long lapse of years is *too* painful. Having failed to carry out the most explicit instructions given to me, I had rendered myself liable for the cost of the articles stolen. Legally speaking, this may have been correct, but there was as little chance of my paying a hundred pounds as of swimming the Atlantic.

The *guv'nor*, who was a very wealthy man to whom the loss was of no great moment, was of the opinion that I must be made an example of. He used that parrot phrase: "Discipline must be upheld," and in this he was supported by the gentleman whose Christmas cigars I had inadvertently smoked a couple of years earlier. I was given a month's notice and left the office in dire disgrace, almost under suspicion of collusion with the thieves. But the fates were kind, or not as cruel as they usually are. A day or so after, in an entirely different neighbourhood, a man and a woman were arrested for attempting the same type of fraud on a well-known West End firm and the whole of our furs were recovered. I made an appeal to the head who, seeing that he had *lost* nothing, magnanimously *forgave* me and I was allowed to continue giving my services gratis until the end of my apprenticeship. But it was an experience I have never forgotten.

When stupid credulity overrides explicit instructions then trouble is almost certain to follow. But, after all, at nineteen we haven't the wisdom of a Solomon nor the intuition of a Sherlock Holmes,

CHAPTER XV.

THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE AND THE END OF PART I.

THE incident related in the previous chapter made a deep and lasting impression on me. The disgrace of getting the "sack" upset my all too sensitive nature. My apprenticeship was rapidly drawing to its close. I could see no prospect in remaining on with the firm at a commencing salary of £15 a year, for, as I have already stated, it was at this value they assessed the capabilities of the young fellows whom *they had trained*. It certainly did not show or indicate any great belief in their own methods. Besides all this, there was the thought of those "sale hands" which was ever with me, and I would say to myself:—"Is this *my* destiny? Is this what I must look forward to when I am old? Surely," I thought, "there are other *younger* countries where young men who understand their business and are not afraid of work can make good? This overcrowded London is not the *only* place in the world."

I would scan the "Situations Vacant" columns in the morning papers. Why, in some instances a man's particular religious persuasion was a consideration! "Wesleyan preferred" or "preference given to a Congregationalist." "Preposterous! Intolerable!" I thought. What are any man's religious convictions to do with his employer? It was simply *unChristian* bigotry, a revival of the spirit of the old Spanish Inquisition, and were men who made such stipulations better to work for? Most assuredly *not*. Generally speaking, they were mean, narrow, exacting insufferable *humbugs*. I have known men who, to obtain a situation, have adopted the particular creed required, and almost without exception, have found such ultra religious employers overbearing, inconsiderate and the worst possible payers. So much for "Church of England, Wesleyan, Presbyterian, or any other religious sect" preferred.

“For I believe it matters *less* where man his God
doth praise,
Than how he treats his fellow men and spends
his workadays.”

No, I felt that at any cost I *must* get out of England to some bigger, freer country, and continued to study the advertisement columns. I wrote for situations in Calcutta, Bombay, China; I made application for vacancies in Canada, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, but never received a reply to one of them.

“Father,” I said, as I was walking to church with him one Sunday morning, “I want to go to New Zealand.”

If I had told him that I wished to make a voyage to the moon he could hardly have been more surprised. I can see him now as he stopped dead in the street and looked at me in utter and blank amazement.

“New Zealand!” he echoed almost aghast. By the way he said it one would have thought that I wished to throw in my lot with the head hunters of Borneo.

“New Zealand!” he repeated, “but why do you wish to leave England, my son? It’s always been good enough for me.”

“Because, father,” I replied, “there seems to be no chance for a young fellow in this country. I want to get out of it. I want an opportunity to make good.”

“But,” he remonstrated, “are there not plenty of opportunities in England? The higher positions must be filled by someone. Why shouldn’t *you* be a *someone*?”

When he returned from church he invited me into his small study, where I told the dear chap all my troubles and ambitions. He was a gentle, kindly-natured man, and was visibly affected at the thought of his eldest son leaving the country.

“But if you *must* go, my son, why not South Africa?”

“No, father, I prefer New Zealand,” I replied.

“But think of Johannesburg, my boy. Why, people are making *fortunes* there.”

I wasn't thinking so much of a fortune just then. My one absorbing idea was to get out of England. But beggars can't be choosers, and, having convinced him that my destiny lay abroad, he set his mind on South Africa.

"We'll think it over," he said.

New Zealand, I think, attracted me because of its greater distance from England, and, strange as it may seem, after all this long lapse of years, it *still* attracts me. If ever I see that country now as I hope to some day, it can only be in the guise of a tourist, but, nevertheless, I have always been sorry that I was dissuaded from making it my adopted home in the first instance. Not that South Africa has not brought me happiness and comfort; it has, in a very marked degree, and I have learned to love this land of sunshine and kindly people:—

"With its bright stars above,
And its bright eyes to love,
Why a *Land of Good Hope* it must be."

But there, I am anticipating. Naturally, having made the initial suggestion, thereafter I felt very unsettled. Life in the shop became irksome to me.

We had a little man in the Manchester Department. He was a Welshman, and, somehow or other, Welshmen seem to take to the drapery trade as a duck takes to water; they appear to be *born* drapers. He was 20 years my senior, and from the day I had joined the firm had spoken of going to South Africa. He was known among us as "Little á La," because he usually spent his summer holidays in Boulogne and would return affecting a distinctly foreign accent. One could hardly stay in Boulogne for a fortnight without acquiring something of the language, you know.

During the last year of my apprenticeship one of my duties was to dress the silk window, and to do this I had to make use of his counter. When in a bad humour—and this is no infrequent thing with Welshmen—he would use most frightful language, and consigned

me and my silks to places which I don't even like to mention. When in a better frame of mind, although perhaps serving some trying customer, (and, my word, customers *can* be trying sometimes—oh, yes, there are some heart-breakers among them) he would come to me and say: "Look here, young fellow, if there are any of this sort of people out there (meaning South Africa) it will be a case of this sort," and he would present an imaginary revolver. Well (anticipating) I have lived in South Africa nearly 40 years, and have never seen even the most trying customers—and there are not a few—treated in the bloodthirsty manner he suggested. Poor "Little á La." I am looking ahead, I know, but it can't be helped. After I had been in the great sub-Continent for quite a number of years, he came, and came to the very town I was living in; but he was not a success, he was too old. If men intend settling in the Colonies, or to give them their modern or more distinguished title, "Overseas Dominions," a distinction with very little difference, then it is imperative that they should leave England, or wherever their homes may be, when they are *young* men, not when middle-aged or old. A young man can adapt himself to the new conditions, the older man is for ever drawing comparisons and in his heart is always longing for the country he has left. Naturally, wearying of his continual complaints and unfair comparisons, the Colonial-born man retorts:—"Well, if this country is *so* bad, if things are *so much* better over there, isn't it rather a pity you came, and why stay?" As my dear old father used to say, "You can't transplant the oak." But meanwhile "Little á La" had married a double extra outsize wife, and to return to England was no easy matter. He had burned his boats, as it were.

The last I heard of him was that he had been found dead in his bed in the business house where he acted as caretaker, and I sent a wreath with a card bearing this message: "From an old comrade." Poor "Little á La"; his ideas of life in South Africa never materialised, and he discovered, as do many others, that

mediocrity is as little in demand there as it is in England or in any other country.

So time went on. Meanwhile I had frequently discussed the matter of emigration with my father and had decided that South Africa should be my goal.

For the time being I was regarded as something in the nature of a hero among my fellow apprentices, to whom Africa suggested painted cannibals.

I finished my term of apprenticeship, and, very grudgingly, was given the usual commencing salary of £15 a year. I said nothing, but thought a lot; and when the end of the year came gave notice and announced that I was leaving England, at which piece of news the management didn't fall into tears or offer me a fabulous salary to remain.

The night before I left, my fellow apprentices organised a special farewell concert in my honour, which took place in our dormitory and to which the occupants of the other rooms—including the "Pelican"—were invited, and at which function I was presented with a splendid revolver. It was what might be described as a noisy night. Speeches were made, songs were sung, choruses were lustily joined in, and these joyful celebrations continued until the small hours of the morning. The locker-up, whose duty it was to report these irregularities, kept discreetly out of sight. He wasn't a bad sort of chap and for once he was wise, for, as a rule, he had as much diplomacy as a box of matches.

The next morning, during the breakfast hour, another presentation took place. (I have referred to it already in the earlier portion of this narrative). It was by the members of the Commerce House Bible Class and Spitalfields Lodging House Mission, and, as I have already told you, took the form of a volume of Farrar's "Life of Christ," and being very highly strung at the time and possibly a little emotional at the thought of leaving—(No, don't laugh, and don't sneer; I was quite young then, and wasn't, perhaps, as worldly-wise as you are)—I broke down. It is true my breaking down didn't last very long; at the same time I am bound to

admit that I have always held a secret admiration for young men who have the courage, in the face of countless attractions, allurements and temptations, to take their stand on the side of righteousness. Perhaps it is just that quality in which we fail ourselves, that we admire most in others, and although I was always looked upon as a backsliding member, and regarded by the other members of the Bible Class as a hopeless case, still, I have always been an admirer of pluck, and these young men and women possessed pluck in a very marked degree. It's always the easiest way to drift with the tide, the least line of resistance, as it were. There were times when I was positively overcome with religious fervour and possibly the next time I was present at a gathering I would laugh at what, in my ignorance and egotism, I considered the ridiculousness of it all. There is little doubt that my flights in religion were largely determined by the warmth of Marie's affection for me, if she ever had any. In the light of retrospect I rather fancy her's was a mere sisterly affection, her real object being to bind me closer to her church, but this I shall never know, for she made the great sacrifice long, long ago, and Heaven is richer for her presence there.

Well, I left, with, I think, the genuine regret of most of my contemporaries and of not a few of the heads.

There was a free week in front of me before sailing. Meanwhile, with my father, I went to the Castle Company's offices in Fenchurch Street and booked a second-class berth on board the "Harwarden Castle" sailing from Dartmouth on February 14th, 1890. She was one of the crack boats in the Donald Currie fleet then, and, let me say this, South Africa has much to thank the late Sir Donald Currie for, his various companies having provided us with such a splendid shipping service.

Then there was my outfit to complete, for, so ignorant were we of conditions in South Africa that we were under the impression that a suit of clothes could not be made in the country. We had some sort of hazy idea that court dress there would be a blanket, red ochre and beads. I spent a few days saying goodbye

to my friends, and the night before the ship sailed there was a farewell party at my home, to which my more intimate friends were invited, among whom was the dear little body whose "bonnie laddie" I had been for so many years.

What a riotous evening of fun and frolic it was, to be sure! The noise we made must have disturbed the slumbers of almost every resident in the quiet London suburb. At midnight, or thereabouts, we all sang "For Auld Lang Syne." My friend Sandy's father (a Scotsman) sang the verses and we joined in the chorus. I remember he introduced a new verse that evening, finishing thus:—

" And we'll meet again some other necht
For the days o' auld lang syne."

But we were destined never to meet again, for only a few years later the grim Reaper took his dear little wife and not long after the husband passed through the Valley of the Shadow. Thus old friendships are severed; and when we return we find ourselves forgotten and soon long to get back to the land of our adoption where we have made new friends and acquaintances, where all our interests lie, and where, somehow or another, we seem to be relatively more important to the community, as unquestionably we are, something more than a mere pawn in the game of life.

It was early morning before the last of the guests had departed, and then my father, as was his custom, called all the household together and bade us kneel while he prayed for me. What an eloquent prayer it was; full of tenderness, full of love, full of confidence and hope for the future. It was a prayer I have never forgotten. In it he showed, as from time to time his voice broke a little, how deep and real his affection for me was, and I am not ashamed to say that I rose from my knees with eyes somewhat misty and a strange choking sensation in my throat.

It was a very busy day we had entered upon. There was my luggage to get down to the ship which lay

in the East India Docks. There were more farewells to be taken, and I had to be on board at six o'clock in the afternoon. My father accompanied me, inspected my cabin, looked over the ship, and, with a firm grip of my hand and a "God bless you, my son, remember Robert Dawson," he passed down the gangway. Ah, "Robert Dawson, or the Brave Spirit." Yes, to be sure, it was a favourite book of the dear fellow's. Robert was all that a son should be and was held up to me as a sort of pattern saint on which to mould my life, and a very good pattern he was, too. So much for "Robert Dawson." For a moment I felt the utter loneliness of it all. I was going to a strange country with £10 in my pocket to seek employment, and for a moment I felt dismayed. I saw him walking away from the ship, and then, all of a sudden, my feelings seemed to overcome me. I felt I *must* shake hands with him just once more. Down the gangway I ran, and catching him up, gripped his hand in mine again. We were both too full to speak, but *we* understood. As yes, *we* understood.

Silence is oftentimes more expressive than speech, at all events I know it was on that occasion.

I stood on the deck and watched his tall, upright figure until it finally disappeared into the distance, and for the first time in my life I felt I was really alone, *quite* alone, and sailing away to a strange country in which I did not know a soul, to commence a new life in every sense of the word.

He had not been gone very long when, to my surprise and no little delight, Marie came to bid me goodbye. She had brought me a Bible, her *own* Bible; I have it still.

Later in the evening a large party of my business comrades came to see me off, and, for a time, the sadness of farewell disappeared. I was entrusted with all manner of commissions. One required the daughter of a native chief for a wife. Another a lion's skin, a third asked me to send him as soon as possible rather a large packet of diamonds! I carefully noted each one. So far they have *not* been sent. Daughters of native chiefs do *not*

marry white shop assistants. Lions are a little too far north for me, and large packets of diamonds are somewhat expensive, and if not expensive, then decidedly dangerous.

I was up at daybreak the next morning and saw our vessel glide out into the mighty Thames. The foundations of the great Tower Bridge were just being laid then. Slowly we steamed down to Gravesend, where our vessel was inspected by the officials of the Board of Trade, and that same evening we were safely anchored in the beautiful river Dart off Dartmouth. It was my first introduction to lovely Devonshire. We remained there for two days awaiting the arrival of the mails and the remainder of the passengers.

Then commenced the great adventure—for one's first voyage is *always* an adventure. One is going out into the *unknown*. In my case I was sailing away to commence an entirely new life, armed with a painfully small amount of capital and sundry letters of recommendation that seldom cut much ice. But I was young. I had courage, I had health, hope and determination, and surely these attributes should go a long way along the road that leads to success! Not that I claim to have been successful if the definition of success is regarded from the standpoint of the mere accumulation of great wealth. If this be so, then I must confess to being a failure. To my mind it depends entirely upon the light in which we regard success. If, as I myself regard it, it means the building up of a sound business, the establishment of a comfortable home with a good wife and loving family around one, if it means doing one's best as a citizen, so that the city or town is better on account of one's sojourn in it, if it means gaining the esteem and love of one's fellow citizens, then, without boasting and without egotism, I think I can claim to have been successful.

“ For weans and wife;
That's the true pathos
and sublime of human life.”

THE END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

SOUTH AFRICA.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE.

THE Bay of Biscay didn't live up to its reputation. When we steamed through it, it was as calm as the proverbial mill pond. I freely confess I was somewhat disappointed, for it was my desire to experience the effect of those giant seas I had read of in the old windjammer days. There appeared to be nothing to justify :—

“ Till next day, there she lay,
In the Bay of Biscay O.”

Within two days after leaving Dartmouth we were at anchor in the Tagus off Lisbon.

“ Going ashore?” Why, of course. Had I not *ten pounds* in my pocket, or rather, to be exact, in a small linen bag which I was wearing under my shirt.

I made one of a party of four to all of whom—except myself—money appeared to be no object.

There had been a carnival the day before our arrival, and Lisbon didn't appear to have recovered from the effects of it. The dirty streets were still covered with confetti and broken and faded flowers. All I can remember of Lisbon is one long, hilly and not too well kept street with a monument at the top of it and a certain café. That café or restaurant or whatever they called it was, in style and quality, not *far* removed from the cook-shop of my Greenwich days. We made a fairly substantial lunch, though, and were sitting pretending we were enjoying one of their abominable, black-looking

cigarettes, when the waiter handed me the bill. (I don't quite know why he handed it to me, for I was the least prosperous-looking of all the company).

I looked at it in utter amazement. *Good heavens! Five thousand reas! Five thousand reas!* Why I should not only arrive in South Africa *penniless* but head over heels in *debt*, and, worse still, the proprietor *might* not allow me to rejoin the ship. "Might attempt to keep me as hostage," I thought, "these Portugese are rather brigandish-looking fellows and there's no knowing what they may do. "*Five thousand reas!*" My head positively *reeled* at the mere thought of it. "This is the worst of coming to a foreign town," I thought. Oh, *why* had I ever left the ship?

Bye and bye my companions noticed my evident distress.

"Why, what's the matter, old chap?" said one.

"Look at this; I'm ruined," I said, as I handed him the bill.

He laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" I asked, "it may be all right for you, but it's ruination for me. Where do you think I am going to get the money from to pay a fourth of this?"

"It's all right, old fellow," he replied, "this won't ruin you. At the most your share of the swindle won't amount to more than the good old English five or six bob. You see it takes 500 of these wretched "reas" to make a half a crown of our money. It's only done to give the Portugese a chance to be millionaires."

What a relief! In my elation I could almost have danced for the very *joy* of it. True, six shillings for a lunch was far more than the parlous state of *my* finances warranted; regarded from that standpoint I had no justification for ever leaving the ship. But youth is youth all the world over and providence is one of its characteristics or failings. "Take no thought of to-morrow what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink." I had been very foolish, but then foolishness is a prerogative of youth and I don't know that we should care

to see our young people *too* perfect. We should miss much of the gladness of things if they were. The mistakes of youth bring wisdom in age.

"After all," I reasoned, "I am provided for for the next three weeks, so why worry?"

This is how I reasoned then. I don't reason along those lines now. I give lectures on "Thrift" to young people and preach the gospel of "a penny saved is a penny earned," and sometimes feel that I am an abominable hypocrite in doing so. If someone in the audience were to shout "*Lisbon*" I know I should collapse utterly, but until now not a soul, save those who were with me at the time, have been told of the 5,000 reas incident. Speaking of thrift, this, I think, is a very useful definition of it:—

"Pounds, shillings and *sense*."

In due course we reached Maderia, where I was more on my guard. I indulged in no luncheons there! The party I was with engaged a guide whose one aim seemed to be to introduce us to as many wine shops as he could, but in those days I didn't take wine, and, if I had, remembering my painful Lisbon experiences, I doubt whether, in the circumstances, I should have indulged, for already my capital had shrunk to £9 and the period of my prepaid accommodation and food was lessened by two days. I was beginning to look facts in the face, you see.

As the voyage continued—and a beautiful voyage it was, too, for there is nothing finer, from a pleasure point of view, than the voyage to the Cape, which is usually one of sunny skies and calm seas—I became increasingly thoughtful. By this time my capital was reduced to *eight pounds*! £8, *eight days to go, and nothing to go to*.

I will not attempt to describe the journey. A sea voyage is too commonplace an occurrence nowadays. Why, parties of schoolboys take a trip to the Cape in their school holidays, and Boy Scouts think nothing of a voyage to England to attend a Jamboree. There were the usual sports, the usual concerts, the usual fancy

dress ball with costumes hired from the ship's barber, and the usual Sunday services in the saloon. There was the usual ceremony when crossing the line when Father Neptune came aboard and shaved a few of us budding Christopher Columbuses, the usual flirtations, and the usual grumbling about the food from people who had never lived as well in their lives.

We entered Table Bay on March 6th. No-one who has seen it will ever forget the positive grandeur of dear old Table Mountain. Every aspect of it is charming, but more particularly beautiful is the view one gets of it from the sea. The mountain seems to dwarf everything. Tall, six-storey buildings look quite little pigmy affairs when viewed in perspective alongside of it.

We were allowed to spend the night on board—personally I wished at the moment that I could spend the remainder of my days on board—we took breakfast the next morning, and there the shipping company's contract terminated. Thenceforth I had to fish for myself.

Ill as I could afford it I had to observe convention and tip the various stewards who had done nothing for me over and above what they were paid to do. Five shillings to the cabin steward, five shillings to the table steward, two shillings to the bathroom steward, a shilling to the deck steward, and a shilling for the ship's band, which in those days before musicians' unions came into being and other associations which have resulted in the cost of fares soaring up, was composed of ship stewards. I wasn't quite sure that I shouldn't tip the captain, the chief engineer and the various officers. I have often remarked that the stewards could better have afforded to tip me and nearly told them so. When this was done I was left with exactly £7. The next thing to be determined was: "Where shall I stay?" A string of hansom cabs were lined up alongside the jetty. I hailed the driver of one whose cab bore the significant name, "Good Luck." The driver—a Malay—was wearing a curious hat resembling, for all the world, a Chinese pagoda.

“Do you know where I can get accommodation?”
I asked him.

“Ja Baas,” he replied briskly, and placing my modest tin trunk and Gladstone bag on the roof of his vehicle, in a very short time, having passed the customs, where, incidentally, I smuggled through two revolvers, we were bowling away to Bree Street, or to give it its English equivalent, Broad Street, which, somehow or another, at that time seemed more familiar.

CHAPTER II.

CAPETOWN.

MY Malay driver took me to what I afterwards discovered was a well known and very well conducted boarding house run by a certain Mrs. Roper. I had no references concerning my ability to pay to offer, but to her everlasting credit—that is from *my* point of view—she accepted me as a boarder for £5 a month with an additional charge of 10s. a month for washing. The good woman—and she *was* a good woman if ever there was one—little knew the risk she was running.

“Well, that’s that,” I said to myself as I settled myself in a bedroom which I was to share with another, “The next thing is to find work.” For I was not out to explore, but to get employment; there would be plenty of time for exploration later. Alas, I was to find that this was only too true. There was not a corner of Capetown, especially in the business quarters, that I did not explore again and again, but no work could I find in any corner of it, but I am anticipating again. I wish I had some friendly critic at my side while I am writing to warn me against this failing of mine.

First of all I had a wash and brush up, putting on my best clothes to create the very best impression. Then, from my painfully small store of money, I took £5 10s. and hid it at the very bottom of my trunk. “Whatever happens,” I murmured, “my landlady *must* be paid, and at all events she is secure for at least *one* month. Where the next month’s money will come from, if I don’t speedily get work, goodness only knows.”

Then I made a round of the various stores.

In passing, may I say that before leaving England the report was current that there was such a scarcity

of labour in South Africa that employers actually met the various ships as they arrived in Table Bay and offered likely men fabulous wages or salaries. As I have already shown, no such satisfactory procedure happened to me on my arrival. Perhaps I was one of the unlucky ones, but to be perfectly candid I have never heard the story confirmed on this side that it ever did happen. A drawback that I was confronted with was the fact that in the year of my arrival the first great setback or slump in the triumphal progress of Johannesburg had taken place. They had advanced too rapidly, so it was said, and something in the nature of a setback had occurred, with the result that men of all classes were returning to the coast. This was distinctly unfortunate as far as I was concerned, for such men, with more or less South African experience, received preference at the hands of employers. From store to store I went, but in each case was told that they were more likely to dismiss than to engage more men just then. Some offered good advice, others told me to call again (which raised a glimmering hope in me), and one or two were distinctly curt and unkind. I have never understood why any employer should be anything but kind, courteous and even sympathetic to a young fellow seeking work. It costs nothing, but oh! what a difference a friendly, kindly reception makes to the applicant.

The almost antagonistic reception I received from some has lingered in my memory ever since, and, as the years have rolled on, and I, too, in my small way, have become an employer, I have always striven to give any applicant for work a friendly reception. Why humiliate a man who comes to you offering his services? It's a fair offer, and if you don't require his goods, that is, his services, well, be kind about it. Don't make his already sore heart sorer by an abrupt or aggressive reception. Would *you* have liked it yourself? You were not *always* the big man you are to-day, were you? Possibly you have forgotten, for it is *so long* ago, but surely there must have been a time when you, too, sought employment, or were you *born* an employer?

When we make the initial start, generally speaking, our services and a knowledge of our business are our stock in trade.

A year before I left England a friend of one of the heads had called at the establishment where I was employed. His name was Woods. I was introduced to him. He came from South Africa and was employed as chief photographer at the Cape Observatory. In conversation I remarked that it was my desire and intention to go abroad.

"Well," said he, in a friendly way, "if you come to Capetown be sure and call to see me at the Observatory and I'll see if I cannot help you to find a suitable situation."

After a day or so's fruitless search for employment his name occurred to me.

"Let's see, where was he?" I asked myself. "Oh yes, to be sure, I remember, he is at the Observatory."

"And where's that, I wonder?" I mused.

The obvious way to discover this would have been to ask, but ever since my unhappy Greenwich days, I had been under the impression that *all* observatories, like their big and royal brother there, must, of necessity, stand on a hill. I suppose the idea at the back of my mind was, that being built on a height they were nearer the heavens, and I made up my mind that the building on top of Signal Hill must be the observatory.

"Difficult place for my acquaintance to get to his work," I murmured, as I plodded up that steep path, "shouldn't wonder if he's sometimes late."

I reached the summit. There was a fairly large telescope there, not as large, mind you, as I had anticipated, though, not by any means.

"Yes," I said to myself, "this is right, this is the place I am after."

Next I accosted a seafaring-looking man in uniform.

"Excuse me," I said, "Is this the observatory?"

"Good gracious, no!" he replied, "this is Signal Hill; the observatory's miles away. You see that round dome over there?" pointing with his finger, "well,

that's the observatory. It's about 5 miles away. You can get there by train."

"Thanks," I said weakly, at the same time feeling inclined to kick myself in annoyance, and forthwith made the descent.

I didn't go to the observatory by train. A railway journey, however short, costs money. I walked. Why not?

"Is this the Observatory?" I asked, when, in response to my knock the door was opened by a rather elderly-looking man, who, not having seen very much of him, I took to be my acquaintance from England.

"Yes, this is the Observatory, laddie."

"Oh," I said, "you remember when you were in London last year you told me I might call on you if I came to South Africa, and I've come."

"No, ye're making a wee mistake, laddie, I've no' been in the Old Country since '87."

"Are you not Mr. Woods then?" I asked.

"No, I'm no just Mr. Woods," he replied, "I'm just Dr. Gill—Dauvid Gill, the astronomer, but we'll just gang awa' and find Mr. Woods. I know fine where he is."

On the way he encouraged me to speak about myself, of my hopes, and of my prospects, and before we had found my London acquaintance, Dr.—afterwards Sir David—knew as much about me as was worth knowing, and being a Scotsman, and a keen Scotsman, there is little doubt he had mentally appraised my worth.

Handing me over to Mr. Woods he bade me a kindly farewell, and my friend introduced me to the wonders of the Observatory. Gladly would I have gone into the astronomical world—no, I had better say "*line*," not "*world*"; the latter smacks too much of the end of things, and I was, as it were, only at the beginning—gladly would I have worked there if Dr. Gill would have employed me. I might have introduced Greenwich to advantage just then, but it never occurred to me. They say that a draper can turn his hand to anything, and, in a measure, this is true. I have come across

them in almost every walk of life. Why, one of our most famous millionaires commenced his business career behind the counter of his father's shop in Queenstown, and, what is more, is not ashamed to speak of it, for which I admire him, but so far I have never met one who has become a professional astronomer.

The next day my friend met me by appointment in Capetown and took me from place to place, recommending me to many possible employers, but nowhere was there a vacancy of any sort, and I returned to my boarding house weary and depressed. That is, of course, as depressed as a young fellow of 20 can or should be, for youth and hope must always be bosom companions.

Weeks slipped by. I made a daily round of the various business establishments, and after a time they began to expect me, but was always met with the same hopeless story of trade depression, dismissing rather than engaging. *Willing* to work, anxious to give good and loyal service for the lowest possible wage, but no-one would give me a start. It was *heart-breaking*!

The Railway Department! Why not? I was a fairly good writer, quick and accurate at figures, my stock-taking extensions were responsible for this. I waited on one of the managers; I fancy it was Mr. Creswell Clark. No, he had no vacancies on the clerical staff, but, if I would call a week later, he *might* be able to do something for me up-country.

"The very thing," I thought, "there's more chance of promotion up-country than there is in this overcrowded place." I wanted to be among the black men in the more uncivilised parts, not in this miniature London.

Meanwhile I continued my fruitless search, and my little stock of money was becoming alarmingly smaller and smaller.

On the appointed day, at the appointed hour, I was waiting at the door of the manager's office.

"Ah, let's see," he said, after he had given me a friendly "Good-morning," "you're the young man who called on me a week ago. Yes, yes, to be sure. Well,

young man, the only thing I can offer you is a post as porter at Beaufort West."

My spirits fell to zero. "Had I," I thought, "travelled over 6,000 miles simply to become a railway porter?" Perhaps it would have been wiser to have accepted it, because it would appear that most of these important railway officials have commenced their distinguished careers at the very lowest rung of the ladder, and *all honour to them*. Ability with opportunity plus determination, *must* find an outlet, and that outlet is usually at or near the top. But a "portership"! No, my dignity—the little I had left of it—was wounded. I hadn't come all the way to Africa to descend, but to ascend.

"I'm sorry, sir," I said politely, "but I can't accept it."

"Very well, young man," he replied, in no unkindly way, "that is the very best I can do. I think you are very foolish. It isn't the start but the finish that counts. Good-morning."

And once more I was seeking employment.

At the end of the month I took the £5 10s. from its hiding place, paid for my board and lodging, and was left with exactly *ten shillings*.

At that time the Chartered Company was recruiting pioneers in Capetown for service in the newly-acquired Mashonaland. The necessary qualifications were that applicants should be in robust health, and be able to ride and shoot. I possessed at least *one* of these qualifications—the first—the second two I knew nothing at all about, but this did not deter me from making an application. I presented myself before a board of seemingly ex-military men, but was soon told that riding and shooting were indispensable.

"But can't I look after the stores on one of the waggons?" I urged. "Surely there must be *some* virtue in me," I thought.

"My deah feller," said one, who was wearing a monocle, "at any moment we may have to abandon the

waggon and ride off to save our lives, don't yer know. Old Lobengula's hot stuff, don't yer know."

It didn't sound too nice, but gladly would I have risked it. "For how can man die better," I thought. Naturally I wasn't anxious to die, but I *was* anxious for adventure, as most young men of 20 are or should be, and such an expedition would, necessarily, be crowded with adventure. I have no doubt, given the opportunity, I should have made quite a useful pioneer, but no, they would not accept my services, and the burden of my distress grew heavier and heavier.

It is not always the *expert* who is, necessarily, the best authority. Expert knowledge or expert training does not mean that the man is better equipped in certain directions than his *less* expert contemporary. *Sound judgment* is often more valuable than so-called expert knowledge, which latter is frequently over-rated. A man may know how to build a house, but may not be an expert in, we will say, administering a housing scheme. It may be (I don't say that it is) that a man who cannot place one brick on top of another has more administrative ability in his little finger than the expert has in his whole composition. So much for *experts*.

Weeks sped on; the end of the month came again. Meanwhile I had sold some of my personal belongings and was able to pay for my board and lodging in full. My kindly landlady little knew the dire financial straits I was in, and, had I confided in her, I am certain she would have been content to wait, for she was a motherly, generous soul, but pride, and perhaps justifiable pride, forbade my making any such appeal. One should exhaust every visible means of subsistence before appealing to charity, and *then not do it*.

At that time the Government was advertising for men to act as convict guards at 5s. a day plus uniform. In Capetown, at that time, there was a large number of white convicts, mostly I.D.B. (illicit diamond buyers), men from the diamond fields who were serving their terms of hard labour on construction work in the harbour.

Well, rather than loaf about, rather than be unable to pay for my board and accommodation, rather than become a burden on others, I would welcome even that employment. I would change to cheaper lodgings and the people I had met at the boarding house would never see me, and, if they did, would never recognise me in a blue serge uniform with a large white helmet. If they *did* recognise me they wouldn't wish to know me, so that was all right. With the poet I would sing:—

“ Don't be haughty and turn up your nose
 At poorer people in plainer clothes
 With infinite pride of station,
 And learn for the good of your soul's repose
 That wealth is a bauble, that comes and goes,
 And that all proud flesh, wherever it grows,
 Is subject to irritation.”

I think the foregoing lines should be committed to memory by every child in every school in the British Empire. In after life they will prevent him from arriving at false values, and he will strive to judge people by their worth and character, rather than by the value some individuals place upon themselves. They will teach him to avoid snobbery in any shape or form, for there is nothing more abhorrent in the world, and “snobbery” is simply a false value which mankind places upon its own importance. Self-esteem in a most objectionable degree. Pride of wealth, the pride of so-called position, but seldom is it the pride of intellect, for real intellect is too sensitive of its own shortcomings. How many of the high-brow class can go back more than one generation, and some not even that. The father of that ultra superfine person was probably a mechanic, a good mechanic, and was proud of the fact, as well he might be. Lucky speculation has made the son a wealthy man, but not necessarily a *gentleman*. We all admire a kindly nature, a generous giver, a great intellect, but are supposed to *worship* wealth for wealth's sake. When wealth is used as a symbol of social superiority, then it becomes despicable. I know many very wealthy men who

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haven't an atom of snobbishness in them, but they would have been gentlemen whether wealthy or not.

For instance, could you admire the wealthy war profiteer, who, from his ill-gotten gains, purchased a large estate in the country on which he planted millions of oak trees. Anxious to display his progressiveness and his wealth, he invited a number of friends to inspect "his little place."

Taking his guests to the top of a rise, he pointed with pride to the surrounding plantations.

"There," he said, "you see them there hoaks, I've planted 'em all for my posterior."

"Indeed," said an elderly, thoughtful-looking man, "if that is so, what a *pity* you didn't plant the *birch*."

Honest labour, after all, is far better than visionary prospects. Meanwhile I could be earning something and looking for some opening in my own line of business. It wasn't much better (for that matter I doubt if it was as good) as the portership I had refused, but then, you see, many weeks had passed since then, and now I was practically penniless. No, I'm not ashamed to confess it; why ever *should* I be? If I had been lazy, if I had not tried, then there would have been cause for shame, but I had diligently sought employment, and had failed.

The fact that I had arrived in South Africa with such a lamentably small capital was due to no fault of my own. Men coming out to a situation "*signing on at home*," so to speak, do not need capital, because at the end of the first month they are in funds, but, as I have pointed out, I did *not* come out to a situation, and found that the streets of Capetown were *not* paved with gold as had been represented. But there's "the inner side of every cloud," you know; I was not destined to become either a railway porter or a convict guard; the fates ruled that I should be neither a pioneer nor an astronomer, and just as things were at their very darkest, dawn was very near.

CHAPTER III.

THE TIDE TURNS.

I HAVE already remarked that in addition to my appallingly small capital which by this time almost needed a microscope to detect it, I possessed two revolvers, a fairly complete wardrobe, and several letters of introduction. I don't wish to labour the point of my financial embarrassment, as I fear I am doing, but, you see, in my case, to find employment was almost a matter of life and death. Had I been successful in getting work as soon as I arrived, in all probability you would never have heard another word about my finances, but, as you will gather, I had reached a stage where it was a matter of work or starve.

It was obviously impossible for me to deliver these letters of introduction in person, for they were addressed to people in all parts of the country—Johannesburg, Kimberley, Durban, Queenstown, Port Elizabeth, and I know not where else. Therefore, shortly after my arrival, I had posted them on with a covering letter to each.

I had reached home, or rather the boarding house, after another weary, hopeless day, determined that on the morrow I would make the plunge and offer myself to the prison authorities as a convict guard. Disconsolately I entered my bedroom, and there, on my pillow, lay the familiar yellow envelope of a telegram. Hastily I tore it open. It was from a firm in Queenstown, and read:—

“Offer you situation in drapery. Twelve ten a month. Passage paid round.”

I almost *danced* with delight, and then came the reaction, and, falling on my knees, I thanked God for having ended my troubles. Oh, I have no doubt some will laugh at this, but possibly you who laugh have never been through experiences such as I had endured during the previous three months. I am not ashamed

to make the confession; I only wish I could act as spontaneously now as I did then. Yes, I fervently thanked God, and, taking the telegram in my hand, I ran downstairs and read it to my kindly landlady, who was almost as delighted as I. Then, in the fullness of my heart, I told her all my story, and the dear woman actually wept.

“Why didn’t you tell me before?” she asked.

“I was too ashamed,” I said.

“Why ashamed, my dear boy?” she answered, “you have acted bravely, and I’m sure you will do well.”

Then she told me all about her own son, who, she said, had he lived would have been about my age, but he had been drowned in Table Bay while boating when a treacherous sou’ easter was blowing.

“*Twelve ten a month!*” I kept repeating to myself. Not a *year*, but a *month*. Why, it seemed to be untold wealth. And then appeared the skeleton at the feast. The sting was in the tail of the message, as it were. “Passage paid round.” *But where was the passage money coming from?* It wasn’t attached to the telegram! It wouldn’t do for me to wire asking the firm to remit the amount, for they didn’t know me, and then such a request might create a bad impression, and a bad impression at the start should be avoided at all costs.

I made enquiries and discovered that the cheapest way to reach Queenstown was to proceed by ship to East London and then take the train for a distance of some 150 miles. The very lowest cost of such a journey would be £6. I had exactly 3s. in my pocket, and there was no reserve bank in those days. How I managed to raise sufficient money to pay the amount due to my landlady I will not enter into. The good soul would willingly have made me a present of the amount. By parting with the few—astonishingly few—valuables that I still possessed, and when I say “valuables” you know what I mean (anything that could be converted into money was valuable to me then),

I was able to secure a third-class passage on the old "Grantully Castle" to East London. From second-class I had descended to third, but what of that? Why *third-class* on an ocean liner, even in those now remote days, was luxury compared with the accommodation provided for those plucky 1820 settlers, and would have been unspeakable grandeur to the grand old Dutch pioneers of Van Riebeeek's day. I travelled in the same cabin with five Italians, and, I am sorry to say, rather dirty Italians, who could not speak a word of English, and after four days at sea and being dumped from a gigantic basket on to the deck of a tug which was lying alongside the ship which took us up to the jetty in the *Buffalo River*, I landed at East London, another stage nearer my goal.

East London was a primitive-looking place in those days. At the entrance to the customs shed stood a solitary and shabby-looking hotel bus, on which was painted, in somewhat faded letters, "*Buffalo Hotel*."

A stoutish man approached me.

"D'ye want accommodation?" he asked.

Unquestionably I did, and very badly, but all my worldly possessions in the shape of money amounted to seven and sixpence.

"Well," I replied, cautiously, and with all the dignity I could command, seeing that my baggage advertised the fact that I had travelled third-class, "What will you charge me?"

"Oh, make it five shillings," said the stout man.

"Very well," I agreed; and into that shabby conveyance with my astonishingly small amount of baggage I jumped; the *only* passenger.

Now, having taken you fully into my confidence, having, as it were, placed all my cards on the table, and realising, (as, of course, you must do), that with five shillings set apart for a day's accommodation at the Buffalo Hotel I had only half a crown left, you will wonder how I was able to reach Queenstown, which, as I have said, was 150 miles distant by rail.

Well, it was just like this. I have referred on one

or two occasions to my presentation revolver. It was a handsome weapon, the only thing of any value I had left. "I must sell it," I thought. After a wash and brush up, for the liberal hotel proprietor had thoughtfully thrown in the use of a bedroom for the five shillings, I started on a tour of inspection, but primarily to find a purchaser for my revolver.

I wandered about the place until I discovered a small, unpretentious-looking Kaffir store, the door of which was tastefully decorated with white cotton blankets and tin cans.

"Ah, this is the place for me," I said to myself, and in a shamefaced way, very like I had seen men wearing when entering a pawnbroker's, I walked in.

The proprietor—at least I took him to be such—was seated on the counter reading a newspaper and smoking some abominable-smelling tobacco, and took not the slightest notice of me.

I coughed,—he read on quite unperturbed.

"Beautiful day?" I hazarded.

"Maria," shouted the counter-sitting smoking student, "come and see what this 'ere bloke wants, can't yer? Don't yer see I'm busy?"

"Maria," who turned out to be a weary-looking woman, carrying a baby in her arms, came and stood before me.

"Well, what d'ye want?" she asked.

"Thank you," I said politely, "I wish to speak to the proprietor."

"Can't yer see he's busy?" she answered.

I frankly admit that until then I had not noticed that he was particularly overburdened with work. Possibly, though, he was undergoing some great mental strain; one never knows. But apparently overhearing the conversation he sort of slid off the counter, and, standing somewhat aggressively before me, said:—

"Now, young man, if you're a traveller, I don't want anythink, and if you're one of them there blinkin' life insurance johnnies I don't want nothink to do with yer."

"Excuse me," I said, "I'm neither a commercial traveller nor an insurance agent, but I have something to sell."

"There yer are, what did I tell yer, Maria? A bleedin' traveller. Didn't I tell yer," turning to me, "I didn't want nothink? Turn 'im hout, Maria!"

"I thought perhaps you might be interested in this," I replied, at the same time producing my revolver. "As a matter of fact, I'm a little short of cash. It's worth about six pounds," I added falteringly.

"Six fiddlesticks!" he answered, balancing the weapon in his hand and then testing the trigger. "Six fiddlesticks! I'll give you thirty bob."

"*Thirty shillings!*" I gasped, "Is that all you can give me? Why, it's never been used."

"Yus, take it or leave it, and if yer don't want to sell, clear out of my blinkin' shop."

"My word," I thought, "if this is a fair sample of the East London storekeepers' civility, I should say there is an opening for a good firm here."

Desperation makes sellers of us all. I hadn't the courage or spirit to try elsewhere, for, all my life—unfortunately for me—I have been unduly sensitive to anything in the nature of a slight or rebuff.

"Very well, then," I said, "I'll take it."

He paid me in tickies (the South African name for a threepenny piece) and sixpences from his till, and as I hastened to the door he shouted: "'Ere, I say, wait a minute. What about the ammunition?"

I didn't wait to discuss "ammunition," but literally bolted down the street to get away from his insufferable presence. I lunched and dined at the "Buffalo," ramshackle place that it was, paid my five shillings, was driven to the station in the same disreputable-looking bus, took a second-class ticket to Queenstown, and arrived there with exactly twopence in my pocket, with which, after I had been fixed up at a comfortable boarding house, I purchased two penny apples, and this was my financial position when I commenced to work for my first and *only* employers in South Africa.

CHAPTER IV.

QUEENSTOWN.

QUEENSTOWN is a progressive little town on the Frontier, which, in the old days of Kaffir wars and native unrest, was laid out by the military authorities in the form of a hexagon. The centre of the town commanded all roads entering it. The hexagon to-day is really the Market Square, with the Hexagon Hotel to remind us of its past glories.

Queenstown is an extremely pretty place surrounded by mountains, and the centre of a very large and usually prosperous sheep farming area. To-day it might be described as a model town, but in the days I am writing of—38 years ago—it was anything but a model.

The proprietor, or the resident member of the firm, I should say, a keen, level-headed, hard-working, capable Scotsman, was outside in his shirt-sleeves dressing the door with somewhat high-smelling corduroys (the higher their flavour, the better they sold). He met me in a friendly manner, took me through the place, and then introduced me to my department—the *dresses*.

This was on Friday, and in conversation with another assistant I learned that the very next day was what is termed Nagmal. "Nagmal" is the occasion when the Dutch farmers, with their wives and families, attend divine service. They come, or used to come, from the most remote corners of the district by ox waggon, and many would travel a distance of some 60 or 70 miles, which means that they would leave their farms, say, on Thursday, in order to be in time for church on Sunday, and would naturally take advantage of the opportunity to do their shopping. In these

modern days the motor car has altered all this. The farmer finds he can leave his home and get back again in one day, the result being that while the feverishly busy days have disappeared trade is more evenly distributed—it is more uniform, as it were, throughout the year. In those days it was the custom for the farmer's wife to purchase the drapery and clothing, while the farmer himself purchased the coffee, sugar, tea, rice and candles. Of these commodities he was supposed to be the better judge, whereas in the matter of the clothes he wore he was guided entirely by his vrouw, and a very keen judge of values the "vrouw" usually was. Corduroys were then a great sale. The women would buy the material, and, with great dexterity, would make trousers for their husbands and sons. Farmers nowadays have become fashionable, and don't wear corduroys. I can still see those women applying their unerring test to the material. A good rich smell was one essential, and this being right they would then stick a pin through the rib, and if they could pull the head through then it was considered to be of poor quality. I used to demonstrate to them that, by a little persuasion, I could pull the head of a pin through the very best quality, but never succeeded in convincing them.

"But can these people speak English?" I asked the man who was telling me of the anticipated rush of business on the morrow.

"Very few of them," he replied. I groaned. I had always prided myself on my ability as a salesman, but to attempt to serve a host of people of whose language I couldn't understand a word—well, as we should say nowadays, I got the "wind-up." He was a very friendly young fellow I was speaking to, a South African by birth who spoke the Taal (that is, South African Dutch, now called Afrikans) fluently.

"Speak to me in Dutch," I said.

He did so, but I could make neither head nor tail of it.

"Look here," I said, "would you mind telling me the Dutch names of the various articles they usually

require and I will write them down as they pronounce them?"

Not a bad idea, and from time to time during the day he did this, and I left business with some 200 names on paper spelt as only I could spell them, and it was not until the early hours of the morning that I had mastered—no, I will not say "mastered"; I was, at least, fairly conversant with them. The result was, when next day the crowds arrived, if I could not carry on a conversation—for there having been no "Pentacost" this was impossible—I at least understood what they were asking for and did not feel quite such a dunderhead as I otherwise should have done. As a rule our Dutch friends are very tolerant in this respect. When they see an assistant striving to address them in their own language and not doing it too well, almost invariably they come to his assistance by airing their little English, which in most cases is far better than the Dutch of the man they are trying to help, and surely this spirit of mutual help and forbearance is the right and proper thing. There can be no question as to the relative values of the two languages. Even our more educated Dutch friends who use the choicest English rely upon English literature for mental recreation, for South African authors are not much in evidence yet. Then again, outside the Union of South Africa Afrikans is seldom heard of, but sentiment is a very large factor in our national life, and it is the duty of the two great white races in this country to become bi-lingual.

I speedily discovered that the business atmosphere of Queenstown was very different from that of London. In the store there were no shopwalkers, overbearing or otherwise, there were no fines and very few corrections. Men, generally, were expected to and actually *did* take greater responsibility, and in our case it was the head—or, as he is termed in South Africa, the "baas" himself, an old Copestake's man—who set the pace. What greater stimulant to the assistant is there than a hard-working employer? He fires the staff with his own never-diminishing enthusiasm. For very shame,

even were he inclined to, the man will not loaf while the master works.

The "baas" was the best salesman we had and would take a delight in comparing his sales with ours. It was a clever thought, for it became our ambition to beat him at his own game. Naturally the head of a concern, when he happens to be a worker and not a figure head, has, as a salesman, a great pull over his subordinates. Customers like to be served by the head, especially by a smiling head and a bachelor at that. They accept his word more easily. Still, the spirit of rivalry over our takings was, as I say, a very excellent thing to encourage, and the business benefited accordingly.

At sale times the great feature was ticketing the goods. There being no local firm of ticket writers, each man was made responsible for ticketing the goods in his own department. There was no uniformity of design, and some very crude and weird effects were the result. The lid of an empty cardboard box and a red and blue lead pencil was all the equipment required for this primitive method, and as each man's lettering differed in style—well, the effect is more easily imagined than described. It was again in this direction that the little gift I possessed was used to advantage.

"The first thing to be aimed at is 'uniformity,'" I thought, and this could only be done by inventing some *means* of uniformity, and it might be done by cutting stencils. The result was I took a large bundle of cardboard to my bedroom, and spent many evenings designing and cutting out cardboard stencils. First of all a complete set of bold figures, then a number of sale headings, such as "Cheap," "Sale Price," "Given Away," and so forth. Then followed a whole alphabet. Thereafter all that it was necessary for the assistant to do was to get a piece of cardboard from the showroom and rub his pencil into the open spaces which formed the letters. It was ticket-writing made easy. When I took my parcel of home-made stencils to the baas, he was literally overjoyed. My invention, poor

as it was, caused a minor revolution in the appearance of the place. There was, at least, uniformity, and a certain amount of native artistry, but my poor fingers were sore for many a day after.

Naturally such crude methods would not suit modern conditions. That small place of 38 years ago is now a handsome building with huge plate glass windows, and, in all probability, a professional ticket writer is constantly employed, but I can at least claim that my innovation was a forward movement, and paved the way for loftier and more approved ideas in the future. In business every new departure marking a step from the old to the new bears fruit. Progress, progress, progress, must be our watchword, and even though we may be the means of introducing only some minor reform, it counts in the general aggregate of advancement. I would rather employ a man with initiative and courage to experiment, even though his experiment is a failure, than the deadly dull individual who is content to simply carry on.

In those days we opened at seven in the morning and closed at six in the evening. Being the centre of a large farming district, most of our business was done in the morning. It was altogether a friendlier style of business than I had been accustomed to. After a while the customers became, as it were, personal friends, and would invite us to their farms.

I have often said—and say so still—that I would infinitely rather be inside than on a horse's back, and yet I have ridden hundreds of miles visiting my farmer friends and was *always* welcome. Frequently I would return to business on Monday morning with a fairly considerable number of orders, so pleasure and profit combined to help things along.

I had been in Queenstown some two months when I received my first *home* mail containing the first letters addressed to me since I had left England. Not knowing where I should eventually land, and being so unsettled and not a little ashamed of my apparent failure during the whole time I had been in Capetown, I had not

advised them, and they did not know where to write. It is true I might have made use of the *Poste Restante*, but this did not occur to me, and it was only after I had taken up my permanent abode in Queenstown that I felt justified in telling them where to address me.

Naturally I timed the date of their replies to a nicety. In those days there was no through railway communication between Capetown and Queenstown. The nearest point to which mails were conveyed by train was Cradock, and from thence they were carried by post-cart a distance of some 80 miles by road.

This particular long-looked-for mail was due at the local post office at 8 p.m., but, unfortunately, it was late. At about 9 o'clock I heard the bugle, as the post-cart, drawn by six mules, rattled up Cathcart Road. It was positively laden with mail bags, and perched uncomfortably on top of these were two or three weary-looking passengers.

Most business houses in South African towns have their private box at the post office, into which all postal matters addressed to them or their employees, are sorted. At closing time I had taken the key of this box from the office, and now waited for the post to be sorted. Oh, what an insufferable time they took that evening. At 11 p.m. a notice was put up reading: "*All sorted*," and my quota amounted in all to 15 letters and numerous papers. It was one o'clock before I got to bed that night—or, rather, next morning—for I read and re-read those letters over and over again, and felt I was no longer an exile.

By way of recreation I joined the local volunteer corps. This was in the scarlet tunic, blue trousers and white helmet days of pipeclay and "present arms." The heroic Victoria Cross style of uniform. In memory it took me back to my school experiences. It is true I was no longer "Napoleon," but our instructor, who was a retired officer of the Indian Army, was even a harder proposition than had been that old school sergeant of mine. He would add blasphemy to sarcasm, and was a perfect terror, but certainly taught us our

drill. We used to have shooting practice at the butts with the old Martini Henry rifles, and, my word, how those guns did kick, to be sure!

At Christmas time—my first Christmas in South Africa—I camped with the regiment under canvas at East London for a week. It was during that time that the captain of one of the Union Line of ships (which subsequently amalgamated with the Castle Company and became the Union-Castle Company) invited the officers and men of my regiment to visit his ship, “The Scot,” which lay out in the roadstead. We were accompanied by the regimental band, and marched gaily down to the same jetty on which I had landed only a few months previously. We boarded a tug in the river, and in a little time were well over the bar. The sea was rough (and it can be rough at East London!), the tug was small, we soldiers were not sailors, and “The Scot” seemed to lay such a *long* way out. Many of us crowded on the upper deck of the tug; the bandsmen stood below us on the main deck. As we approached the vessel the bandmaster gave a tap with his baton and the instrumentalists commenced to play “The Boulanger March.” By this time we were bumping about at the side of “The Scot” in a most alarming manner, and the process of getting us all on board, by means of the basket, was a slow one. The up and down motion began to have its usual demoralising effect. One by one the valiant bandsmen fell out, and, one by one, the gallant soldiers on the upper deck began to turn from pink to yellow, from yellow to green, and then, ah then, a *dreadful* thing happened. One of the few survivors of the band was bravely trumping away on his trombone, and the greenish complexioned one above was “*ill*” right into the top of the instrument. Consternation!!! Let me draw the curtain. There was no more music on that occasion, and, brave as we looked and unquestionably were, we were all delighted to be on *terra firma* again.

CHAPTER V.

STILL QUEENSTOWN.

I FOUND life—especially business life—in Queenstown very interesting, and was able to improve my business knowledge. I mastered the somewhat intricate task of costing, for, as of course you will understand, the costs incurred between the suppliers in England and where the goods are eventually delivered in South Africa, including, as they do, freight, customs, clearance, railage, etc., are pretty considerable, and have to be worked out on a percentage basis, which percentage has to be added to the cost of the various articles imported.

I developed any amount of originality in the science—and it is a science—of Advertising. To my way of thinking the very greatest feature in all advertising should be originality. People will never wade through columns of uninteresting literature in an endeavour to discover what it is all about. An advertisement should strike people, *hit them right in the eye*, as it were. Harry Furniss's picture of the dirty tramp who is writing a testimonial which reads "Two years ago I used your soap, since when I have used no other" doesn't say much for that particular brand of soap, but it impresses the name of a certain famous firm of soap manufacturers on one's memory, and, in my opinion, it is more important to popularise the *name* of a business than to publish long descriptions of goods with tedious and bewildering details of prices which can only be perused with an effort. Think it over; the more *daring* one is in advertising, the better the advertisement.

When I started business on my own account printing was not at very high-water mark and was shockingly

expensive. To keep expenses down, which is an essential factor of success, I purchased a second-hand cyclostyle, and spent many evenings drawing, printing and producing advertisements for the next day. My business was discussed, and a progressive business, to remain progressive, must always be prominently in the lime-light.

On Sunday evenings it was my custom to invite a few of my more intimate friends to my tiny bed-sitting-room, where we sang, talked, smoked, laughed, read or slept, as the mood took us. It was on such a Sunday evening, after I had been in Queenstown some six months, that there was a knock at my bedroom door. I opened it and found it was my employer.

"What's the matter now?" I thought, "isn't going to give me notice, I hope."

"May I see you for a few minutes?" he asked, as I bade him "Good-evening."

"I say, you fellows," I said, turning round and addressing my visitors, "would you mind going? The baas wishes to discuss business matters with me."

Of course they didn't mind going. They would simply storm some other fellow's room and hinder him in writing his English mail. They half expected I was going to get the sack, which made them more than usually cheerful.

"Sit down, sir," I said, as the last of my visitors left.

"I suppose you don't mind me smoking?" he asked, at the same time seating himself and lighting his pipe. Seeing that the atmosphere was dense with tobacco smoke I couldn't possibly "mind."

"I've called to see you on business," he said. "The man who manages the men's outfitting department is leaving, and I think you are the man for the position. What do you think?"

I had had no experience of that department, but knew I could sell stuff, and should soon learn what there *was* to learn about keeping the stock and, for that

matter, ordering it. After all, sound business methods are good anywhere; the mere matter of a different department didn't dismay me in the least.

"Yes, sir," I replied readily, "I'm sure I can run it satisfactorily." (And, as I said it, I had already mentally embarked upon a scheme of re-organisation).

"Very well, then," he said, "then you will take over from the first of the month, and from that date your salary will be increased to £15 a month."

A rise unasked for is an infinitely better and nicer thing than one which has to be dragged out of an employer. It is a recognition of ability and an indication of satisfaction. Why, I would rather a rise in salary were smaller and came voluntarily than a larger sum given grudgingly by coercion. In my London days, when a man asked for an advance in salary and his request was refused, it meant that he was to go, and therefore, unless he had something better in view, he was both nervous and diffident in proffering his request. It was wrong, *of course* it was wrong; I am not attempting to justify it. It's all so different now, as I have already remarked. There is no longer that great gulf between employer and employed that used to exist, and rightly so, too. The employer fully recognises that a good, reliable, well-trained assistant is a very essential factor in the success of a business. Fines have disappeared altogether (robbery that they were), and altogether a better and friendlier atmosphere prevails. Why, nowadays some of the larger retail establishments in London and in some of the larger provincial cities are employing *University graduates* and "teaching them the trade." Personally I am a little dubious as to the possible success of the experiment. To begin with, I don't think for one moment that these young students will be trained and treated as we were trained and treated. The heads of large concerns, having lords and knights on their directorates, are forgetting or *trying* to forget their own humble origins, and are becoming fashionable. It *sounds* so well to say: "Ah, yes, you

see that young man wheeling that truck of goods? He's a B.A. of Trinity, and that one there in his shirt-sleeves took his M.A. at Oriel." But, personally, I doubt very much whether the fact that they have their degrees is going to make as sound drapers of them as that little chap who came to us from the police orphanage when he was 14, and now owns one of the largest businesses in Montreal. As I read the other day, "brains are not less brilliant in Tooting than in Mayfair." It has become fashionable for the wealthy father of to-day, in a feeble attempt to patronise democracy, to boast that his son, in true Dick Whittington style, has started on the very lowest rung on the ladder, "pushes beastly trucks about and all that sort of thing, don't you know." It sounds well, and, theoretically, maybe it is right, but nevertheless I am inclined to think it savours just a little of play acting, and I am of the opinion that the lad who is apprenticed in some small establishment will finish with a more intimate knowledge of business, and will, commercially, in the long run outstrip his more educated college-trained contemporary.

Some of the greatest failures in business I have met have been theorists. They have worked out the commercial problem on theoretical and scientific lines. But one cannot disregard the fact that despite all this you have made a success of your various ventures, while your theoretical friend is discussing new problems and attempting to prove that while you are a success by all the rules governing success you *should* have been a failure. He continues theorising until he ends in the bankruptcy court, where he attempts to prove to the commissioners that theoretically he is worth twenty five shillings in the pound, although his books show his assets are equivalent to seven and sixpence. He next makes his appearance as a sale hand, and after that—ah, after that, *oblivion*.

Reverting just for a moment to my London experiences. I had always had the desire to get into the "wholesale," and there was one house, well known to all drapers, the largest of its kind in London—Cook, Son

& Co., of St. Paul's. It seemed to me that in such a place there was a chance for a youth with ambition. I heard that there was a vacancy. All the young fellows had to commence there as carriers; (this was before the days when lifts came into general use) they had to collect the purchases made by customers from the various departments and carry them down to the entering rooms, whence, after being invoiced, they were sent to the packing department, and in due course dispatched to their respective destinations. The value of such services were assessed by the firm at £15 a year, "live in."

Father often said to me: "Get away from the place where you have been an apprentice and where they have known, and always will regard you, as a boy."

I waited at the end of a queue of about 30 young fellows, all about my own age. Old Sir Francis Cook was engaging that morning. Whether it was a legend or not I can't say, but it was said that Sir Francis was a Grandee of Portugal. I don't know exactly what "Grandeas of Portugal" are, or if there are any such gentlemen or noblemen; further, at this lapse of time, seeing that Sir Francis was a British knight or baronet, I can't quite understand why he should require to be a Grandee. But at the time I am referring to this halo, if halo it was, surrounded him. A wholesale draper who was a *Grandee of Portugal* must have been an infinitely superior article to a common or garden knight of British manufacture.

It came to *my* turn to enter the awe-inspiring presence.

"Where have you been living?" demanded the great man. No "Good-morning" or "Good-day"; couldn't expect it from a *Grandee of Portugal*.

I gave the desired information.

"We don't engage from London houses. Next one."

Again, not a "Good-morning," a "Thank you," or a "Good-day."

This was the treatment we received 40 years ago.

On the first of the month I took over my new department, and was not long in mastering its details. In managing a concern the great thing is to know your stock, and to see that you have the *right* stock. This is somewhat more difficult when you happen to be some six or seven thousand miles from the suppliers instead of within telephoning distance. It needs foresight and judgment, and in those days South Africa didn't follow European fashions *quite* as closely as she does to-day. When I took over the clothing department the gilded youth of Queenstown affected bell bottom trousers which any man from overseas abominates. They had a weakness for bright-coloured plush caps with silvery tassels, which certainly did not appeal to my none too æsthetic taste; while the only thing in hats they cared for was what they called a "smasher," really a soft felt hat, the crown of which they rounded in themselves, which gave them rather a squattish appearance. But a change was taking place. The young Queenstonians were beginning to want to dress like "the johnnies from home." I was in command at the psychological moment, as it were, and was able to cater for their evolution in taste, with the result that the returns of my department increased, to the satisfaction of the firm and myself.

CHAPTER VI.

“ SANDY. ”

“ I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan ;
very pleasant hast thou been unto me ; thy love
to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. ”

IT was at this time that the friend of my boyhood, the friend who had walked with me from Greenwich through London on that memorable Christmas morning, came out to join me. The thought of his coming filled me with joy, and in order that he might be able to remain with me in Queenstown, I succeeded in finding a situation for him, his duties to commence on his arrival. Poor Sandy, poor, poor Sandy, I wish to God you had never come to me.

Yes, Sandy was going to join me, and I was delighted at the prospect of renewing our old friendship. He too, so he wrote, had grown tired of the poor prospects of success in a London wholesale warehouse, and had determined to come out to me.

I met him at the railway station on his arrival, and felt at once that some intangible change had taken place. Somehow or other he did not seem to be the *same* Sandy. Our meeting seemed to lack all the spontaneousness and feeling which should have attended it. Possibly it was I who had changed ; I am not out to shield myself in any way, far from it.

We spent our first evening together in my small bed-sittingroom at the boarding house, when he delivered the many loving messages and presents with which he had been commissioned, but all through the evening there was an atmosphere of constraint. Somehow or other we didn't seem to be able to let ourselves go. Why, I can't say. Possibly, as I have said, it was my fault, surely it must have been.

Since we had parted twelve months before, I had

made many new acquaintances, and as the days passed I did not invite my oldest and truest companion to share my new friendships. Possibly I was a little jealous of my popularity and did not wish to share it with him, although he was the last to think or care for popularity and would have been no serious rival, and, if he *had* been, what, after all, *is popularity?* Merely the momentary whim of the public, a fleeting, shadowy thing often swept away by the faintest breeze of disagreement, certainly not worth courting and perhaps hardly worth possessing, if one ever *can* possess such an abstract thing. In any case it is ever a dangerous possession, and, as I have discovered on my journey along life's great highway, Vox Populi is not always Vox Dei, and one sometimes stops to put the question to one's self, in the words of the scriptures:—

“What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

It soon became apparent that Sandy and I were drifting apart. It was all *my* fault, yes, I am convinced now that it was. Finding me cool and unresponsive, he naturally sought other more congenial companions. The fellows he was associating with were not *nice* men, they were not morally clean men. I knew this, and yet—coward that I was—I never warned or counselled him, and he, attributing my silence to indifference, went deeper and deeper into the mire. The gulf that separated us widened. He got into debt, frequented the local bars, of which there are always a superabundance, and, instead of endeavouring to keep him out of them, as for his dear little mother's sake I should have done, instead of endeavouring to resume our old terms of intimacy, I was weakly and pitifully ashamed of the unenviable reputation he was earning. What a pitiful coward I was, to be sure. What were *all* my new friendships compared with his and all that his friendship had meant for me in the days that had gone before? Just a friendly word of counsel, just a brotherly hand such as he would have extended to me had the circum-

stances been reversed, would have made all the difference.

At this time his employer, a very prominent churchman, hearing of the reckless life his assistant was leading, dismissed him. Then Sandy came to me in great distress, expressing deep contrition, full of promises to reform, and, instead of meeting him in a kindly, sympathetic manner, hypocrite that I was, I must needs take up an attitude of outraged virtue. Ah me, might I not have said with Robbie Burns:—

“ Then gently scan your fellow man ;
 Still gentler sister woman.
 Though we may gang a-kennin’ wrang,
 To step aside is human.
 Then, of the balance, let’s be mute ;
 We never can adjust it.
 What’s done, we *partly* may compute,
 But know not *what’s* resisted.”

Neither do we. That grand Scottish bard knew as much about temptation as most of us. What is temptation to one passes another unharmed and unmoved. Who was I to sit in judgment? Why, at that moment did I not recall the parting words of the old sergeant, “ Yield not to temptation ” ?

After that Sandy disappeared. He had walked out of town with one of his low companions and none knew whither he had gone. It was then I first realised how miserably I had failed. What a poor, broken reed I had been, and bitterly, aye bitterly, reproached myself. Sandy, the friend of my boyhood, Sandy, whose home had been dearer to me, aye, *far* dearer to me than my own home, Sandy, whose people loved me as they loved their own children, Sandy, a homeless wanderer. I paid the proprietress of the boarding house his arrears, and took possession of his wardrobe.

For many months I never heard a word of my friend. Then came a sorrowful, penitent letter—just the old story of the Prodigal Son over again. Who was I that he should be penitent to *me*? His letter was

full of regrets and told of the hardships he had passed through. He was starving in Johannesburg, the Golden City; starving in the midst of abundance. In fact, so he wrote, was almost in rags. Who was to blame? Why, primarily I was.

I sent him money, bidding him come straight back to me and make a fresh start, but this letter was returned, endorsed "Unknown." The next news I received from Sandy came from Durban. He had walked from Johannesburg, so he informed me, and was in deeper straits than ever. Again I sent him money and again learned that he had disappeared. Then, after a weary lapse of time, still another letter reached me, more sorrowful, if anything, than the last. It was from East London. He had tramped from Durban through the Transkie and Pondoland, and was in a state of utter destitution. In those days I was not my own master, but felt that at *any* cost I *must* rescue my friend, and accordingly went to my employer, a splendid specimen of a kindly Christian gentleman. He was not the baas I had started with, but another partner from London; meanwhile they had exchanged duties, and I can hardly say which one of them I liked the most. I briefly related the circumstances to him and asked his permission to go to East London, which was readily given. I left by the night train and spent the whole of the next day (Sunday) in a vain endeavour to find Sandy, but was unsuccessful, and, with a heavy heart, I returned to Queenstown.

A few days later I received a letter from him, in which he said he had seen me in East London, but was so disreputable-looking and was so ashamed of his appearance that he had deliberately avoided me. Poor Sandy, in my then frame of mind I would not have been ashamed of him in all his rags.

I sent him money for his railway fare, and late one night went to the station to meet him. His condition and appearance was far worse than I thought possible. In place of boots he had rags wrapped round his poor blistered and bleeding feet. The well-dressed,

well-cared-for Sandy of a few months before looked a hopeless derelict and outcast.

Back to my room at the boarding house we went, where I had a bath and his own plentiful supply of clothes awaiting him. That night he shared my bed with me, as I had often shared his as a boy. It was the first bed he had slept in for many and many a night, and he told me all his pitiful story. It was, indeed, a sad, sad one, and more than sad to me, perhaps, because I could not hold myself wholly blameless.

With the help of kind friends I found an appointment for him as tutor on a farm in the district, where he spent a happy time with the large family of healthy, manly boys. Sometimes I would ride out to spend a week-end with him, but, as I have already remarked, horsemanship has always been somewhat of a trial to me, and I could relate some weird stories of my adventures astride. Those were happy days, and our old friendship was fully restored, perhaps all the more firmly cemented because of what had happened.

After a time, wishing to improve his position, he left the farm to become principal of a public school in a small up-country town, and there fell into terrible disgrace. Poor, poor Sandy.

I always associate this deplorable episode with the death of General Penn Symonds at Dundee in Natal, during the very early days of the Boer War, for, upon hearing the trouble my friend was in, I wired, bidding him come to me, and when at the station awaiting his arrival I heard this sad piece of war news.

After a time Sandy left us, and the next I heard of him was as a trooper in Brabant's Horse.

The gulf had widened again; we were completely out of touch with each other. His father died, and Sandy inherited quite a respectable fortune. He purchased a farm, married, and, after a time, never visited town without getting the worse for liquor. Oh, the *pity* of it all! Then one day I received a telegram informing me that poor Sandy was dead. A great lump formed in my throat as I read it. All our boyhood

days, all our wonderful friendship, all our many little holidays and adventures together, seemed to pass in review before me, and my eyes were wet. I recalled all our brave and high aspirations, and saw how miserably we had failed; I, more than he, perhaps. He was to be buried—so the telegram informed me—the next day. The farm was over a hundred miles away from where I was then living. There was no means of reaching it in time for the funeral, and I was therefore deprived of the melancholy satisfaction of paying a last tribute of love and esteem to my oldest and dearest chum at his graveside. All I could do was to send a wreath from his oldest and best-loved comrade, bearing the message: "Sandy. For auld lang syne."

I prefer to remember Sandy as the splendid boy he was when, with all the confidence of youth, we would speak of our ambitions and what we would do in the years to come when we were men. It all turned out so differently, like most day-dreams do. This wonderful country of smiling sunshine might have been in reality "a Land of Good Hope" for him, but it was not destined to be so.

Sometimes when I fall into a reminiscent mood, and somehow lately this happens more frequently than it was wont to do, I look at the photograph of Sandy and myself, taken soon after his terrible tramping experiences, which hangs upon my study wall. In it he is still bearing traces of the almost incredible hardships he had passed through, and I wonder, yes, I wonder, if we are all born with equal chances? Of course we are not. It is true that Sandy had all the advantages that money or the prospect of money could command, but these proved to be more of a curse than a blessing to him. As my oldest and dearest friend I shall always love him, and am certain of this, that God, being a God of Love and a just God, will not be less tolerant than man. *He* will not deal harshly with one who suffered much. God only knows the temptations my dear friend had to fight, for God *is* Love, and this is the true story of Sandy.

CHAPTER VII.

ADVANCEMENT.

THERE would appear to be certain landmarks in most of our careers which seem to stand out more conspicuously than others. There are long stretches of flat, uninteresting country which seem to indicate nothing in particular, then, as in my own case, there are others which appear to mark some important change or turning point. It was one Wednesday afternoon—all the stores in the place closed at 1 o'clock on Wednesday, but there were no Bexleys to drive to. After I had been with the firm some two years, the baas asked the head of the drapery section and myself to call at his house that evening to discuss a matter of considerable importance with him. Naturally we were both consumed with curiosity. What could he want *us* for? We were wholly in the dark. The suspense did not prevent me playing a hard game of rugby in the afternoon, but most of the time, I fear, I was "off side."

At 8 o'clock that evening we met as arranged at the Guv'nor's house.

There was no beating about the bush, he was a man who always came to the point at once.

"To-morrow," he said, "an advertisement will appear in the paper announcing the fact that on and after the first of the month, the former resident partner in Queenstown, of his own free will and accord, will retire from the business."

Naturally we were very surprised.

"It is my intention," he continued, "to establish an office in London where I shall do the buying for our various branches and other marks, and I wish to know whether you two think you would be capable of running the business here?"

Of course we were capable, and didn't hesitate one moment in telling him so, and, what is more, he was too keen a business man to approach us had he not thought so too. My contemporary knew the drapery inside and out, and by that time I was equally familiar with the clothing and outfitting.

We next discussed terms, and it was finally arranged that we should receive by way of salary £17 10s. a month each and *one tenth share* each of the nett profits.

We left his house feeling fully six inches taller, for management meant power, and power gives scope to one's initiative, a means of giving utterance to one's own ideas.

In due course the chief sailed for England and we were left in supreme command. I remember he sent us a wire as the ship was leaving:—

“ Good luck, pull together, all will be well.”

Ah, that was the point “ pull together,” so much is summed up in this. If we *could* have done so all might have been well, but we were temperamentally unsuited to run in double harness and in a very few months we were at cross purposes. You see in a joint management, the one who has control of the office, the one who signs the cheques, accepts bills and so forth, is recognised more as the head. I knew—we both knew—that our interests were identical, but only one held the Power of Attorney and this fell to the lot of my colleague, who had been with the firm longer than I. This caused more or less friction; he (this, of course, is only my version) assumed powers that I strongly resented. At the end of six months, we were not only not “ pulling together,” but were not on speaking terms. It was a case of “ a house divided against itself.” My colleague's motto seemed to be *Aut Cæsar aut nullus*, I stuck to my own department and he, in addition to his own, attempted to control mine as well, thus each section was in opposition, an impossible state of affairs.

Some little time before this I had become engaged to a dear little girl, and, with the change of fortune and

outlook, was contemplating marriage. Meanwhile, I had received an offer from a large wholesale house on the coast, offering to support me if I cared to open in business on my own account.

The strained relations existing between my colleague and myself, coupled with the fact that I had an opportunity of establishing a business entirely on my own account, prompted me to write to the head of the concern in London, pointing out the difficulties of the existing arrangement and suggesting that he should start me in business in some other town.

Apparently he had heard the other side of the story first and his sympathies were decidedly in the other camp. The reply I received was anything but a pleasant one. It concluded, I remember, somewhat in this cryptic fashion :—

“ I do not care to keep anyone in my employ who is dissatisfied, the alternative lies in your own hands.”

This was distinctly unpleasant; it was, so to speak, a blow in the face, and struck me as manifestly unfair, for I had done good work for the firm; the consequence was I entered into correspondence with the firm which had offered me support. But in a week or two, another letter, couched in entirely different language and bearing a totally different tone, reached me from the chief in London, in which he asked me to continue until he arrived, which would be within the course of the next few weeks.

He came, heard *my* side of the story, shrugged his shoulders with true Scottish caution expressing no opinion, but talked along the lines of my launching out for the firm in some other direction. He would supply the necessary capital in the shape of stock and buy for the suggested new branch in London. At this time I was 24 years of age and the suggestion seemed to open up a new world of possibilities. I had no doubts, no fears, but was confident of success. If I can manage for another,” I thought, “ I can manage for myself.”

We discussed likely towns. He suggested Durban—knew of a vacant store there, proceeded to the Garden

Colony and returned with the news that he had secured the refusal of premises, but, fearing that I was not strong or experienced enough to run alone, stipulated that I should commence in partnership with another. My experience with a partner or, rather, a joint manager, had been anything but happy—almost disastrous in fact—and I demurred.

“No,” I said, “I would rather start entirely on my own.” I would not deliberately court failure by the possibility of another disagreement. I was prepared to put my very best into the venture and was confident of success. He saw my point of view and, withdrawing the Durban proposition which I rather think involved the investing of more capital than he cared to risk, we finally agreed that the selection of a suitable town in which to open should be left entirely to my discretion.

In due course he left again for England and I commenced my quest, in course of which I visited many towns and had many offers. Among the places I visited was Dordrecht, which is the Capital town of the far-reaching Wodehouse District, named after Sir Philip Wodehouse, a former Governor of Cape Colony, a great sheep and cattle raising country. Dordrecht itself, of course, takes its name from her beautiful old grandmother in Holland.

CHAPTER VIII.

DORDRECHT.

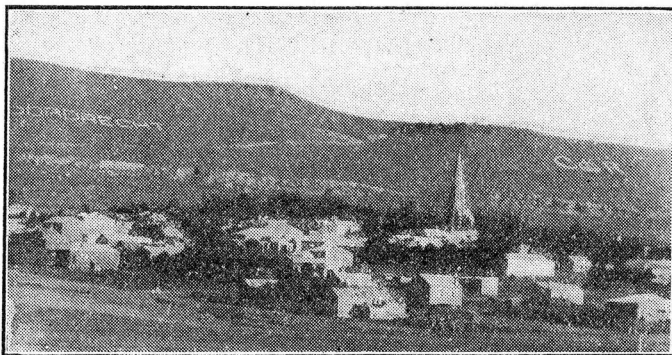
“ It stands on a lake, *some* call a Dam,
Now A-dam was Eden's first host,
And Eden was Paradise once on a time,
But Dordrecht is *Paradise Lost*.”

THESE lines are supposed to have been written by the manager of a touring theatrical company which, through lack of support, was stranded in the place and we had to send the hat round among the residents to get him and his company away. This was the reward we received.

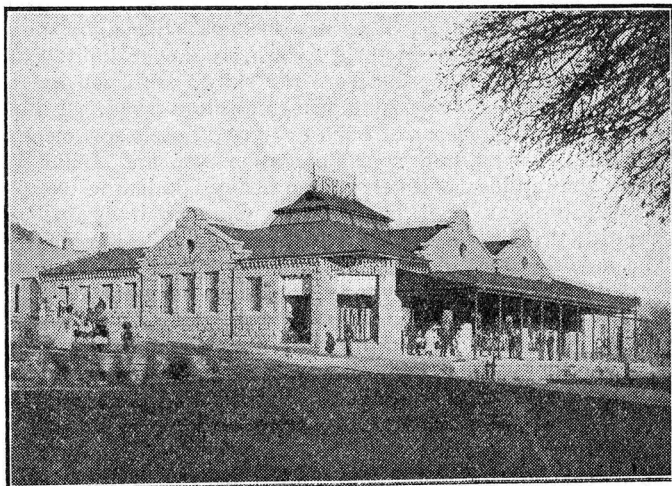
It was during the latter part of '94 that I first visited Dordrecht to view the Promised Land, as it were. It was no inconsiderable journey. As the crow flies it is probably only 40 miles or so from Queenstown, but in those days we had to take two sides of a square to reach it. First by train to Sterkstroom and thence by post cart. The train arrived at Sterkstroom at midnight. The town is about a mile from the railway station and is approached by a long, unmade, unlighted road. I had wired to the proprietor of one of the two hotels for accommodation but he had sent no conveyance and I had to tramp the muddy road carrying a heavy Gladstone bag.

“ Might as well be back in Greenwich again,” I thought, “ delivering lengths of two-yard wide linoleum.” Ah, but there was just this difference, I was about to start in business on my own account, so what cared I for any trifling inconveniences? There were prospects now, whereas there was nothing but sordid, heart-breaking drudgery before me then. I would willingly have carried a load of timber on my shoulders had I had the strength, and if it would have helped matters along.

When I reached the hotel the whole place was in darkness, but by lighting a match or two I found the visitors' board and on it my name with the number of my room against it. After some time I found the room



View of Dordrecht.



The premises of Messrs. W. F. Fish & Co. at Dordrecht, which were opened by the Junior Partner.

and, to my surprise, saw a light burning there, while inside, a man—a total stranger to me—was undressing. “Excuse me,” I said, “I have engaged this room, it is reserved for me.”

“Oh,” he replied, “I’m clean,” and saying this, got into the only bed (a double one) in the room.

I hadn’t questioned his cleanliness, but strongly objected to his occupying my bed.

“Will you get out?” I asked angrily.

“No, I won’t,” he replied, “where am I to go if I *do* get out.”

I felt strongly inclined to tell him exactly where he could go, but refrained from doing so and was reluctantly compelled to share my bed with him, a man I had never seen in my life before.

Speaking of telling a man where he could go to, I am reminded of a very good story, and as it has a business setting and refers to conditions not unlike those which exist or used to exist in some of our smaller South African towns, I will relate it.

A traveller called on an up-country store-keeper and sold him a decent parcel of goods. When they arrived they were not up to sample and the store-keeper refused to accept the draft for payment. This led to a vast amount of correspondence and, finally, the suppliers drew upon him through the local bank for the amount. The draft was returned to the drawer unaccepted. They then drew upon him through the post office. Again payment was refused. Then, in desperation, they handed the account to the local lawyer for collection, which resulted in their receiving a letter from the store-keeper couched in the following terms:—

“Sirs,

The undersigned is the store-keeper to whom you sent your rascally goods. The undersigned is also the President of the Bank through which you drew for payment. The undersigned is also the post-master through whose office you drew the second time. The undersigned is also the lawyer to whom

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you sent your miserable account for collection, and if the undersigned were not also the Pastor of the local church, he would tell you where you could go to.

Yours faithfully,

At 8 o'clock a bugle sounded in front of the hotel. It was the post cart which was to convey me to my destination. It was a ramshackle equipage drawn by four of the sorriest-looking mules I had ever seen. I was the only passenger and was squeezed into a seat among the mail bags. There is a rise of almost 2,000 feet between Sterkstroom and Dordrecht and these unfortunate mules were thrashed all the way. The leaders were named "Donker" (or dark), and "Hell" respectively, and when "Donker" wasn't catching it, "Hell" was, and I seem to fancy "Hell" won.

We reached Dordrecht late in the afternoon—a typical South African village—and my heart sank at the very sight of it. There was a solitary waggon drawn by a team of somewhat impoverished-looking oxen passing down the street, and this was the only sign of business I could detect. "And this after *London*!

I thought, "Ye Gods!"

The driver deposited me and my luggage at the Masonic Hotel (there is hardly a town in South Africa that hasn't a "Masonic").

The next morning I was up early and made a careful inspection of the place. It consisted of one long, badly-kept main street with certain tributaries which, by their appearance resembled mountain passes rather than public roads. There were four or five unattractive-looking shops, one bank, three hotels. The usual well-built Public Offices, an Anglican, Wesleyan and Dutch Reformed Church, the last, as is usually the case in most South African towns, being the most important-looking and best built building in the place, and that was all. At the end of the town was a large vlei or lake, and from there the road stretched out on its 70 mile journey to

Barkly East and from there through Mosheses Ford into the mountain fastnesses of Basutoland.

There was one vacant store, a dismal, unkempt-looking building which had evidently been empty for years and was the property, so I learned, of the only doctor in the place. After breakfast I called on him.

"Yes," he said, "the store was to let, but he didn't think there was much chance of my being able to establish a business in Dordrecht, because "so-and-so's (mentioning a then well-known firm who bought a large amount of business by giving 12 months credit) were there. It was evident he was not too anxious to let his vacant premises, or else he had an extraordinary method of letting. "Well," I said, "will you allow me to look over the premises?"

"Yes," he replied—somewhat grudgingly I thought—"if you wish to."

After a considerable hunt he found the key and we walked over to the store.

As he opened the door, the smell of the place almost knocked me over. Cats, in an almost wild state, were running all over it, and in one corner some potatoes, evidently left by some former tenant, had become covered with dust, and were growing splendidly. It was a mournful and depressing-looking place, but with a broom, a scrubbing brush, a carpenter and a painter, I saw possibilities. We discussed terms, and the rent was fixed at £5 a month, and I was to pay all rates and taxes.

"But," he added, when we had come to an agreement, "I tell you candidly, you haven't a hope here, 'So-and-So's' will eat you up in no time."

It wasn't *too* encouraging, was it? but I had youth, health, vigour and an intimate knowledge of business in my favour and was not dismayed.

Returning to Queenstown I got into touch with a carpenter who accompanied me to Dordrecht and the work of cleaning, alteration, and repairs was speedily in hand.

I had arranged to get married before opening the business and it was therefore necessary to secure a house.

The only place I could find was a great, roomy, leaky place, large enough for a family of ten, not exactly the type of house to take a young bride to, but love is not critical, it was a case of "Hobson's Choice," and I took the place at a rental of £5 a month, which was a fairly hefty amount out of my very limited means.

The terms of partnership we had agreed upon were that as managing partner of the concern I should receive a working salary of £12 10s. a month, and one half share of the *net profits*, from this one-half share I was to be permitted to draw another £12 10s., which would be debited to my share of the profits if there were any. This meant that my income for domestic purposes was £25 a month, which was quite a respectable one in those less extravagant days when living was comparatively cheap.

The furnishing of that roomy, leaky house was no small undertaking. With sufficient capital to furnish three rooms moderately well, it was somewhat of a problem to fit out six, but meanwhile the goods for the store were arriving, there was an abundance of packing cases, and packing cases plus a little cretonne, some glazed lining and white spotted muslin, had a wonderfully filling effect upon what otherwise would have been an almost empty house. In those days young married people didn't commence housekeeping with pianos and velvet-pile carpets. Naturally it would not satisfy the artistic and extravagant tastes of young people setting up housekeeping now-a-days, who commence pledging a large portion of their income by purchasing elaborate furniture on the hire-purchase system and who require gramophones and wireless sets, in order that they may not be behind their wealthier neighbours and to overcome the boredom of early married life. *My advice is try packing cases and avoid debt.* Debt may be unavoidable when the babies commence to arrive, but, of course, I am forgetting babies don't "arrive" now-a-days, they only come when required, or by accident, families are so old-fashioned and so disfiguring. One baby may be wanted, the rest are usually errors of judgement.

CHAPTER IX.

MARRIAGE AND MERCHANDISE.

HAVING put my house in order, and having arranged matters concerning the store, I left to get married.

The great event took place in Queenstown. We were married on March 6th, 1895, on the anniversary of the day I had landed at Capetown five years previously. Poor Sandy was my Best Man and whispered comforting words of courage to me as we sat in church where we had arrived an hour too early, awaiting the arrival of my bride.

We took no honeymoon; one reason was I couldn't afford one, but primarily because it was imperative that I should get back to Dordrecht to urge on the alterations in the business premises. So I took my little bride over the same route that I had traversed a few weeks earlier, and in due course she took possession of her rambling home. She was quite pleased with those camouflaged packing cases, congratulated me upon my taste in the arrangement of the furniture, which, within a week, was entirely changed, and I had to admit, for the better. This is where diplomacy comes in.

Dordrecht boasted of a newspaper "The Frontier Guardian," edited and conducted, aye, and sometimes even printed by a sporting and dare-devil Irishman named O'Brien, a fearless, lovable man who was always out for a fight, a devout Roman Catholic, who cared for neither man nor Devil—and yet, with all—a kindly, generous man. The library adjoins the Town Hall, the latter a poor, hungry-looking place, which had at one time been a wool store, but in early life it had been converted, and in its old age had settled down into a semi-respectable Municipal building. On one occasion a big political

meeting was in progress there. I was in the library and noticed my friend O'Brien pacing restlessly up and down.

"Why, what's the matter, Father?" I asked (most of us addressed him as "Father"), "why don't you sit down and look through the papers?"

"My boy," he replied, "I'm just getting steam up and then I'm going in next door to throw in the apple of discord."

He left in a minute and very shortly after, judging by the pandemonium which seemed to ensue his "apple" was more in the nature of a bomb. With all his faults—and like most of us he had many—he was a generous man, and no man or woman in genuine distress ever knocked at his hospitable door in vain. I could fill a chapter about dear old O'Brien alone for he was unquestionably a celebrity and would have been a celebrity wherever he had lived.

Those who live in the larger South African cities and towns imagine that they are privileged to patronise the people who live or have lived in the Dorps or the more obscure parts of the country and the Dorp dweller is supposed to be very meek and humble in the presence of those who have been privileged to live in larger places. No, I won't say "privileged," because in a sense, they would all have been better for a lengthy sojourn in the Backveld where one comes intimately into contact with the very souls of the people and where life is more human, more real and not in any sense artificial.

It has been my misfortune to come into contact with visitors to Dordrecht who openly sympathised with me because I was living there. They have possibly hailed from worldly Queenstown. "Oh dear," they have remarked, "however can you exist in this small place, it would drive me mad." "Well, you know," I have replied, "I spent the first 20 years of my life in that Little Village on the Thames called London, and yet have managed to settle down quite comfortably in this "small place;" don't you know, if a man's business occupies most of his time, as it should do, he is a poor sort of

individual who cannot put in his few hours of leisure pleasantly and profitably." But then you see, these people have seen life.

Naturally I made use of O'Brien's newspaper for advertising purposes, and in due course my great opening announcement appeared, supplemented by a dozen sandwich-men carrying posters round the streets. Publicity, backed up by sound business methods, is the very life blood of business all the world over. I had gone there to open a *cash* business, no easy matter in a town where every storekeeper in the place *bought* business by giving 12 months credit. Wool season to wool season was the accepted rule and didn't the poor farmers pay dearly for this doubtful privilege? How my opponents sneered at the mere thought of a *cash business*, or, as our Dutch friends have it, a *kontant winkel*, but "those who laugh last, laugh longest;" this all happened thirty odd years ago. All my business competitors of those far-off days have disappeared and my little *cash business*, now grown into a large and prosperous concern, is still going strong. But I am anticipating again, it is becoming quite a disease with me. Seeing that I was up against this iniquitous long credit system, I had to offer something in the shape of a counter attraction and this I did by advertising in a popular manner, by importing the most attractive goods and by drumming the principle of *customers first* into my small but willing staff, creating always the impression that *nothing was a trouble*.

The opening day was March 19th 1895. I placed my one solitary apprentice at the front door with strict instructions that he was to open it as the clock of the Dutch Church struck the hour of eight. There was not the rush that I had anticipated, there was no crowd outside clamouring to get in, oh no, there was nothing like that. All my advertisements of the "Early Bird" type had fallen flat and I was bitterly disappointed. It was evident that the people had not been educated up to my soul-stirring advertisements, they were accustomed to the easy going methods of the back veld, but, nevertheless, des-

pite the disappointing opening, we finished up with quite a respectable day's takings. While the customers were comparatively few, the individual purchases were large, which, with a small staff of assistants is advantageous.

In those days I was my own general manager, head salesman, buyer, window dresser, advertiser, ticket-writer, costing clerk and, having taken a course of simple accountancy, was my own book-keeper, altogether a good, all-round, useful man. What a busy life it was, to be sure. As far as hours were concerned Greenwich wasn't in it, but there was a distinction with a very great deal of difference, for whereas at Greenwich I had been a poor drudge, badly fed and execrably housed, now I was my own master, with my own comfortable packing-case furnished home and a dear little wife. Oh no, I didn't overwork my assistants, not at all; when the doors closed, they had finished and after that I would send my books home and often, aye, often have I worked at them until the midnight hour, then to bed to rise again at 5.30 in order to open the store at 6 a.m. On one occasion I arrived at the store at this hour, a tall Dutch farmer was already waiting outside—"Man," he remonstrated in an injured tone, "you sleep late." "Sleep late, good Heavens!" I thought, "You little know I was working until 12 o'clock last night while in all probability you were in your bed at 8."

The farmers' wives, tempted by the smart stuff I was showing, sent their husbands to discuss the subject of credit, but in this matter I was as adamant, nothing would move me. "No," I said, "my terms are 'cash,' I buy for cash and sell for cash." The next thing would be a note from one or other of my competitors asking me to supply so and so with a hat or dress or jacket she had taken a fancy to, and send the account to them. Thus it came about that those who had placed such a generous time limit on my sojourn there, became my best customers—and the business grew and grew, so much so that at the end of my first season I had to cover up the empty fixtures with curtains to hide their nakedness and I got busy on the cable.

The increase of business meant enlarging the premises, and at an increased rental my landlord, the doctor, threw some adjoining cottages into the store property, and I was able to add boots and shoes to my stock.

The ambitious thought of a night show came to me. Window dressing with modern fixtures and fittings, is an easy and by no means an unpleasant task, but window dressing when one has to manipulate all the fixtures for it and where one has no lights, is a horse of a different colour. But difficulties only exist to be overcome. Let's see, in the old place I think I had four dressable windows and I set to work on them. I have no doubt a professional window dresser at Peter Robinson's or Stuttaford's in Capetown would have fainted could he have but seen the result of my efforts; but you must remember, the people of Dordrecht, or most of them, knew nothing of Peter Robinson's; and Stuttaford's then, had not the mammoth building they have to-day. We had neither gas nor electric light installation in town and I borrowed every lamp or candlestick I could find. Sounds primitive enough, doesn't it?

The evening of the grand illumination display arrived.

One thing Dordrecht *did* boast of in those days was a *brass band*. It is true it could only play two tunes or, to be perfectly accurate, *one and a half tunes*. "Nelly Bly caught a fly" was the "one" and the second half of "God Save the King," was the "half." I engaged the band for the evening to play on the stoep in front of the store, the idea being to make a promenade concert of the affair.

The show had been well advertised and I had the gratification of seeing what was for the little place, quite a respectable number of people parading the path outside the store commenting on the beautiful appearance of the place and assisting the band by singing "Nelly Bly." It was a moving spectacle. To give one final touch to the general festiveness of the occasion, I had surreptitiously arranged little mounds of coloured fire along the

parapet of the roof of the building. The firing of these, by arrangement with the bandmaster, was to synchronise with the playing of the second half of "God Save the King" and was to be the climax or grand finale of that never-to-be-forgotten evening.

I had climbed on the roof and had lighted the first of these mounds, it was a glorious red. The people below became a little panicky thinking the place was on fire. I had lighted another match to apply to the second mound when I felt someone tugging at my leg. I looked round and discovered that it was one of our local police constables. "You mustn't do that, sir, it's against the Municipal regulations, I must take your name and address." Seeing my name was on the building and that I was standing on my address, this seemed almost superfluous. The Grand Finale was spoiled, but the whole thing made a splendid advertisement, and as the people marched away with the band which was playing a mixture of God save the King and Nelly Bly, I felt that I had added additional lustre to my business.

The magistrate in fining me ten shillings next morning, complimented me on my enterprise, but reminded me that the 5th of November, when such displays were more or less winked at, was not a daily occurrence in Dordrecht. "But," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "Dordrecht seems to be getting more like London every day."

After this I interviewed my friend O'Brien asking him to make some press references to the evening. "Look here, old fellow," he said, "I'm very busy just now, you just write up what you like and I'll publish it."

This was an opportunity not to be missed. I *did* "write it up," and what I didn't say about that night's show and the subsequent legal proceedings wouldn't have been worth saying. It knocked all modern American description of a super bioscope film into smithereens.

The whole thing was a very successful experiment,

which I never repeated until many years after when I had rebuilt the premises, with properly fitted windows lighted by electricity, and on which occasion I did not climb the roof to alarm the neighbours with coloured fire, and instead of "Nelly Bly" and that brazen band, long since defunct, I gave a selection from Gilbert and Sullivan on the pianola, which, if not as stirring, was distinctly more tuneful.

Then came my firstborn, a dear little girl, who had the bad taste to arrive on a very busy Saturday morning. I hesitated between parental duty and drapery—and *duty* won—for, after all, humanity must come first and my poor little wife was passing through deep waters. That dear tiny mite is now the pretty little wife of a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church and lives in the Transvaal, and a few months ago visited us to introduce me to my first grandchild, and I think I must tell you of an evening I spent with that fine young fellow, when, in the fullness of my heart I undertook to stay at home one evening to mind him, while his mother and the remainder of my family went to some entertainment. Yes, I must write the appalling story.

CHAPTER X.

AN EVENING WITH MY GRANDSON.

AN evening at home; no engagements of any sort; a cold night, a cheerful fire and, seated before it in the most comfortable chair in the house—myself. This was the evening I planned and anticipated; an evening looked forward to as a child looks forward to Christmas. But, as the poet says: “The best laid schemes of mice and men ——” you know the rest. All my hopes—all my anticipations—all my —— well there, never mind.

Knowing that it was my intention to spend an evening at home, my wife and family decided to improve the shining hour or hours (it seemed like months or years to me), but there I go, anticipating again.

As I was remarking, my family had decided to mark the occasion by going out for the evening. Mind you, I don't blame them—not in the *least*. If the same thing happened to me and it were possible, I would go out and leave myself at home. This sounds ridiculous, I am fully aware of that, but *you* know what I mean. No doubt they had recollections—vivid recollections of the rare evenings when Dad had been at home and had come to the conclusion—rightly or wrongly—that some outside form of amusement was infinitely more attractive and desirable.

These last few weeks my little grandson and his mother (the baby of the last chapter), from the Transvaal, have been visiting us. The small chap hasn't travelled very far on life's journey yet; as a matter of fact he has reached the advanced age of four months, is very thoughtful-looking as parson's sons should be, toothless, prematurely bald, but is, nevertheless, a very sweet bundle of love.

Both of the gallivanters demurred a little or expressed regret at leaving *poor daddy all alone*, as it was only correct and proper they should do, while daddy—equally correctly—sighed and agreed yes, it would be lonely, but he'd try to live through it.

Oh the *humbug!* Daddy is perfectly well aware that the attraction of the opera outweighs all domestic ties and responsibilities, but maintained the comedy by remarking: "No, no, you go, I shall be all right, I'll look after baby." Had I not his dear little mother's assurance that the little mite would neither move nor whimper?

"For that matter," she said, "we should be perfectly safe in all going."

From the very day of his birth—so the testimonial went—he had been placed in his crib and had never stirred until 9.30 the next morning. "How different from his dear little mother in those far distant Dordrecht days," I thought, "who was always wide awake during those hours."

"But Dad," said my daughter, to reassure me, as it were, "I will leave his dummy beside his cot in case he does wake." So despite his glowing testimonial there *was* at least some lurking shadow of doubt in her mind.

She laughed almost incredulously at the mere thought of his waking. "Well, Dad," she said, "if he *does* wake, just dip his dummy into a little sugar and the dear lamb will go off to sleep again immediately.

"Good-bye," I said, "I hope you'll all enjoy yourselves. Don't hurry home; after the performance is over go and have some refreshment somewhere."

I murmured as I closed the front door: "Now for a comfortable evening."

First of all, my slippers—that's right. A little more coal on the fire. A small table at my elbow on which to place my books, papers, pipe, tobacco and matches. All done quite methodically, you know; no fuss, no bustle, no excitement, just quiet systematic, orderly working. There is always an unostentatious superiority about men

when they enter upon domestic management; things appear to run smoother, quicker, and better in every way. When I was a lad there used to be an absurd story told of a man who declared that:—

“ He could do more work in a day
than his wife could do in seven.”

And the author, simply to cause his—or her (it was most probably a woman) ridiculous verses to rhyme—attempted to prove that the man got hopelessly mixed, whereas the woman made a great success of the farming operations. It was a gross libel on the so-called sterner sex—*sterner!* Ha! Ha!

I had read a few pages of “ Jew Suss ” when I fancied I heard a faint noise—something between a sigh and a cry.

“ My imagination,” I thought, “ possibly some passing motorists with a new contrivance in the shape of a motor horn.”

An intangible, haunting dread had come over me. I commenced to read again, when there came something which unquestionably was a cry. A cold shiver ran down my back—and, as I shivered, the cry developed into a scream. Surely my grandson had not *broken his record?* surely he had not wantonly discredited his fond mother’s testimonial. I would wait a little—pretend, as it were, not to notice anything and in all probability he would go off again. He did “ go off,” but not to sleep; he went off on a higher note.

“ My word!” I said to myself, “ you small Transvaalers have got lungs. Well,” I mused, “ it’s no use going on like this, I must go and pat this young testimonial destroyer.” Off to his bedroom I went. My grandson was almost blue in the face competing with our local fog horn.

“ Ah! there’s the solution,” I exclaimed, as I caught sight of the dummy which his thoughtful mother had provided. It wasn’t the work of a moment to slip into the pantry and get a saucerful of sugar.

“ There, there then,” I said, patting him, “ there’s his dummy for him then.” Saying which I dipped it into the sugar and conveyed it to his mouth. He sucked for a moment and then ejected it in absolute wrath, to continue his broken scream.

I patted him, stroked his bald head, rubbed his toothless gums, but nothing would pacify him.

“ Oh, well,” I said “ I’d better take him up and sing him to sleep.” So taking my grandson and the entire contents of his crib in my arms, I began to pace the room singing the hymns which had never failed to comfort and soothe all my own children—his mother included. But evidently what had been good enough for his mother, his uncles and his aunts, didn’t satisfy him. The more I sang the more he screamed and the more he screamed the louder I sang.

“ P’haps the poor little chap is hungry?” I thought. “ Mothers don’t seem to feed their babies sufficiently now-a-days. I’ll go and see what I can find in the pantry.” So laying him down—a mixed bundle of bed-clothes and boyhood—I slipped the dummy again into the sugar and popped it into his mouth, whereupon he immediately ejected it, at the same time giving a most piercing and penetrating scream.

“ Whatever is the matter with the child?” I said distractedly. “ P’raps a safety pin has become loose and is sticking into him somewhere?”

“ Never mind, then,” I crooned, “ let grandfather see what’s the matter.” Saying which I again lifted him from his crib. I sat down upon a specially low, stumpy-looking chair and proceeded to search for this possible cause for his distress.

One by one I divested him of his garments. It’s no easy matter to undress a baby when he is laughing and crowing (I’m not sure about “ crowing,” I’m merely repeating a word I have heard used), but when he’s screaming it’s a very difficult task.

“ There, then,” I said, as after some ten minutes or so I had removed his nightshirt, “ grandfather will soon make you comfortable.”

That part was fairly simple; it was the other things that gave me the trouble. In about half an hour I had him quite naked, and there was no sign of anything pricking him at all unless it may have been his conscience, if small babies have such things. But this I have no means of determining.

The next thing was to get his clothes on again. And here, I will candidly confess, I was hopelessly at sea. Nothing seemed to fit at all. Meanwhile, for a moment, my grandson had ceased to scream, either to get wind or to give me a most malevolent look. Taking advantage of the brief cessation of hostilities, this armistice, as it were, I succeeded in tying something which looked like a piece of turkish towelling round his neck. I tied it in a knot. "This, at all events will keep the top portion of him warm," I thought. But the remainder of my grandson's garments were an absolute enigma to me. Young as he was, I'm convinced that the little chap knew I was wrong, and as far as his lungs would permit he vigorously protested. What were screams before now became war whoops—savage yells.

I was getting desperate. At any cost he must be kept warm, so collecting his bed-clothes in a bundle, I fastened them round him by means of the girdle of my dressing gown—a Heaven-sent inspiration. I dropped him down into his cot—not *too* lightly I fear, dipped his dummy into the sugar again, and rushed off to the pantry. Good luck! there was his bottle and next to it a jug of milk. I raced back to the bedroom, and putting a goodly quantity of sugar into the bottle, I gave it a good shaking and placed the nipple between his pretty little lips. *Instantly there was a terrific scream.* I sat down, utterly exhausted and in despair. "What more can I do for the little rascal?" I moaned. "How can I pacify this little gentleman who sleeps from 6.30 p.m. to 9.30 a.m.?" I took him in my arms again and paced the room, when, to my infinite comfort and relief. the crying ceased.

"Hush!" I said to myself, "the little man is asleep; he is smiling, actually smiling. "Evidently sees the humour of it all," I thought. It had always been a difficulty with me, after having sung my children to sleep, to transfer them to their cot without waking them. I had seen my daughter perform this difficult task in a wonderfully dexterous manner. You lean over, very gently, until you are almost on a level with the mattress, and then place the infant very gently down. As a precautionary measure I sang just a little louder and selected the most comforting verse from "There's a friend for little children."

No sooner had my grandson's head touched the pillow than his big brown eyes opened; and looking me boldly—almost savagely in the face—set up a scream, which, had the doors not have been securely closed, would have aroused the whole neighbourhood.

Then it dawned on me like a flash of lightning, as it were; I could see it all in a moment; my grandson didn't like me; he had taken exception to my face. Well, he couldn't be blamed for that, there are many who take exception to it, particularly photographers. "In any case," I thought, "that can be easily remedied." I threw a towel over my upper part completely enveloping my head and shoulders, and, having done so, recommenced my backward and forward vigil.

"P'raps," I thought, "being a parson's son, he doesn't care for hymns. I'll try a song." Whether it was the covering of my face or the song, or complete exhaustion, I am not prepared to speculate upon, I am inclined to favour the last though. Whatever it was, about 11.30 the little chap fell into a peaceful slumber, and, transferring him to his crib, I tip-toed noiselessly from the room only to meet my family entering the front door returning from their evening out. I had a wild, despairing look on my face.

"Why, what's the matter, Dad?" exclaimed my daughter, "What's the matter?" I groaned, "What's the matter?" I repeated bitterly, "Why that son of yours

—the future Prime Minister of South Africa—the *little gentleman* (oh I was bitterly sarcastic as well I might be), who always sleeps from 6.30 p.m. to 9.30 a.m. has reversed the order of things and has screamed steadily from 8 p.m. until 11.30 p.m.”

“Oh the poor lamb!” moaned my daughter.

You will notice that: “Oh the poor lamb!” Not a word of sympathy for his poor, distressed grandfather.

“Why didn’t you give him his dummy, Dad,” she demanded.

“I gave it to him,” I said sullenly, “and the ungrateful little rascal almost threw it back at me. I gave him milk, bread and butter, cheese, sardines. I gave him a good talking to. I gave him hymns, songs and anthems. I gave him everything I could think of, but he showed such unmistakable signs of dislike that I never wish to see the young urchin again. Here have I been nursing your screaming offspring all the evening while you have been enjoying yourself at the Opera House. I even undressed him to see if some stray safety pin were sticking into him.”

At this all the female portion left in a little cavalcade for my grandson’s bedroom.

Meanwhile I gloomily put my pipe, tobacco, books and papers away. I had scarcely finished doing this when my daughter fairly bounced into my study. I cannot recall ever having seen her quite so perturbed before. She was supported by her mother, her aunt and our lady visitor, but she herself was the spokeswoman. In the ordinary way, let me remark, she is a gentle, loving, kind and tender girl, but on this occasion she was literally boiling over with motherly wrath and indignation. “My poor, poor little son,” she sobbed. “Fancy dipping his dummy into salt. Of course he screamed, what, in similar circumstances would *you* have done?” she demanded. “Salt!” she almost screamed. “And fancy tying his ———.” No, nothing shall tempt me to disclose what particular portion of his furniture she referred to ———. “Fancy tying *that* round the

dear little man's neck in a knot? Why the poor little fellow couldn't help whimpering." (I like the word "whimpering;" most appropriate).

"Who told you," she went on, "to put paste into his feeding bottle and to add salt to it? you're an inhuman grandfather."

And this was all the thanks I received for remaining at home to take care of my grandson. But I have made a solemn resolve never, in any circumstance, to remain alone again with a baby. My daughter has subsequently withdrawn the expression "inhuman," she has recognised the injustice of it, for she is a sweet forgiving girl, and a smart new pram has a wonderful conciliatory effect. But neither she, my wife, her aunt, or our lady visitor will ever forgive me for tying that piece of towel-ling round my grandson's neck.

At one time, during that never-to-be-forgotten evening I would gladly have placed a rope round his neck, but the next day, after the little man had smiled at me, I relented, took that small chap in my arms, kissed him and forgave him.

Now let me finish this chapter by saying "God bless this little grandson of mine," who has quite captured my heart. Yes, I know I am a generation ahead in this autobiography, but, as a business man it has always been my custom to look ahead and this is the only apology I have to offer, so let us leave 1927 and return to 1897.

CHAPTER XI.

DAVID AND OTHER MATTERS.

THE casual or more menial work of the store such as sweeping, window cleaning, unpacking cases, the delivery of accounts and parcels, is performed by Kaffir "boys." The black man is fortunate in this regard; figuratively he never grows up, for, no matter how old he may be, he is always a "boy" in the eyes of the white man.

These "boys" with their wives, which latter are usually employed as cooks, nurses or housemaids in town, generally live in what is known as the location, which, as a rule, is situated somewhere on the outskirts of the place. They occupy Rondavals, that is, round mud huts to which for greater stability is sometimes added flattened-out parafin tins, and, as a whole, despite their small earnings, are a fairly happy people.

Generally speaking they are great church goers and in this respect are well catered for—if, bodily, they are neglected, spiritually they have nothing to complain of, if their stomachs are empty, their souls must be very full.

In the Dordrecht location there are no less than five churches, and as each church holds one tea meeting a week, the dwellers there have hardly a dull moment, and when Eliza Jane—your apology for a cook—arrives in your kitchen two hours late in the morning, with her doek—that is her large handkerchief—wrapped round her mouth instead of round her by no means unshapely head—you may depend upon it she is suffering from an excess of tea meetings, for these tea meetings usually commence at 9 p.m. and finish at sunrise.

At the period of which I am writing, I employed three of these "boys;" among them, one David—not

David the son of Jesse, but David Mapekeyso, a Basuto "boy." He was a careless fellow and despite my almost constant admonitions, had a positive dog-like affection for me. David—in my eyes—and in those days I fear I was somewhat exacting—could do nothing right, and yet his affection stood the strain of repeated and almost devastating reprimands, and almost unceasing corrections.

One morning I was working in my small office in which I gave cash, kept the books, did my indenting, advertising, etc., when I heard something in the nature of a scuffle going on in the store; I looked out and beheld David escorted by two other store "boys" coming towards me.

"Well," I said testily, "What's the matter now?"

"David wants to see the master," said one.

"Well," I replied, "here I am, all that's left of me, what does he want?"

"Baas," said the spokesman, almost confidentially, "David's got a baby."

"Indeed," I said, "well done David."

"And," continued the 'boy,' "David wants to know if he can give his baby the Master's name."

"The Devil," I answered, somewhat taken aback, "what does he want to call his baby after me for?"

"Baas, David likes the Master."

"Yes, very well," I said somewhat mollified, for we all love to be liked if only by a black man. I haven't yet come across a man who is indifferent to the esteem of his fellows.

"And what *is* the Master's name?"

"My name is William Frederick," I replied.

"Oh," said my interrogator, somewhat disappointedly, "that isn't the Master's name, isn't the Master's name 'Fish?'"

"Is that the name David wants for his child?" I said—"poor little beggar, what a handicap!"

And so they named that unfortunate little black boy "Fish Mapekeyso."

A few months later David made up his mind to return to Basutu Land, and accordingly left me. A day or so after he had come to this decision, when I reached home for lunch, my wife said: "David is in the kitchen with his wife and child."

I went there, and there stood David all smiles with his wife, a nice clean-looking Basutu woman, and on her back was little "Fish" Mapekeyso.

David had brought me a farewell gift, and proudly opening the kitchen door, he pointed to a sheep tethered to one of the poles of the tennis court.

David left on his long journey, and it wasn't for months after that I learned, to my regret, that the poor chap had died at a place called Siberia, which is about 30 miles from Dordrecht, and his poor wife, with little "Fish" on her back, continued her pilgrimage alone.

I have often wondered what became of my little black namesake whose father was so devotedly attached to me.

"Fleecy locks and black complexion

Cannot alter nature's claim,

Looks *may* differ, but affection

Dwells in white and black the same."

Then came a second little daughter whom we named Phyllis, a pretty little mite, the image of her mother, and our family, so we thought, was complete.

The business had grown wonderfully, and it was at this time that I opened a branch at Indwe, some twenty miles distant from Dordrecht. Indwe was a coal mining area—and we did quite well there until there were almost more stores than residents, when I sold out of the place.

Meanwhile I had still further enlarged the Dordrecht premises by adding a grocery department. I had had no experience of the grocery trade, but it's surprising how with a general grip of commercial affairs, one can adapt oneself to new conditions. The man that you employ to run the department supplies the technical knowledge to which you add your administrative experience. Well, there you are; it's all as simple as "A,B,C." From

then onward there was nothing we didn't stock, from prunes to pianos, from penknives to ploughs, miniature Universal Providers.

My greatest trouble was always with assistants. Capable and trained men couldn't speak Dutch, and as fully two-thirds of my business was done with the Dutch people, it was imperative that we should be able to address them in their own language. They are very tolerant; an Englishman laughs when he hears those of other nationalities expressing themselves ungrammatically in what is to them a foreign language. This is not the case with our Dutch friends; when they hear a person trying to express himself in their language, they always assist him when they can by using a little English. This, you will remember, was my experience when I first arrived in Queenstown.

I remember once employing a London-trained man who condemned all my system. "I'm a London man, you know," he would say, "and things were not done in this way there; it's all wrong."

"Is that so, my friend," I replied, "well, you know, I happen to be a London-trained man too, but soon discovered that London methods would have to be very much modified to suit this small up-country town; we can make use of our London training as a basis, but must shape our ideas to local conditions. The methods that you condemn are the methods that I have employed to build up a successful business, and perhaps if they are so antiquated it would be better if you sought employment elsewhere. I have not engaged you to save a sinking ship, but to help me navigate a well-found vessel. Just go to the office and get your cheque please."

Naturally, it was not this only that caused his dismissal, it was one of many unsatisfactory traits in his character. The moral to be drawn from this is, don't be too hasty in your judgments; don't think everyone's methods are wrong save your own. If you intend to suffer fools gladly, at least do it unostentatiously, give the head of a successful concern some little credit for the

system he employs, those methods may not quite reach your high standard, but in all probability they appeal to his customers, and from his point of view, customers are far more valuable to him than *you* are; in fact, they are of primary importance to the business. *Customers first!*

By all means try to introduce new ideas, but in doing this don't condemn existing conditions too hastily. If he is a keen, capable business man—and there must be *something* in him, you know—he will speedily detect and appreciate your innovations, and if he considers them good will adopt them and will not fail to mark his approval, for ideas worth having are worth paying for. The average employer is not blind, he is generally more alert than you give him credit for being.

Speaking of assistants naturally reminds me of commercial travellers, and I have a very soft spot in my heart for these Ambassadors of Commerce, or Knights of the Road, for my own father was one.

A commercial traveller who knows his business can be of great assistance to a shopkeeper in this sense, that the latter can gain much useful information from him in the matter of values, qualities and styles. I have had travellers call upon me whose word I would accept implicitly. If they assured me that a certain line was selling I knew it *was* selling—and if, on the other hand, they advised me not to touch other doubtful lines, it was enough for me not to touch them. It's short-sighted policy to load up a buyer with unsaleable goods, for when he returns and sees his goods still on the shelves—well, it doesn't lead to further business, that's all. A trained man can detect at once whether or not a commercial is familiar with the goods he handles.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BOER WAR.

NATURALLY this autobiography would be incomplete were no reference made to that epoch-making period, the Boer War. I am not introducing the subject with any desire or intention of re-opening old wounds or re-awakening unhappy memories, far from it; if for one moment I thought this, then I would omit all reference to it; but I feel sure of this, we have reached a stage in South Africa to-day when both Boer and Briton can afford to jest over their reverses and victories of twenty seven years ago, and when we can laugh at our differences and misfortunes, then there cannot be very much bitterness left. To-day there is little talk of Dutch and English, we are all South Africans, with one common ideal—the advancement of our country. Why, dear me, my eldest daughter is married to a young minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, and my little grandson—whose shocking behaviour has been already commented upon in a preceding chapter, is half Dutch and half English, and I am *proud* of the little man. At her wedding reception, which took place in the Banqueting Hall of the City Hall of Capetown, of which beautiful city I then had the honour to be Mayor, (and of this more later), in replying to the toast of the “Bride’s parents,” I remarked, incidentally:—

“Twenty-five years ago, the bridegroom’s uncle, General Cronje, was captured by the British at Paardeberg, at which I rejoiced.

Twenty-five years later his nephew came to Capetown and captured my daughter, and again I rejoiced. I therefore think that the honours are easy, inclining a little perhaps in favour of the bridegroom.”

Among the many guests present was that distinguished sailor, Vice-Admiral Sir Maurice Fitzmaurice. As we were leaving the hall he stopped me and said:

“You know, Mr. Mayor, in the days you referred to I was Captain Fitzmaurice of H.M.S. Doris, and had to take General Cronje as a prisoner of war to St. Helena.”

The Union of South Africa is divided into four provinces. The Province of the Cape of Good Hope, the Province of the Orange Free State, the Province of the Transvaal and the Province of Natal, whose local needs are legislated for by what are termed “Provincial Councils,” which have nothing to do with the Union Parliament, or, as it is called “The House of Assembly,” or to be more correct still, “The Legislative Assembly.” The members of the Provincial Councils are termed M.P.C.’s., and of the Legislative Assembly “M.L.A.’s.” These Provincial Councils are each presided over by an Administrator (appointed by Parliament) who keeps in close touch and contact with every portion of his Provinces.

I have given this explanation because another guest on the occasion of my daughter’s wedding was the Administrator of the Cape of Good Hope, Mr. A. P. J. Fourie, who told me after that he had served as a private or burgher under Cronje, was captured in the same engagement and was also sent to St. Helena.

Still another who was present—Captain Caswell, the then Mayor of Simonstown, which is the Naval base in South Africa, came to me and said:—

“It’s strange you should have related that incident for I had to take the old general out to the “Doris” on one of my tugs.” Now was this not an extraordinary coincidence? In that festive gathering no less than four were associated or had had some connection with the capture and subsequent deportation of General Cronje, and yet, there we were, one happy family, with not one unkind thought among us, laughing and jesting over an incident—serious enough at the time, no doubt—which

had occurred when all were out to kill and destroy. *And surely this spirit of laughing forgetfulness is the right spirit.*

From the period of the miserable "Jameson Raid," which has never been and never *will* be forgotten, ill-feeling between the races had been steadily growing. The position of the "Uitlander," a liberal translation of which would be the "Outsider," in the Transvaal was becoming daily more acute and more difficult of solution. Now it is not my intention to discuss or give my views on either the rights or wrongs of the Boer War; it has always seemed to me that the clash was inevitable, just as I think the Great War *had* to be, so I think the Boer War *had* to be, and as I think all wars of the future will have to be, for I fear we are yet a very long way from the Millennium. In those now far-off days, while my sympathies were entirely British, I cannot disguise the fact, that among the enemy forces I had many dear and intimate friends, and, in the light of retrospect, I am perfectly willing to agree that in all probability there were faults on both sides. Let me then leave it at that. I merely wish to relate a few of my personal experiences during those eventful and never-to-be-forgotten days. They will be, as it were, side-lights on the great struggle which rent South Africa in twain.

War was declared in October, 1899, and almost immediately certain Boer Commandos crossed the Orange River from the Free State, primarily with the intention of prevailing upon their brothers in Cape Colony to join the Republican Forces. In this respect—as far as they went, for most of the Boers in the North Eastern portion of the Colony were waiting and wishing to be "commandeered"—they were distinctly successful. It's all very well for us to say that the Colonial Dutchman was wrong in going into rebellion, technically, no doubt he was, for as far as I can remember he had *no* grievance against the Imperial authorities; but, I put it to you, what should we, as Englishmen, have done in similar circumstances? To them, the invaders were an all-con-

quering army, and, being of the same race, is it surprising that they wished to be on the side of what they imagined was *victory*? No, it is perfectly true I didn't think along these lines then but time brings reflection and sometimes more reasonableness, we approach matters from a different standpoint in the light of subsequent happenings, so I put the question again—what, as Englishmen in similar circumstances, should *we* have done, I know and *you* know.

To legalise rebellion in case things should go wrong, and to set the minds of would-be rebels at rest, the all-conquering invading forces formally annexed the various towns they occupied, at the same time proclaiming residents in town and district, Free State Burghers. This, with many of the waverers, was their justification or excuse for joining up.

The Boers, under General Olivier, had occupied Aliwal North, immediately on the south side of the Orange River which, of course, divides the Free State from Cape Colony.

It was when the war had reached this stage that I decided my wife and two small girlies should leave Dordrecht, the position having become too threatening and acute. With them in safety elsewhere I should be left with a free hand to act in any emergency, for after all, war *is* war you know. I got them away by one of the last trains that left, for in the years that had passed between we had been provided with railway facilities—of a sort. They went to Queenstown where my wife's people lived and I was left alone to await the coming of the Boer Commando.

All manner of wild rumours were current but these left me quite undismayed, for we had heard of so many Boer victories that we were beginning to wonder if there were any British left to continue the struggle.

On December 1st, 1899, General Olivier and his Commando, General Olivier, who, with his entire force was subsequently captured in the Free State and sent to

St. Helena for a change of air, was encamped four miles outside Dordrecht.

On December 2nd—it was a Saturday I remember—at about 6 a.m. I was aroused from my slumbers by a loud knocking at my bedroom window.

“ Yes, what do you want,” I demanded.

“ Baas, baas,” came the agitated voice of one of my store boys, “ Die Boere mense kom an ” (The Boers are coming in).

“ At last,” I murmured, “ thank God,” for the tension had been very great and I was not sorry that what had to be had come.

Dressing very hurriedly, I was out in the main street in a jiffy to find the Boers already riding on to the Market Square, while not far behind rode General Olivier and some 500 armed men. There wasn't a uniformed man among the lot of them, some had rifles strapped across their backs, most of them were wearing yellow puggarees with the letters “ O.V.S. ” rudely printed upon them. Not a few of them carried umbrellas, a most distinctly *unmilitary* weapon and somewhat reminiscent of the late Duke of Cambridge.

As the column rode by I recognised many local men who, as they passed, greeted me in a perfectly friendly manner. “ Dag Oom Fish ” (Good day Uncle Fish), they shouted, although at that time many were old enough to be my father; still, in times of war and invasion one may not be *too* critical. “ My friends the enemy,” I thought, as in reality they were, for at no time did I receive anything but courtesy from them.

When all were assembled General Oliver solemnly read the proclamation formally annexing the place, and this is the manner in which the Free State came to Dordrecht. A real case of “ under two flags ” over which the renowned Ouida might have wept.

Then commenced a great exodus of the British residents—stage fright was the trouble with most of them I fear. Some left in carts (the railway bridges had been blown up so there were no trains), some on horseback,

others took their families in ox-waggon, while not a few walked, all proceeding to Queenstown some 40 miles distant and at that time a large British Military base.

I sullenly refused to open my store, but a word from the Commandant speedily made me realise that a state of war existed, that some 500 armed men were in possession of the place and that to kick against the pricks would be the height of folly.

There was a great demand for anything in the nature of food stuff, and overhearing an altercation going on between a huge Freestater and my last remaining assistant, I went to his help.

“Look here, sir!” he said in a heated and distinctly aggrieved way, “this fellow wants to pay me with ‘Oom Paul’ money.” “Oom Paul money,” bearing as it did the familiar features of President Kruger or “Oom Paul,” was the name given to the Transvaal coinage in Cape Colony. At the time it wasn’t legal tender, the banks would not accept it and it was looked at as more or less of a nuisance.

Just fancy having the temerity to argue with an armed enemy as to the nature and origin of the coin he was tendering in payment for goods he required. It is almost laughable to think of such a thing now. I wonder how many German soldiers paid for goods they required or desired in Belgium or in France during the Great War?

“You had better accept it, my boy,” I urged, “if not, then doubtless they’ll take what they want and pay nothing.” That one solitary assistant and I did a roaring business that morning.

There was the customary shaking hands as each one entered; “Hoe gaat het jong” (How goes it, chum), was their invariable salutation. These men were surely friends, not enemies! We listened to their stories of the progress of the war on which they had been fed, and came to the conclusion that the war couldn’t possibly last many minutes longer.

By and by most of them left for the laager on the outskirts of the town, and then I had time to review the situation, which as you will realise, required some reviewing. By proclamation the British residents had been given fourteen days notice to leave, with the alternative of signing neutrality, in which case they were permitted to remain.

The temptation to sign was very strong. I had a fairly considerable business there which represented all my worldly possessions—and “where the treasure is”—you know. But to sign neutrality savoured to me too much of cowardice. Personally I had no grievance against my Dutch friends, but were they not at war with my countrymen? and to sign “neutrality” in the great struggle would, from my point of view, be something tantamount to selling my birthright for a mess of pottage, which, from the earliest biblical days, has always been regarded as something shameful. “Undoubtedly I shall be the gainer if I do,” I thought, “but shall I not lose my self-respect? Shall I not forfeit my claim to manhood? Should I not ever afterwards be a poor emasculated thing, neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring?” It falls to the lot of few to make so momentous a decision. “What if I do lose all?” I argued, “I am a young man and will start again after this dreadful war is over. But it’s hard lines,” I thought, “very hard lines after all my work. No, I *won’t* sign,” and this was my final decision. Not knowing what might happen, I persuaded my last assistant to leave, which, very reluctantly, he did, and I was left entirely alone in charge of all departments. “Alone stood brave Horatius, but constant still in mind.” At the moment I almost wished I was back in Greenwich again, but decided that even *war* was preferable to those sordid conditions. That afternoon, as I was sadly pondering over the events of the morning, a local man—Gert Van Niekerk by name—who had “joined up” with the Republican Forces, entered the store literally *bristling* with weapons—a most terrifying spectacle. He was wearing two bandoliers, a Mauser rifle was sus-

pended over his back, and stuck in his belt, which looked surprisingly like one worn by the British Tommy, was a heavy revolver. "What a pity it was I had sold mine so many years ago in East London!" I thought. "I might have shot him and that would have meant one Boer less." But Gert, who I knew very well—despite his aggressive—I won't say "military" appearance was, in reality, one of the most harmless of men. For that matter he was no Boer at all—for the interpretation of "Boer" is simply "Farmer"—he was really a local stone mason and builder, and a very poor one at that.

He was perfectly friendly, by his demeanour—not his appearance—one might almost have thought that he had come to ask for a little credit as he had done many times before he rose to the giddy heights of a Republican Officer, which request had been consistently refused.

We shook hands, made the usual references to the weather; I asked after his wife and family, whom I rejoiced to hear were well, save for his youngest child who had whooping cough. These courtesies being over he produced a formidable-looking blue paper, all sealed and signed, the contents of which he read aloud to me in most excellent English—for Gert's English was infinitely superior to his Dutch. The purport of the document was that I, William Frederick Fish, Merchant, of Dordrecht, in the Orange Free State, was commandeered to appear with horse, saddle and bridle, gun, bandolier, ammunition and 1 days' provisions at the Court House on the following Monday morning, to fight for the liberty and freedom of all true South Africans.

I protested that I was a British Subject and demanded the 14 day's grace as proclaimed. That the only weapon I possessed was an air gun and that the only horse I owned was a *clothes horse*.

"Sorry," he said, with almost a ludicrous attempt at dignity, "I have to perform my duty, I'll leave the commandeering note with you, good afternoon." Saying which he left the store to serve similar documents on other stranded Britishers.

Now, as I have said, I knew Gert Van Niekerk very well; he is dead now, poor fellow, so this will be no breach of confidence, and were he here I haven't the least doubt but that we should enjoy a good laugh over this little episode. I met him that same evening at the hotel at which I was staying—for on the approach of the Boers I had closed and barricaded my dwelling house. He was minus his weapons by this time. We had a drink together, "Gezondheid" (Good Health) I said, as we clinked glasses. "Gezondheid!" indeed; at that moment I would have rejoiced in shooting him. Then my foolish tongue ran riot, and thinking I was doing him a good turn, I told him how foolish he had been to join the Boer forces and doubly foolish in *daring* to commandeer me.

"But I didn't join them voluntarily," he protested, "I was commandeered."

"Ah, to be sure," I said, "but I fear you were too willing a conscript." Thinking I had impressed him I enlarged upon my subject and really thought I had caused him to see the error of his ways. I reduced him almost to tears—and he was nearly at the point of apologising to me on behalf of the Free State Government.

Sunday was a peaceful, quiet day, but early on Monday morning two armed burghers called at my house, arrested me and marched me to the Court House or Krijs Kantoor (War Office).

The Landrost (magistrate) was seated at a table, and looking very sternly at me said:

"You are to take your pass and leave the place within 24 hours."

"But why?" I demanded.

"Simply because you've been talking too much," he said.

Then I knew that my friend and enemy—Van Niekerk—had given me away.

A pass was handed to me; I have it still and reproduce it here. It was an order to proceed to British territory within 48 hours. Here was a pretty kettle of

G

fish—a store containing a large stock and I was ordered to leave the place within 48 hours—such a problem required some thought, you know.

Dorchester U.S.A.
3 December 1899

Werkhof werd hiersmede volkend aan
Onder Afweer W. H. Fish om binnen
Oor tijd van 48 uren terug te
naar de Holonische begeven

J. J. de Wet
W. H. Landroost

All my protests proving unavailing, back to my business I went and commenced pacing the floor of the store, looking as happy as an elderly London shopwalker, with tender feet, under notice to leave.

In all my wonderful repertoire of language—greatly enlarged for the occasion, I could find nothing bad enough to say or think about that Landroost.

I will not weary you by relating how I managed to get out of this trouble and how I succeeded in getting the full fourteen days of grace, but I did, and it was a considerable relief to me.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOME MORE BOER WAR.

IT was during the 14 days of grace—or notice, whichever you please, when, as a business man, I was utterly demoralised (I question whether I ever regained my pre-Boer War keenness and alertness), that a young Dutchman whom I knew very well and moreover liked, but who I afterwards discovered was a spy, called on me, and, in a very excited manner, told me that he had just ridden in from a place called Bird's River, which is about 15 miles along the road to Sterkstroom, where he had seen General Gatacre (or "Backacher," as he was called by the "Tommies") with 3,000 men, marching on Dordrecht.

This was too much for me! I have always been a very impulsive man, so, locking the door of my poor, deserted store, I positively rushed up the street to impart the glorious tidings to my few remaining British friends.

"Gatacre's coming!" I almost shouted, "let's go out and lead him in!"

One of these Britishers, my own particular friend, who was thoroughly acquainted with my excitable temperament, and who, anticipating that sooner or later I should get into trouble, had thoughtfully kept a mare in his stable for me. She was a tall, ambling creature with an injured look in her eyes. I don't know why, for up to that time I had never ridden her.

We called on two other friends, and, in a very short space of time, our little cavalcade of four rode out of town in the direction of Bird's River.

"How glorious!" I thought, "to come riding back and directing a real live British general! Why, hence-

forth I should be able to style myself a "General Director."

As we rode on, and on, and on, that mare became more dejected-looking than ever, but I could quite understand her feelings. No doubt when she saw the British forces she would cheer up a bit.

We rode on, reached Bird's River, rode 10 miles beyond Bird's River, but no sign of Gatacre or his force did we see.

Then we realised that we had been sold, and scented trouble.

The great thing was—if I may be permitted to use the expression—to cover up our tracks. In other words, to invent some valid excuse for our journey which would satisfy the Boer authorities on our return.

A Dutch farmer who lived in the vicinity had been captured by the British. "Let us go and commiserate with poor Mrs. Botha," I said.

We did so, but Mrs. Botha wanted no commiseration. She was bitter, extremely bitter, against the British for having made her husband a prisoner of war. It didn't look too hopeful, and my spirits sank to zero.

Dejectedly we rode back to town. That mare of mine, with true womanly inconsistency, had brightened up, and the more disconsolate we became, the more skittish she grew. She had lost her injured look and wore an almost laughing expression. What extraordinary things females are, to be sure. They've an innate sense of humour undreamt of by man, but have an irritating way of showing it at the wrong time. I am convinced that that mare was a pro-Boer, and, seeing the sad plight we were in, couldn't resist a smile. As we dismounted in front of our hotel, an armed guard came forward and formally arrested us. It was done in a perfectly friendly, apologetic manner; we were simply informed that it had been reported that we had ridden out to carry information to the enemy and that we were to report ourselves at 9 o'clock next morning to the Landrost. I may say the first Landrost had been superseded, and his place had been filled by another, named

Potgieter, who knew not Joseph. Visions of being placed against a wall at early dawn and shot, a long term of hard labour, and all manner of things flashed through my mind, and I passed a restless night.

Whether it was that the new Landrost was unduly credulous the next morning, or whether some friendly influence had been at work (I suspect the latter, for most of the stationary enemy were personal friends), whatever it was our cock-and-bull "Mrs. Botha" story was accepted and we were admonished and released.

It was after my reprieve, if I may use the word, that Potgieter, the Landrost, took something in the nature of a *quid pro quo* for his leniency.

Some mornings during those 14 days of grace the town was absolutely deserted. All the British residents were under a cloud, and, not knowing what was likely to happen, were not inclined to spend the little money they had, while the Dutch people were either away on commando or busy on their farms.

One morning I was disturbed from my slumbers by a loud knocking on my front door, for, although I had barricaded the house, I still slept there, with the object of protecting the place as long as I could. I answered the summons, and found two local railway gangers, whom I knew very well, waiting outside. They were fully armed, as well they might be, seeing the desperate character they had called upon! They explained that the Landrost—or Commandant (for meanwhile he had been given military rank)—wanted me at the store *at once*. They escorted me down the street, I wearing a "to-be-shot-at-dawn" expression on my face. The Commandant was waiting for me at my place of business. We shook hands, and he gave me the latest war news: "*Ten thousand British had been killed the day before at Ladysmith, and Generals Whyte and Buller had been hanged in the fort at Johannesburg*"! Dreadful, dreadful! He wanted a little clothing for his own use, he said, and proceeded to select about £25 worth—from boots to hats, with socks and shirts and undervests in between, and a few little things such as

stockings, gloves, handkerchiefs and a dress or so for his wife. I always like to see a man take presents for his wife; it shows a thoughtful, kindly spirit. I do the same thing myself sometimes, when my better half has hinted sufficiently long, but I object to giving presents to other men's wives! Before he had finished my friend the Commandant had fitted himself out from stem to stern, and I am convinced never had such a complete wardrobe in all his life. It was almost as complete as the list I had made out so many years ago when I went in for fire insurance in my apprenticeship days!

He refused to sign any acknowledgment, openly stating that, save for his clemency, I should have been dead and buried. There was something to be said for his argument, so I clothed him, shook hands with him, and placed the "sale" to the debit of profit and loss.

The period of 14 days' grace was drawing to an end. We met frequently and discussed the matter of signing neutrality, but always arrived at the conclusion that it would be better *not* to do so.

Meanwhile I had got into touch with a refugee from Johannesburg, a man in my own line of business, who, on account of his wife's serious illness, was compelled to remain in Dordrecht. He undertook to run the concern until war conditions made it possible for me to return, for, despite our many reverses, I was confident of the ultimate success of British arms.

Right to the very last the old drapery training asserted itself. Before I left I took every line down, that is, of course, the goods displayed on the lines, I wrapped up as many of the fixtures as I could, pulled up a portion of the store floor and secreted all the firm's books beneath it, and took out all the goods from the windows until the place looked for all the world like a leaky old windjammer prepared for a 40-foot gale round Cape Horn way.

The local bank had closed down the night before Dordrecht had been occupied by the Boers. I had a couple of hundred pounds in gold and silver in the safe. This I tied in a canvas bag ready to take with me.

My household goods, too, needed attention. The few valuables we possessed I hid beneath the floor of our small drawing room, where, no doubt, had the enemy been anything but a kindly enemy—and I shall always affirm that Britain never had a more generous foe—they would speedily have been discovered. Then, nailing a few additional sheets of galvanised iron over the windows, I left the house to look after itself.

On December 14th, 1899, four of us—the last of the Mohicans, the irreconcilables, if you like (for many, meanwhile, elected to sign neutrality and remain)—took our departure. Two of us—myself and another—drove in a one-horse buggy, and the other two were on horse-back. One was astride that ridiculous mare I have mentioned. She was looking more melancholy than ever. If the creature had only looked more cheerful we should all have been happier. She was a positive wet blanket, and one would have thought, judging by her dejected appearance, that she was carrying the whole burden of the war and several other wars, too, on her back. Like many of her sex she had no sense of proportion.

At the lower end of the town a little group of those who had elected to remain had assembled, and raised a feeble cheer as we passed. It was a poor, lame attempt, but then, you must remember, as I have already remarked, we Britishers were under a cloud.

We had not proceeded very far on our journey when we met the vicar of the English church at Dordrecht, who told us of Gatacre's reverse at Stormberg, which was not exactly cheering news. But, for that reverse, I am convinced we should never have had to leave the place. All looked as black as it could look. We had left everything to the mercy of the enemy, and, for all we knew, were ruined.

That night we slept at a place called Buffeldoorns, which, at that time, was the headquarters of the Native Levies. These were raised to prevent any invasion of Kaffirland by the Boers. Early next morning we continued our journey to Queenstown, which we reached

about noon. The place was literally *thronged* with troops of all sorts.

"If only a few of these had been sent," I thought bitterly, "it would not have been necessary for us to leave our homes."

But large bodies move slowly, cumbersomeness is fatal to quick movement, and meanwhile hearts are broken.

It was not long before I had fixed up my wife and girlies in a small house, for, anxious as they were that we should do so, I could not accept the hospitality of her parents for what seemed likely to be an undeterminable period, and although our housekeeping savoured somewhat of a picnic, we were, nevertheless, very happy there; that is, as happy as suspense and anxiety would allow us to be.

On Christmas Day the report reached me that my store had been looted and the premises burned down. This did not make exactly for cheerfulness, but still, we wished each other "a merry Christmas," and made light of, what was, to all appearances, *ruination*. Ah, that's where the buoyancy of youth comes in.

Of my protracted stay in Queenstown, of the wholesale business I conducted there (for I could not be idle), I will say nothing. In due course, largely owing to the pressure from other quarters, probably due to the relief of Kimberley and Ladysmith, a battle fought by the men of Brabant's Horse, when the shells exploded right over the town (the fragments of some of which I have kept to this day), Dordrecht was free of the enemy. Its claim to being Free State territory was cancelled, and we were permitted to return.

Naturally, I was never able to determine the extent of my losses, which, unquestionably, had been considerable, but little or no damage had been done, and there is little doubt that subsequent good business consequent upon the town being crowded with British troops more than compensated me.

The man who had been the last to leave me on the occasion of the Boer invasion was the first to return,

and, on his arrival, the bank not yet having re-opened in Dordrecht, I dispatched him on horseback to Queens-town with some £500, all in sovereigns, which had been taken during my absence, and which I found carefully concealed in a pudding basin.

The interior of the store looked a positive wreck, but we soon made it as attractive as ever, and we became the popular shopping place with the "Tommies."

On account of shipping difficulties, I made every use of the parcels post, and on one occasion by this method imported 500 pairs of riding breeches, at which the local postmaster was greatly distressed, for in his small office he had scarcely room to turn.

In retrospect this reminds me of what took place in Capetown some two years ago, when the great shipping strike was on. Two P. & O. vessels, with a very large number of emigrants aboard en route for Australia, were held up in Table Bay for some six weeks. There was, in consequence, great distress among the passengers, who were all, more or less, of the poorer class. Through the Press, as Mayor of the city, I made an appeal for clothing for these unfortunate people, and oh! what a wonderful response there was. In no time the Mayor's Parlour was literally loaded with parcels containing clothing and goods of every description, and, in addition, several hundreds of pounds were subscribed in cash. How proud I was of the citizens of Capetown, who are famed for their generosity. Later, the Premier of Australia wrote thanking us for what we had done in that great emergency.

It would make altogether *too* long a story to recount the many interesting and exciting episodes of those three years of war, which had both their tragic and amusing sides.

To me, more irksome than the war itself, were the martial law regulations, which usually were administered by some little local nimcompoops who had as much diplomacy in their composition as a penny candle. Little Jacks in office as ill fitted to rule as a Standard I. schoolboy, but who, in the glory and importance of a

brass hat, became, for the moment, little tin gods. Ruling where formerly they had been ruled changed many a quite decent fellow into a first-class prig.

Farmers, if they were Dutch, were only allowed to purchase goods on an order signed by the Commandant or his deputy. This, in a measure, was necessary, because, there is little doubt that, as the campaign developed into guerrilla warfare, the roving bands of Boers obtained their supplies from their sympathisers living in the various districts in which they operated. But still, there is little doubt that individual power was abused, which was, perhaps, inevitable during such abnormal times.

Naturally, as I have already remarked, many of my customers were personal friends, and, war or no war—although they all knew on which side *my* sympathies were—we were still friends.

There was one old lady, a very dear old friend of mine, a Mrs. Labuschagne (pronounced in colloquial Dutch “Lubberskier,” as her name implies, a descendant of the brave old Huguenot stock, and a notorious Boer sympathiser).

“Mr. Fish,” she said to me one day, addressing me, of course, in Dutch, “I want a pair of corduroy trousers for my husband.”

“Where is the order, Mrs. Labuschagne?” I asked.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Fish, the Commandant won’t give me an order, and my poor husband is almost in rags.”

Remembering that she had purchased two pairs for this same distressed husband only a fortnight before, it didn’t say much for the quality of my firm’s corduroy trousers, did it?

“I’m sorry, old friend,” I replied, “It’s as much as my liberty is worth to supply them.”

She made use of all the customary feminine wiles to induce me to supply her, but I was adamant. Frankly, apart from breaking the martial law regulations, I did not wish to be a party to prolonging the war by supplying the enemy with clothing. “No,” I

said, with some finality, "I'm sorry, but it can't be done."

Then she stood up—I can see her still—and leaning over the counter whispered in my ear: "Mr. Fish, if you will only sell me those trousers, I will wear them myself until I am out of town."

I may mention that a strong guard was stationed at each end of the town, which examined every parcel which was being taken out of the place.

Oh, Eve, Eve, Eve! The same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow! Her appeal was too much for me, the temptation too great. I *fell*, and one more Boer was fixed up with trousers for the remainder of the war. I wonder what the modern young lady with her dainty "undies" would have thought of Mrs. Labuschagne's underclothing on that occasion!

As illustrating some of the pettifogging annoyances in the mal-administration of martial law, I remember on one occasion (I was Mayor of the place at the time), I

*Permissio is hereby granted
to William Fred. Fish to
remain with in the village
of Dorchester until 12 midnight
R.M.'s Office
Dorchester
6/3/1900
J. H. G. J. J.
for Col. Leary*

took my wife and children to Queenstown, where they were to remain while I proceeded to East London. *Their* pass, which I reproduce, permitted them to proceed to

CAPE COLONY.

No. 6875

ORIGINAL.

(To be retained by Passenger.)

Mr. Rich & 2 Children
of Dordrecht has authority to
proceed from Queenstown
to Dordrecht on 4/6/02.
and return on Single



*To be deleted if not required.

N.B.—This does "not" entitle the holder to travel from

Queenstown and back, *mine* to East London and back. Queenstown is about half the distance on the same direct line of railway. In due course I returned, intending to break my journey, pick up my family at Queenstown, and proceed to Dordrecht. To my amazement, when I reached the former town, I was informed by the Station Commandant, who, in times of peace was a commercial traveller who had frequently taken orders from me and at one time had been an officer under whom

I had served in the Queenstown Rifle Volunteers, that my pass only permitted me to proceed from East London to Dordrecht, and he would not allow me to break my journey. As a matter of fact, through the good offices of the stationmaster, who had a better sense of proportion than that brass-hatted Commandant, I *did* do so, but that's another story. That Station Commandant, who like many others, thought, and I have little doubt hoped the war would continue indefinitely, returned to civil life and his former occupation, but although he called on me many times, never once did I give him an order, so chickens came home to roost!

This incident emphasises the painful lack of diplomacy which was characteristic of most of these hatred-manufacturers. Oh! if I had but time and space, what stories I could tell of the many unnecessary indignities which some of my farmer friends had to suffer. War *is* war, you know, and it cannot be conducted with kid gloves, but why allow such responsible positions to be filled with such unlikely and unsuitable individuals?

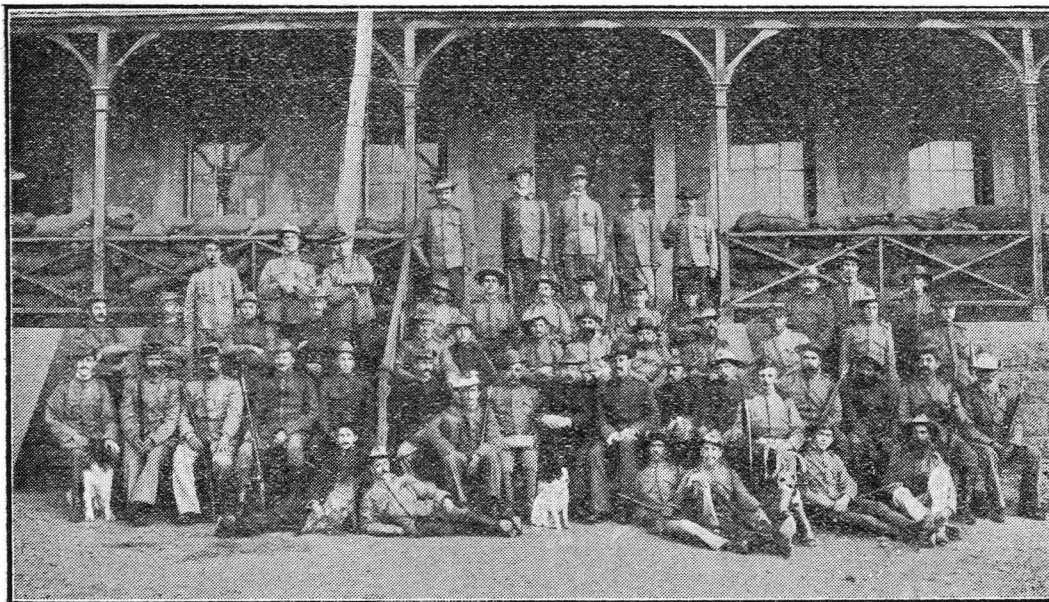
CHAPTER XIV.

TOWN GUARDS, AND WHY I SHOULD RECEIVE THE VICTORIA CROSS.

AS this heart-breaking war proceeded orders were issued by the Commander-in-Chief that each town in the disaffected areas must provide it's own defence and this led to the formation of Town Guards.

In Dordrecht two or three so-called ex-military men appointed themselves officers while the remainder of us formed the rank and file. In those days, when every nobody was a somebody, and when, like Gilbert and Sullivan's Dukes, officers were three a penny, it was somewhat of a distinction to be able to write "O.S.P." after your name, the interpretation of which is:—"Only surviving private."

This self-appointed business was the cause of considerable dissatisfaction which reached the ears of those in authority with the result that orders were gazetted whereby citizens were permitted to select their own officers. As Mayor it fell to my lot to call a public meeting for the purpose of this selection and I was rewarded by being elected a lieutenant. This was due to no special military gifts on my part; true, I had served for four years with the Queenstown Volunteers and could still "Form Fours" as alertly as anyone, but "Form Fours" seemed rather pointless when dealing with an enemy who was potting you from a thousand yards away, instead of potting one he would pot four at a time. Then there was my school training under that irascible martinet of a sargeant; but this, I fear had very little weight with my fellow citizens. The point that influenced them was that as Mayor, I could hardly hold less than commissioned rank, the dignity of the town demanded this, and thus it was that I came to hold Her Majesty's commission at a paltry rate of pay of sixteen shillings a day for half an hour's drill.



The Dordrecht Town Guard.

(The Author is sitting in the middle in a dark uniform, with a white dog at his feet.,

I was now, however, with the second *improved* Town Guard, a portrait of which I submit. The smaller officer with a moustache and a dog at his feet, is myself. I confess that I have the appearance of having the whole burden of the war on my shoulders. Possibly the quality of the Dordrecht Town Guard may be better understood by introducing an article which I wrote shortly after the conclusion of hostilities. I was laid aside with a badly broken leg, and to overcome the deadly monotony of inactivity which is abhorrent to me, I devoured anything in the shape of literature I could lay my hands on. Among the many papers and periodicals that came my way was a copy of that well-known weekly "Tit Bits," the enterprising proprietors of which were offering prizes of £5 each to soldiers who had served in the South African War, for articles on certain subjects. Among these was one which was to be entitled "Why I should receive the Victoria cross," and another, "What I would do with Lord Kitchener's Grant if he handed it to me." I competed for both and, by good fortune, *won* both. In due course a cheque for £10 reached me which helped to defray my not inconsiderable doctor's bill, and I feel that in the circumstances, I cannot do better than introduce the Victoria Cross article as it appeared in "Tit Bits" a quarter of a century ago.

WHY I SHOULD RECIEVE THE VICTORIA CROSS.

Before I commence to give the reason why I consider myself deserving of the Victoria Cross I must first explain, or possibly some evil-disposed person, when the prize has been awarded to me, may dispute my right to it on the grounds of some technical irregularity.

The condition upon which the prize of £5 is offered is that the competitor must either be a regular soldier or a member of the Colonial Forces, but no mention has been made and no provision laid down for the Town Guardsman. When the history of the late war comes to be written Town Guards will form no inconspicuous part and of *all* Town Guards throughout the Colony, none will figure more brilliantly than that of Dordrecht and,

moreover, I venture to say, if the historian is a fair, unprejudiced man, no individual will stand out so conspicuously a hero as *Private William Fish*, of the Dordrecht Town Guard, who still lives in hopes of receiving the thanks of both houses of Parliament, a grant of £50,000 or more, and a peerage.

Now it is useless for the disappointed competitor to object to my being the winner of the prize on the ground of ineligibility, for all Town Guards were incorporated with the Colonial Defence Force, and consequently I come under the heading of "Colonial Forces."

We were all compelled to join the Town Guard. There was no alternative; join or be deported as "Undesirable," and not wishing to pay a protracted visit to some coast town two or three hundred miles away, we joined.

There was always an element of topsy-turvydom though about *our* Town Guard, for the higher you were in the social scale, the *lower* you ranked in the "Guards" (sounds nicer than Town Guards, don't you think?)

Thus, therefore, the resident magistrate became a full private. His Worship the Mayor was orderly to one of the sergeants and drew an extra allowance as cook to the sergeants mess; while the Church of England minister, who had shown great bravery when Dordrecht was threatened with attack, by throwing open his church for the protection of the women and children, was rewarded with the position of Acting Corporal. Sheer influence, nothing else.

The baker was appointed Officer Commanding with the local rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and two shop assistants were lieutenants; hence it happened that the merchant had to salute his assistant when on parade and threaten to dismiss him from his employ when back at business.

The uniform of *our* Town Guard too was most effective; Private Magistrate always turned out to drill wearing a silk hat, frock coat and puttie leggings. His Worship the Mayor (the orderly) came to full dress parade

attired in a tam o'shanter, dressing gown, dancing pumps, carrying, of course, his rifle and bandolier, while round his waist attached to a sort of pulley, was an obsolete sword. He looked a terror such as no respectable Boer would have dared to face. But there, I have no time for further description, I must recount the deed for which I consider the V.C. should be presented to me.

It was the night upon which the Wodehouse Yeomanry had been captured by Fouché. Shortly after the fall of Jamestown, Dordrecht was threatened with attack. We had no garrison, so the Town Guard—fifty strong—was called out. A native "boy" called and warned me for duty just as I was retiring for the night.

"Baas," he said, "de commandant he say de Town Guard him must fall in."

He was an educated native from the mission school.

Ah, the proudest moment of my life had come. Before the morrow the world would ring with the gallant deeds of Private William Fish.

My wife was terror-stricken and gave way to tears, but I girded on my armour heroically. A metal dish cover served as a breast plate. Two overcoats, a staff cap (left behind by an artillery officer who had visited us a week or so previously), a bundle of sandwiches, a bottle of cold tea, my gun and bandolier and all was complete.

Then a painful leave-taking of my wife, recommending her, should I fall, not to take in boarders but to sponge on her friends, for boarders are "taken in" quite enough in South Africa, and I was gone into the night.

Scene.—The Hill-top. The Sleeping Village Below and Private Fish pacing backwards and forwards doing sentry go.

"Halt! who goes there? Ah, I see, it's you, Lieutenant Brown." (Brown was senior apprentice in my store).

"All right, sir," said the lieutenant apologetically, "only inspecting rounds, sir. Would you like a little something hot, sir?" (Depraved young rascal).

"Thanks, lieutenant, it is a little cold, just hold my gun, I'll go to the tent and get some."

The "little something hot" revived me. I resumed my backward and forward vigil, when hark! something is moving. The night was intensely dark, and something was creeping, creeping, creeping, slowly towards me.

One of the enemy's scouts surveying our trenches, or, perhaps some treacherous Town Guardsman leading the enemy in.

"Private Fish! do your duty!"

So said the still, small voice within me, and "Private Fish" longed for another "little something hot."

And the form crept stealthily on.

"Halt! who goes there?" I shouted. No reply. And the form crept nearer and nearer.

To fire a shot would be to alarm the town. The enemy would be among us burning our homes and murdering our wives.

"P-R-R-Rivate Fish! D-D-Do Yo-Yo-Your DUTY!"

"No, I must not shoot, for there's no knowing who I may hit," Thus my thoughts ran. And then a brilliant idea occurred to me.

The Town Guards had never been served out with bayonets. (Disgraceful neglect on the part of the War Office. Had Town Guards been served out with them the war would have been over long ago). But some of us married men carried carving knives instead. I had mine with me.

I would test the truth of the story that the Boer hates cold steel (he might prefer it if it were warmed a little, but I'm not sure).

On this occasion I fastened the improvised bayonet on to the gun with my socks.

The creeping form came *on, on, on*. Already I could hear him breathing. My Town Guard courage was oozing out of me with the "something hot" my lieutenant had invited me to drink. But I once read in a book that a nervous man who performs a brave act is doubly deserving of recognition.

Oh *why* had I challenged him? Had I not done so I could have hidden. But, the *women and children!* Oh, I could stand it no longer. Lowering my bayonet to the charge *I rushed at the enemy*—

AND THEN I KNEW NO MORE.

It was early dawn. I was lying on the ground with a crowd of Town Guardsmen round me.

“Whatever was he dreaming of?” “Off his chump!” “Drop too much!”

These were the remarks I heard as I opened my eyes. Surely they could not refer to *me—me*, a respectable merchant—albeit a private in the Town Guard!

I sat up. A dead mule was lying near me. Nothing strange about that, though, there are dead mules all over the veld now, for the Town Guard practices shooting at the butts every week. But what's that sticking out of it? Looks like a gun—*my* gun. Well, I never! This then, was the Boer I had killed. This was the creeping form. But I claim that £5, for had it been a Boer my carving knife would have done for him and I should have saved the town. The local paper took the matter up in the wrong light altogether. In fact, to a high-spirited fellow like myself, it was most offensive. The paragraph I refer to is the following:—

“The Town Guardsman who went on duty with a tin-covered chest and fainted at the sight of a mule, should in future go provided with a tin-opener, which would be of great assistance to those who may be called upon to restore him to consciousness.”

But understand me clearly. It is not because I killed a *mule* that I claim the V.C., but because the same feelings which prompted me to charge that animal would have compelled me to attack a Boer. Had I been born under a fortunate star it would have been a Boer, and the world would have sung the praises of Private Fish; as it is, the Dordrecht people, when they speak of the incident, say:—

“WHISKY.”

CHAPTER XV.

WHY GENERAL FRENCH REFUSED THE FREEDOM OF DORDRECHT.

IT was long after the occupation of Pretoria by Lord Roberts. It was after the triumphant return of the C.I.V.'s to London, where, amid general rejoicing, they had been acclaimed the victors. It was after the war was "officially" over that guerilla warfare commenced, and untrained and inexperienced Boer generals outwitted all the strategy of the British army. I am writing this in no disparaging way, far from it, for, knowing the nature of the country, I fully appreciate the difficulties the British commanders were up against. Where almost every farmhouse in the wide-spreading districts of the Free State and the mountainous regions of Northern Cape Colony contained Boer sympathisers, it was a comparatively easy matter for the enemy to evade the British. I am not discussing the merits or demerits of guerilla warfare. It merely had the effect of unduly prolonging hostilities by which none were the gainers. Still, as the old saying has it, "All's fair in love and war," and despite the bells of victory having been rung the war could not end until the last of the guerilla commandos had been subdued.

I was Mayor of Dordrecht at that time, and the Wodehouse District, of which that town is the centre, was a happy hunting ground for these roving Boer forces.

I was walking down the main street of the place one morning, when the Commandant, all top-booted, spurred and brass-hatted, wearing his second-best martial law all-the-war-on-my-shoulders expression, came riding up to me.

“ Oh, good-morning, Mr. Mayor,” (something unusual was going to happen, for it wasn't often that we were favoured with a “ Good-morning ” from such almightiness), “ would you people like to meet General French ? ”

“ Delighted to,” I replied, “ when will he be here ? ”

“ Well, I don't quite know, don't yer know,” he said, “ but I'll soon find out.”

“ When he comes,” I remarked, shouldering the responsibility, “ we should like to entertain him at a public luncheon,” and with that Lieutenant-Colonel Smithson, who in times of peace was a baker and confectioner, rode away.

I called a public meeting, at which it was decided that we should entertain our distinguished guest not to a luncheon but at a banquet.

Neither of the hotel proprietors would accept such a responsibility, and it was resolved that we should ask our wives to provide the meal, which it was agreed, with the consent of the local magistrate, who was present in his capacity as D.A.M.J. (Deputy Assistant Military Justifier), should be held in the court house, as the Town Hall was being used as a military hospital. If there was one thing which those busy Dordrecht housewives excelled in, it was cooking !

The arrangements proceeded apace, and willing help was forthcoming from all quarters. The printer got busy on the menus, the local carpenters constructed long tables on tressels. The Town Clerk and I prepared the address, in which, although no such honour existed, we formally presented him with *the freedom of Dordrecht*.

A sub-committee was appointed to supervise the erection of a rostrum in the market square, from which the general would address the citizens. Everything went swimmingly along. As martial law—which is no law at all—was still in operation, the Commandant, very generously, issued an order that the bells of the Dutch Reformed Church should be rung as our guest, accompanied by his staff, rode into town. Everything was in readiness. Tables were set, seats duly allocated, I had

my speech all prepared, in which I stressed the point of "the flower of the British army" and all that sort of thing. It was a very fine speech as speeches go, and I was rather proud of it. We were all on the *qui vive* of expectancy—any moment the famous general might arrive. I was mentally rehearsing that speech of mine because I didn't wish to break down or anything like that, when a telegraph messenger appeared on the scene and handed me the familiar yellow missive. I tore it open, and, to my amazement, this is what I read:—

It was dated Stormberg Junction, which, you will remember, was the scene of poor old Gatacre's first reverse.

"Greatly appreciate the honour you propose to confer on me. In other circumstances and in happier times, nothing would give me greater pleasure. But I must ask you to defer this honour, as hostilities are still proceeding."

If a fifteen-pounder had exploded over us it could hardly have caused greater consternation. Oh yes, the banquet took place, and, having memorised it, I made my speech to an imaginary guest. It was too good to be simply thrown away, but it fell as flat as ditch-water. It was a case of "'Hamlet' without the Prince of Denmark," and it took the community some days to recover from the shock. The people wanted to blame me, but I *ask* you! As Mayor I was vested with certain powers, it is true, but those powers, rightly or wrongly, gave me no control over the British army. The whole thing was a dismal failure. For anybody—even the King of England himself—to refuse the *freedom of Dordrecht*, the first and last time it has ever been offered, was, to our minds, an unprecedented insult.

A few days later the Commandant called on me. He had received a wire from French to the effect that he would be passing through Dordrecht the next day and would like to meet the Mayor and citizens.

Now, after the treatment we had received, I had mentally sent General French and all his staff to

“Coventry.” “These men, big as they are, mustn’t be allowed to snub a community, however small, with impunity,” but then I relented a little, and thought “Oh, well, after all, he did relieve Kimberley,” and perhaps, taking everything into consideration, he was right in placing *duty* before pleasure. But to *refuse the freedom of Dordrecht!* Well! I communicated the news to some of my friends, and the next day, when the general and his staff rode into town, we were waiting outside the hotel to meet him. There were no joy bells ringing; I had set my face against that, for, after all, the slight he had administered must be brought home to him somehow. He never dismounted. I stood bare-headed and delivered a short speech. It was not the speech I had prepared for the banquet, mind you! Oh dear no, I robbed it of all its fine and flowing periods. I did squeeze in something about “The flower of the British army”; that was too fine a passage to be simply thrown away. I don’t suppose he had ever heard it expressed quite as nicely before, but, altogether, my few poor halting remarks lacked all soul and enthusiasm, as we say in the drapery trade; they had no body in them. After briefly replying, the general shook hands with me, saluted our little company, and rode away in the direction of Queenstown. I am not certain, but, as far as I can remember, his chief of staff on that occasion was one Major Douglas Haig, who was destined to become England’s greatest general, and whose unexpected death threw the whole Empire into mourning. A man of great heart and high ideals.

During the Great War, when General French’s name became a household or world-famed name, I sometimes wondered whether, when all the honours were being showered upon him, when from plain General French, as I remember him, he became Lord French of Ypres (or “Wipers,” as the “Tommies” pronounced it), whether his thoughts ever reverted to the time when he wantonly refused an honour which was not ours to bestow, but one which each of us was prepared to accept responsibility for. I mean *The freedom of Dordrecht!*

CHAPTER XVI.

A BROKEN LEG AND A TRIP TO ENGLAND.

AND now I must leave the war period and continue this autobiography, for I have still a long, long way to go. I wish there was time and space to tell of my meeting with General Gatacre. I should like to have told you of our wonderful "Flying Columns" with gallant old cows bringing up the rear to provide the officers with fresh milk. You would have been interested to hear of that momentous Christmas when we intended to entertain the stationary troops at dinner, and how, before the feast took place, news came that the Boers were advancing on the town. How all the good cheer had to be abandoned, and instead we spent a miserable Christmas Day on duty, all because of a false alarm! I wish I could relate the epic story of the great fight at Labuschagne's Nek, and the deeds of derring do by the Wodehouse Yeomanry, who went out in search of Commandant Fouché, were captured by that astute general, their horses and boots taken from them, and how they were "returned empty" by waggon to Dordrecht. But what I have written must suffice, for, after all, this is "The autobiography of a Counter Jumper," and not the exploits of a military man. "One man in his time plays many parts," and it takes many episodes to fill up a whole life-time.

As you may imagine, the period of the war had been a particularly strenuous one for me in business. In those days one wanted all one's wits about one, and I don't think mine were "wool-gathering" very often. When the place was threatened with attack—and this was no infrequent occurrence—it was no uncommon thing for every member of my staff to be warned for town guard duty, I being left entirely alone.

The general strain of things, due to such abnormal conditions, had told somewhat upon my health.

It was in September, 1902, having just finished stock-taking, and feeling very run down, I decided to make a short visit to Capetown, which city I had not seen since I had boarded the "Grantully Castle" in 1890. I had a feeling that I should like to visit, once again, the city of my humiliation.

In those days the train for Capetown left Dordrecht station, which is some $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the town, over what was, in those days, a preposterously bad road—and South African roads, when they *are* bad, require some beating, or perhaps rolling would be better. I left on a Friday, in opposition to the wishes of my wife, who had superstitious reasons for not commencing a journey on that particular day of the week. Somewhere about midnight I left my house in a Cape cart drawn by a couple of somewhat skittish horses. The driver—a Kaffir—was drunk. We had almost reached the station when that intoxicated idiot allowed the horses to run up a very steep bank alongside the road. In a moment the cart was overturned, with me beneath it and my leg broken. There I lay in the road helpless, and had the mortification of seeing the train for Capetown arrive from Indwe and depart, taking with it all hopes of a holiday for me.

After some considerable time the cart was righted, the horses inspanned, and, in great pain, I was conveyed back to my home. It was many weeks before I was even able to get about on crutches, and after that it was some months before I could get a boot on to my swollen foot. Meanwhile I could not keep away from the business. Unfit as I was, I persisted in hobbling down on my crutches, and many a nasty fall I had.

I was *not* progressing. The doctor suggested a trip to England. "Ah, why not?" I thought, "the very thing. See my dear old Dad again, consult a specialist, go round the city warehouses and do some buying, visit the house where I had served my apprenticeship. A thousand and one things suggested themselves.

Yes, I would go, and I would take my wife and girlies with me."

Naturally my business affairs required some arranging, but with these satisfactorily fixed up, we proceeded to East London and sailed by the "Dunottar Castle," leaving Capetown on Christmas Eve, 1902. The first night out, as I say, was Christmas Eve. The girlies were somewhat concerned as to the probability of Santa Claus not being able to visit their cabin, but he did, oh! yes, he *did*, and their small stockings were overflowing in the morning.

This was my wife's first voyage, and naturally she was very interested in everything. The girlies, who at meal-times we left in charge of a kindly stewardess, greatly to the amusement of our fellow passengers, would sometimes escape her vigilance and come running out into the dining saloon in their nighties just to make sure that we hadn't run away and left them after the manner of "the babes in the wood." As we neared the docks at Southampton, we saw the tall, upright figure of my father standing waiting for us, and, as he spotted us among all the eager and expectant faces, he gave the familiar wave with his umbrella that I remembered so well. I wonder what caused the lump to form in my throat again as I saw him?

I had left England an irresponsible boy and was returning a responsible man of 32 who had passed through possibly an as eventful 12 years as have fallen to the lot of most men.

There was the usual scramble on landing, baggage to get through the customs, porters to tip, and finally we were all seated in the railway compartment.

My father was, I think, just a *little* disappointed that my little ones were fair complexioned. He had expected that they would be yellow instead of the beautiful rosy cheeks they had. He, apparently, had not studied the science of eugenics, or he would have known that fair-skinned fathers and mothers do not beget dark-skinned children, and, possibly, remembering the prejudice which exists in South Africa, it is as well that

they are fair, but this is too wide and too deep a subject to handle in a book of this nature. To my way of thinking, the colour question transcends all other in importance in South Africa, and one wonders what the ultimate solution of it will be, or if there will ever be a solution. I cannot think that mere legislation is going to suppress natural development; it may retard it, but in the natural course of things ability will assert itself.

Our homecoming was a very happy one. How I gloried in walking through those familiar London thoroughfares again. The masses of people amazed me. I compared it all with the quietness of little Dordrecht, and yet, despite the fact that I am a born Londoner, I had grown to love the land of my adoption with all its difficulties and problems. The call of what Joseph Chamberlain described "the illimitable veld" was in me.

They all fell in love with my wife and children. In a way, being South Africans, they were, more or less, heroines! My father assumed command and showed them all over London, but I had to get my broken leg attended to, for, although by that time I could manage to hobble about without a stick, one foot was pointing to Cheapside and the other to Threadneedle Street! On the advice of a specialist I attended a surgical gymnasium in Orchard Street, and was put through a series of exercises daily until, although still weak, the broken limb resumed its normal position.

How different it was visiting the various city warehouses accompanied by one of the buyers who bought for me in England. There were no insulting remarks hurled at me by bullet-headed boys in entering desks. No parcels to carry, no "Sign here!" It was all so different. No wonder I was tempted to and *did* overbuy. No wonder I felt happier in the city taking a "busman's holiday" than spending my time sight-seeing. I was now wanted, whereas, in the old city trotting days, I was merely tolerated or regarded as something in the nature of a nuisance.

No, I had not forgotten my way about. I don't believe the born Londoner, given that he has spent some years there, no matter how long he may be absent, ever forgets. The streets were quite familiar. Why, there was Olney Amsden's, where I had purchased the wadding in my miserable Greenwich days. There was Cook's, who "did not engage from London houses," and, yes, there was my first place in Knightrider Street, where I made my first great audit and took the wind out of my employer's sails by informing him that he was making £30,000 a year!

Then I visited the house of my apprenticeship days. There were very few of the old hands left, but the few that were there appeared to be occupying the same positions they were occupying when I was a boy there. Among these was "The Pelican."

The management allowed me to look over the old "Living In" quarters. There was the library, reminiscent of my very first election. There was my old dormitory, looking very shabby, I thought. No, I could *never* return to such a life. Time, carrying with it a certain measure of success, had brought with it more or less culture. As a matter of fact, I was working harder than ever I had done in my apprenticeship days, but it was responsible work, with authority attached to it, which was a totally different thing.

I asked one or two of the older hands to lunch with me, and over the meal we discussed many of the things that had happened since I had left. My friends did not appear to be at their ease; somehow or another a gulf seemed to exist between us. We seemed to have so little in common. The fact was we had traversed different roads, and, although they were living in the greatest and most marvellous city in the world, their lives appeared to be narrow and circumscribed, whereas my life had taken me into the wider spaces of the earth, which must, in a sense, broaden one's outlook.

Frankly I must confess to being just a little disappointed with my visit there.

A man who is in active command of a business is never wholly at ease when he is away from it for any length of time. In all probability things are going on much the same as though he were there, but the haunting thought is ever present with him that all is not well. This feeling speedily overtook me. "Let's get back home!" I said to my wife; and it wasn't long before I had booked our passages on the "Briton," and, bidding farewell to our relatives and friends, we were soon on the high seas again. How different to the first leaving, when all the great uncertainty lay before me! Now I was returning to friends, to an established business, and to a country I had grown to love; while the spirit of adventure had disappeared.

No more expensive luncheons at Lisbon! The Union-Castle ships no longer called there, and the weather was too bad when we reached Maderia to permit of our landing there. So much for my first trip home. On the whole, I think, I was disappointed.

I am told that I may not use the endearing name "Home" when referring to England. They tell me that South Africa is my home, and so it is, in every sense of the word, but a man can love his wife *and* his mother, and if sometimes, when I am in a thoughtful or reminiscent mood I allude to the land of my birth as "Home," I am not one whit less loyal to the land of my adoption. The call of the Motherland comes to each one of us occasionally. We love *her* for what she *was* to us, and we love Africa for what she *is* to us. So you ultra sensitive ones who look for imaginary slights, be very tolerant and do not take exception to a little pardonable sentiment. You are not less loyal to the Mother city of South Africa where you may reside because in thought you are sometimes on the farm away yonder among the mountains in the high veld.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE JUNIOR PARTNER.

WITH my health restored and outlook improved by having been in contact with London methods again, I returned to my business with redoubled energy.

I opened another branch establishment, this time in Barkly East, placing the assistant who had remained with me on the occasion of the Boer invasion—by then a thoroughly capable man—in command. Barkly East, as I have already explained, lies on the borders of Basutoland, and is a very prosperous sheep and cattle-raising district. In those days—and I am speaking now of 25 years ago—there were farmers there who were making their £3,000 a year out of wool alone, and to-day with that commodity twice and three times its pre-war price, they must be making fabulous incomes.

We did well there from the very first, for Dredge (that was the manager's name) had been trained by me and conducted the concern on cash lines. He had learned to say "no," which, in business, is one of the most valuable assets a man can possess. It was my custom to pay periodical visits of inspection, necessitating long, long post-cart journeys, 14 hours over atrocious roads and up hill and down dale the whole way. The post-cart, too, carrying His Majesty's mails, was a ramshackle affair drawn by six mules which were changed every two hours. The team we left town with was usually a fairly good one, as also was that we inspanned at the last stables before reaching our destination, but the intermediate stages. Oh, my! A poorer, more unhappy looking lot I have never set eyes on. There were no bridges on the route and we splashed

through the various rivers as best we could. After heavy rains these rivers would "come down," that is to say, instead of being peaceful little streams, they would develop into rushing, roaring torrents, any attempt to cross which would have been suicidal. At such times we either had to outspan on the bank and wait for the water to subside or seek shelter for the night at the nearest farm house, and never *once* have I known hospitality to be refused. The farmer and his wife—in those parts usually Dutch people—would give of their *best*, and if that best were poor, well, what of it? We did not criticise the quality of hospitality, shelter from the storm was all we asked and whatever our kindly hosts offered in the shape of foodstuff was acceptable. As a whole it has been my experience, and I think it is a generally accepted fact, that the Dutch, as a race, are more hospitable than the English. Their solicitude for the distressed or storm-driven traveller dates back to the early pioneering or voortrekking days when the country was but sparsely populated.

Few realise the terrifying nature of these storms—most prevalent in the more mountainous regions of South Africa.

At that time it was my ambition to establish three or four businesses which should form the nucleus of a buying connection, and after securing other marks, to open an office in London and do the buying. I have frequently heard buyers remark: "Oh, buying is so difficult!" Some of them make a slogan out of that pious old saying: "Goods well bought are half sold." This *may* be so; I doubt it; anyhow, it looks well in print and is quite an attractive stock phrase to use. To my mind, and I say this after 40 years' experience, it is *far* more difficult to sell than to buy; for no matter how attractive a line may be, competition is so keen that salesmanship requires to be almost a fine art, and in my opinion it is an art which is not studied or paid for sufficiently well. To be able to *sell* seems to me to be the fundamental principle in every business,

ranking before everything else. It is the whole object of business, in fact it *is* business.

I, like Dombey, had longed for a son who should succeed me in business, and when the little chap arrived I was filled with thankfulness, love, and joy. He came to us a long time after my girlies, and the kindly Dordrecht people, knowing my aspirations for the little man, christened him "The Junior Partner." We were very proud of that small chap and I couldn't resist making use of him at once for advertising purposes. Some wisecracs will remark that the type of advertisement employed was ridiculous, that they did not follow strict business lines. Thank God they didn't, for the man who simply follows the crowd is frequently lost in the crowd or becomes, as it were, simply one of a herd and absorbed by dull, uninteresting mediocrity. In advertising one should endeavour to get away from the beaten track. I have already somewhat stressed the point; I fear that business in a small up-country town becomes more or less a personal matter. My clients knew all about the coming of my little son and were interested in him. As I have said, it was they who had named him "The Junior Partner." In the circumstances, therefore, it was a title to conjure with. He—subject of course to my editing—would write to the Press. The following is his first attempt.

Some eighteen months after his birth, finding that my then premises were inadequate to cope with the ever-increasing volume of business, I decided to rebuild. I had purchased the premises from my original landlord, some years before.

"The Junior Partner" was wheeled down in his pram to lay the foundation stone of the business which should some day be his, and the architect, to mark the great occasion, presented him with a very handsome silver trowel. But perhaps the proceedings would be best described by reproducing a preliminary announcement and letter from the little man which appeared at

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the time in the local paper, *The Frontier Guardian*, Dordrecht, Thursday, February 15, 1906:—

Par ses i am 2 lay the
 Foundashun Stoan of his
 Wite Elefant 2 - Morrer
 Arfturnoon (Fryday) at fore
 o-klock.

OBL R INVITED.

FISH JUNR.

This was followed by the official report as under:—

“ LAYING FOUNDATION STONE.

A most interesting ceremony took place last Friday afternoon in connection with the new premises, in construction, for the well-known and enterprising Firm of Drapers, Grocers, Oil Merchants, Produce Buyers, etc. (W. F. Fish & Co.)—namely, the laying of the Foundation Stone by the only son of the Head of the Firm, familiarly known as the “ Junior Partner.” The little mite, daintily arrayed in white, with the silver sword trowel, presented to him by the Architect, Mr. Cordeaux, gently tapped the stone three times and, through the medium of his father, declared “ this stone well and truly laid.” The stone, a massive block, quarried and cut here, bears the following inscription:—

This Stone was laid by
 WILLIAM THOMAS FISH,
 The Junior Partner,
 16th February, 1906.

Several interesting mementoes were put in a box, and deposited in a receptacle under the stone.

Mr. W. F. Fish, on behalf of the “ Junior Partner,” thanked the large turnout of spectators for their attendance, and hoped that the Founda-

tion Stone so auspiciously laid to-day would be the founding of a future large and substantial business. He remarked on the presence of so many business men, and the good feeling it evidenced.

Three cheers for the "Junior Partner" closed the proceedings."

Newcomers to the place look at that stone to-day and wonder who "The Junior Partner" is, and sometimes, with a sob in my throat, I tell them the sad story.

The dear little man was not destined to occupy the position in the firm that I had mapped out for him. Death, ah! "The old, old-fashioned death." This was what happened.

We had finished stocktaking and, as was usual at the end of the financial year, I was feeling very run down and decided to take a short holiday at East London. On my return journey I went right through by train to Indwe, where I was having some trouble with my business.

Returning to Dordrecht the next day, my wife met me at the door of my house. She was in great distress. The little man—now four years old—had met with a nasty accident the evening before. His nurse when preparing his bath had put the scalding water in first and had left the room to procure the cold water. During her absence the small chap, while running merrily round his bath, had fallen backwards into it, with the result that he was badly scalded and convulsions ensued. I hastened to his bedroom where to all appearances the dear little man was sleeping peacefully. When night came I insisted that his poor distressed mother, who had sat up with him all the night before, should go to bed, and I with a neighbour who was very devoted to him sat through the long night hours. He slept, and slept, and slept; and all the while I thought he was recovering from the shock, but when in the morning the doctor came and sorrowfully told us that there was no hope, we were prostrate with grief.

“ Oh, God,” I prayed, “ if death *must* come, *take me*, but spare my boy’s life.”

Oh! the bitter anguish of it all. He lingered for a few hours, never regaining consciousness, and then his gentle little spirit fled and we were left desolate.

It is difficult for me to write all this for, as I do so, I am passing through all the poignant grief of it again, but I wish to speak of my sorrows as well as my joys. There is cloud and sunshine in each of our lives, and the passing of the little “ Junior Partner ” has, so far, been my greatest sorrow.

All the town attended his funeral. There was scarcely a dry eye among those who followed him to the grave. I was blinded with tears and was too rebellious to “ Thank God for taking this our brother from us.” It may be wrong to say so, but I never have nor will I ever “ thank God ” for taking that little man, *never*. Why not omit such palpable hypocrisy from the funeral service? We are fretting our very souls away because a dear one has been taken, would do anything to have him back, while—parrot-like—the priest mumbles out thanks to God. It is wrong, wrong, wrong.

There in that quiet and peaceful cemetery he sleeps, and sleeps, and sleeps, and a very great part of my affection rests there with him. As the years pass by naturally the poignancy of one’s grief becomes less, and one finds that death leaves no sting, but I never go to Dordrecht without visiting his little grave, standing bare-headed the while and visualising him as he would have been to-day, a strong, stalwart fellow.

I keep that silver trowel and with it a lock of his golden hair. It is all I have except a beautiful memory, for I like to think that he simply ran the race quicker and has just gone on ahead, for I believe that the richer, fuller, truer life is still to come, when all will be made plain, and when *my* time comes to pass through “ The Valley of the Shadow,” it will be easier in the knowledge that my boy has crossed the river before me.

After all, the *longest* life is merely a moment in Eternity, and some day we shall understand.

“Some day, when all life’s lessons have been learned,
 And sun and stars for evermore have set,
 The things which our weak judgments here have
 spurned,
 The things o’er which we grieved, with lashes wet,
 Will flash before us out of life’s dark night,
 As stars shine most in deeper tints of blue,
 And we shall know how all God’s plans were right,
 And how, what *seemed* reproof, was *love*, most true.
 But not to-day; then be content, poor heart,
 God’s plans, like lillies, pure and sweet, unfold;
 We must not tear the tight-shut leaves apart,
 Time will reveal the chalices of gold.
 And when, by constant toil we reach the land,
 Where tired feet with sandals loosed may rest,
 When we shall know and clearly understand,
 I think that we shall say: *God knew the best.*”

The foregoing beautiful lines appeared in *Great Thoughts* many years ago. I don’t know who was the author of them, but they have been a great comfort to me.

Three other boys followed—fine, brave lads they are and very dear to me, but one always frets for the one who has gone. Business, with its many counter-acting influences, had the effect of diverting my thoughts from my great sorrow, but it was different with his poor mother, who was in the house where he had played and where everything was there to remind her of him. She fretted, and fretted, and fretted; nothing would comfort her. The doctor suggested a change of scene. “What about a trip to England?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied. “A sea voyage has a wonderfully recuperative effect.” So in 1909, with our four children, my wife and I embarked on the “*Gaika*” at East London and sailed right away to London, E., passing Greenwich once more.

I took a daily watch with the children on the voyage and my third boy—George—learned to walk on board ship, one might almost say that he found his sea legs at a very early age.

The trip restored my wife to a normal frame of mind, and while the grief was still present our loss was regarded more philosophically. And so let me close this sad chapter.

“ For what is real 'tis vain to ask ;
And what is *only* show.
For what lies hidden beneath the mask,
Only ourselves may know.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHANGES.

AND so the years sped by, my eldest daughter left school and came home to assist her mother in the household duties. My second daughter went to college in Grahamstown, or, as it is more familiarly called, "The City of the Saints." Her mother and I accompanied her when she first went. A pretty place is Grahamstown, essentially an educational centre. A most distressing incident occurred to me while we were there.

On the Sunday evening my wife, my daughter and I attended Divine Service in the Cathedral. I joined in the responses as only a non-conformist can. I competed with the choir when singing the hymns, until they gazed at me in sheer amazement. I listened attentively to the sermon. It was about the widow and her mites. Then came the closing hymn and the collection. The sidesmen walked up the aisle, the Dean handed them the handsome silver salvers. I had my half crown in my pocket and sang confidently on. A salver was passed along—ostentatiously I placed my coin rather noisily on it. Good Heavens! instead of half a crown I had put a *penny in the plate*. My head reeled. In front of me sat one of the professors who, in all probability I should have to interview on the morrow. I could see that he had detected this shameful thing. The eyes of that large congregation were upon me and I could imagine the people murmuring among themselves: "Shame on you nonconformist, yours is the typical gift of a dissenter—go home! go home!"

Cold shivers were passing down my back, while my brow was heavy with the dew of perspiration. If

I could only have grabbed that plebian coin, but alas! that sidesman, with an aggravating smirk on his face, had already joined his half section and they were marching towards the chancel in step with the tune of the hymn we were singing—when I say “we” I mean they, for I hadn’t a note of music left in me. The Dean received and blessed these free-will offerings of the people, and in doing so blessed *my* penny as well—as I did, most fervently. If I were a Bishop or a Dean or even a plain ranker such as the vicar of the parish, I would lay it down as a fundamental principle that in no circumstances would I bless less than a tickey (a “tickey” is the South African name for a threepenny bit), a very useful name too, it’s not quite such a mouthful). I would announce from the pulpit that donors of a penny could get a receipt from the sidesman, and on production of three such receipts a blessing—a very *small* blessing—would be given.

I staggered down the aisle supported by my wife and daughter. The departing worshippers were deliberately avoiding me, making way, as it were, so that I might not contaminate them.

As we left the sacred building, the cathedral bells commenced to peal out: “HE-PUT-A-PEN-NY-IN-THE-PLATE!”

From that day to this I have never visited Grahams-town for the mere mention of the place causes me to shudder, and after this long lapse of time, in my dreams I sometimes hear those bells telling the story of my shame and humiliation.

My younger brother, George, the baby whose weakness for marble mantlepieces I had discovered, joined me in business, for he too had been apprenticed at the same house in which I had served my time. For my father had made drapers of all his sons whether they were fitted for that calling or not, but then, as I have already remarked, so few parents are in a position to study and develop the natural bent of their offspring and most of us are just creatures of circumstance. We just have

to make the best of things and keep on keeping on, no matter what psycho-analysis may say on the subject. I was educating George to take over the management, and a very apt pupil he was. My health was not too good; years of strenuous work and worry were beginning to tell. The doctor advised me to ease off a little.

"Take an hour or so off each day and go round the links," was his advice, and this is just what I couldn't do. I tried it, but having led such a busy, active life, instead of enjoying the sport I was all the time reproaching myself for what I considered was neglecting my business. For the Baas to be out playing golf during business hours struck me as being such a frightfully bad advertisement. I have always preached the gospel that one should endeavour to give the impression that one has too much rather than too little to do. To *look* busy creates an atmosphere of business and the average customer has a liking for a business where all, from the head downwards, are out for business.

A slogan which I have made much use of is, "*in* business, *all* business." This doesn't imply long hours of drudgery, but smartness, quickness and keenness—and business is brighter and happier and more successful when this practice and these precepts are used. Be *downright*, be *earnest*, in fact, be *business*.

My boys were growing up and required better schooling than was to be obtained in Dordrecht at that time. I felt that I too required a respite. My brother and a colleague were capable of running the business. Why not take up my residence in Capetown for a spell, which as all know who have visited that delightful city, is one of the most beautiful places with the most charming environments in the world. Since my protracted and none too happy stay there 26 years before, I had seen little or nothing of it.

To my brother and his colleague I offered a partnership in the business and henceforth they were to accept the fuller responsibility. There was a general feeling of regret among the people of the place when the news got

abroad that we were leaving, for during my 21 years there I had taken a fairly active part in all public affairs, and had served the town as Mayor, having enjoyed no less than five periods of office. Speaking of the Mayorship and honours generally, I never rose to quite such a pinnacle as I did on one occasion. At the time of our last visit to England, I happened to be Mayor of Dordrecht, and my father was very proud of the distinction. He organised a social evening among the members of the church he attended, to give them an opportunity to meet His Worship The Mayor and Mayoress of Dordrecht. Songs were sung, refreshments served, and then speech-making commenced. I gave a brief outline of my experiences in South Africa and then a lady member of the congregation rose to speak. She electrified everyone by remarking "how delighted she was to meet *His Majesty* the Mayor of Dordrecht." I had actually been placed on an equality with *kings*. I have never risen higher than this except perhaps when I *flew* over Capetown, of which more later.

Yes, the people of Dordrecht were genuinely sorry when they heard we were leaving. A farewell banquet was arranged in my honour at which an address was presented to me, and an evening or so later my wife, my family and myself were entertained in the Town Hall at a farewell social, which was one of the happiest functions I have ever attended. They said it was an acknowledgement of good citizenship. And what is "Good Citizenship?" Well, *my* conception of it is to take an intelligent, and where possible, an active interest in the affairs of the town or city where one is domiciled. By one's example keeping the moral tone of the community in high repute. Identifying oneself with its economic and social problems so that when, for whatever reason we leave, the town or city has benefited by our sojourn there.

CHAPTER XIX.

BACK TO CAPETOWN.

AND so, in the early part of 1916, while the Great War was at its height, we left Dordrecht for Capetown, carrying with us the affection, esteem and good wishes of the people of the small place in which we had spent so many happy years. It has been said that a man signs his death warrant when he writes his last business cheque. Certainly the remark has the impress of common sense upon it, but I submit it depends entirely upon the temperament of the individual. For a busy business man to suddenly sit down to a life of ease with no occupation of any sort must be suicidal; for a spell, no doubt, he will enjoy his well-earned leisure and freedom from the the cares and worries of business, but idleness to a man who is not naturally idle and ease to a man who has preached and practised strenuousness, speedily becomes irksome, he becomes irritable, frets for business again and longs for other worlds to conquer. In this respect I was somewhat fortunate. We had not been long in Capetown when a ship, the "Rangatira," bound from England to New Zealand, having touched at our port, was leaving early one morning in a deep sea mist, when she struck on the rocks at Robben Island, which as you know, is only some eight miles distant from Capetown. All efforts to refloat her were unsuccessful. She carried a large and very valuable cargo of drapery, the most of which was salvaged and brought over to the Capetown Docks where, on account of underwriters, it was sold by public auction. Here then, was something after my own heart, something which was as familiar to me as "A.B.C." At that time, owing to the War, there was a general scarcity of goods, for naturally war supplies took precedence everywhere. I wrote

and got commissions from many up-country business houses to secure certain lines for them. It was a case where judgment and knowledge were required and in handling it I was very successful. There were tens of thousands of pieces of calico soaked with sea water. I sent much of this to Dordrecht where it caused quite a sensation, for with it I sent a huge ticket on which was a painting of the wreck, with the message beneath that I was on the spot looking after the interests of my clients. In fact the artist drew upon his imagination to such an extent that in the picture I appeared to be actually *on* the wreck helping to save the cargo.

The goods in that ship seemed to be almost inexhaustible. I was kept very busy for weeks and weeks, busier in fact than in my busiest Dordrecht days. The billiard room in my house became, for the time being, a veritable clearing house.

Capetown men who had never handled "softs"—at least, not that particular type of "softs," and who knew as much about drapery as a pig knows of astronomy—became drapers for the time being. In some of the poorer neighbourhoods of the city it was no uncommon thing to see balconies festooned with drying calico. New shops sprang into existence dealing only with goods from the wrecked "Rangatira." Had I had the pluck and the necessary capital then, I could have made a fortune.

The various "Lots" were laid out on the floor of one or other of the huge customs sheds and a day before the sale buyers had access to estimate the value of these lots and, on the day of the sale would bid for those they were interested in.

This valuing was no easy matter. There would be perhaps a pile of some 30 pieces or so, say of washing materials of various qualities with the lengths mostly washed or torn off. Occasionally there was something in the nature of a surprise packet. A case—unopened—contents unstated, would be placed among the various lots. This would arouse the speculative spirit among the buyers. I saw one man pay £20 for one of these mystery

cases which, when opened, was found to contain nothing else but printed price lists intended for some New Zealand firm.

I remember on one occasion noticing a big pile of wet umbrellas, oh there must have been at least a hundred of the wretched things. Now umbrellas are at no time a very great sale in this drought-stricken country, but I suppose there *are* moments in the lives of most of us when we are a trifle insane; it was certainly one of *my* moments of insanity.

"Ah," I thought, as I looked at that particular lot, "I think I can sell those in East London."

I placed my estimate of value against it and on the day of the sale bid for them. There was some little competition and they were finally knocked down to me at some £2 above my estimate.

"There you are, sir they are *yours, all yours,*" said the auctioneer. There was a twinkle in his eye as he said it. He evidently knew more about those umbrellas than I did. In due course they arrived at my clearing house, I rather fancy I arrived with them with a headache in a handsome cab. "Look, my dear," I said to my wife proudly, "All that lot for £12 10s."

She didn't seem too enthusiastic over my bargain and I was a little annoyed. I opened one to demonstrate it's value. There was a little difficulty in doing this, and when it *was* opened it was indeed a sorry-looking thing. It was when I attempted to close it though that the real trouble commenced, for its long immersion in sea water had rusted it's frame and it simply *wouldn't* close. I then made a systematic examination of the whole parcel. There were some that wouldn't open at all, others there were that opened quite easily but wouldn't close, and others again that being opened, turned right over, inside out. "P'raps," I thought, "if I place them on the lawn and allow them to dry thoroughly, they will open and close easier."

This I did, opening as many as I could, and planting them all over the lawn and garden. People passing

looked in amazement and almost consternation at the ridiculous sight, for they resembled for all the world a field of unhealthy-looking mushrooms or giant poisonous-looking toad stools. The finish of the transaction was, to get them out of my sight, I shipped them round to East London where they were eventually sold to a Kaffir trader from the Transkie for 6d. each, for, although it is hardly conceivable, the Kaffir is rather partial to an umbrella. To this day I never see that auctioneer without mentally picturing him handing me that parcel of umbrellas with the remark: "There you are, sir, they are *yours*, all *yours*."

Strangely enough there were no less than three wrecks immediately following each other. The "Ping Suey," which was wrecked on Dassen Island and the "Tyndarius," and for almost nine months I was kept very busy.

When this was over I was, so to speak, at a loose end again, and determined to take up gardening as a hobby. Noticing my enthusiasm—for I try to be enthusiastic in all I undertake, for half of our successes in life are governed by the amount of enthusiasm we bring to bear on the undertaking—I was waited upon by a press reporter who requested me to write my experiences as a gardener.

CHAPTER XX.

PUBLIC LIFE AGAIN.

IN 1918 I was approached to offer myself as a candidate for the then forthcoming City Council elections.

At the time Greater Capetown was divided into 14 Wards, each of which returned three representatives to the Council. (It has subsequently been increased through the amalgamation of Wynberg, to 15 Wards). One member from each Ward retires in rotation annually. The old Civic spirit revived in me and I rejoiced at the thought of an election campaign. My greatest difficulty was being what is termed a new-comer, I was not too well known. But when at my first election meeting I told the electors that in probability I had known the city longer than most of them and went on to speak of my early struggles when the Ward I was contesting (Sea Point) was little more than an open tract of country, feeling veered round in my favour. I made the usual fulsome promises which inexperience of local conditions is usually responsible for and which almost every candidate for Municipal honours is, more or less, guilty of.

The morning after my first meeting I was called up on the 'phone by a gentleman who said his name was Mac C——m. He was good enough to explain that he was a member of the City Council, a resident in the Ward that I was contesting, had been present at my meeting and wished to see me. I made some enquiries and discovering that he was a solicitor by profession, was a little diffident about calling, but concluding—not unnaturally—that having interviewed me he would, in all probability, vote for me on election day, I called. I found him to be a keen, somewhat stern-faced man of about 36 or 37 with all the self-assurance so characteristic of

the members of his learned profession and of his race. He proceeded, in true legal style, to put me through a vigorous cross-examination until I began to wonder when he would call in the witnesses and what my sentence was likely to be. Save for enquiring into the state of my banking account and my domestic relationships, all of which information I haven't the least doubt he had already obtained by some other means, there was no query he left unasked, and having—metaphorically speaking—turned me inside out—having thanked me for calling—he dismissed me in this manner:—

“Of course, I'm not voting for you” (why the “of course”), “as a matter of fact I'm voting for your opponent who is in every way a far superior man, but I thought I should like to find out just what style of fellow you are off the platform.” This was candid and generous of him and, as I afterwards discovered, quite characteristic.

Since those days we have had many passages of arms but have nevertheless become excellent friends. But all will admit, we made a bad beginning. The election, despite the adverse vote of my friend “Mac,” resulted in my being returned by a very large majority and, once more, I found myself taking an active part in municipal politics. In cocked hat and gown I looked the part—or thought I did. I was appointed to serve on the Health, and also on the Overcrowding, Committee (the latter has since become the Housing and Estates Committee, of which under its new title, I became, a year later, its first Chairman).

At my first meeting of the new Council the business on the agenda was the election of a new Mayor. There were two candidates; I knew neither of them and this being so, really did not care which one was elected for they both seemed very nice and capable fellows, but on being told that one was the head of a very large drapery establishment in the city and that he had been trained at a large retail house in the West End of London and that, furthermore, his father had been a very distinguished

Mayor of Capetown who had been knighted for his services to the community, I voted for him. He was elected by a majority of *one*, and a very excellent Mayor he became. Even to this day, despite the fact that I have since served this city for two consecutive years in the same capacity, I still address him as "Mr. Mayor," for although there is little difference in our respective ages, I still regard him as my civic father as far as Capetown is concerned.

It was in the October following the September of my election that the Great Epidemic devastated Capetown, when the grim Reaper visited rich and poor alike leaving sorrow and desolation in his wake. Relief was organised, the City Hall with an executive committee being the centre of activities while in each Ward a depot was established with a City Councillor in command. I was asked to control the depôt in the Ward I represented. The unselfish kindness which was exhibited and the untiring help which was forthcoming was a revelation to me. The most unlikely people came spontaneously and volunteered assistance. Little bands of women visited stricken homes taking medicine and comforts with them. Urgent appeals for help reached us. "Send a nurse, for God's sake send a nurse!" "Have you no doctor, my wife is dying!" But alas! all the nurses and all the doctors were up to their eyes in their mission of mercy. Death took its hideous toll and gradually the epidemic subsided. News came from other parts of the city telling of men, many of whom had hitherto been regarded as careless, pleasure-seeking fellows, who had left their various offices and had entered whole-heartedly into God's work of helping the sick, comforting the dying and going into the disease-stricken slums of the city, cleansing and feeding and nursing. Ah! the occasion makes the man all the world over. The total cost of this terrible epidemic as far as Capetown was concerned—I mean, of course, financial cost, the cost in valuable lives, in suffering, in sorrow and broken constitutions will never be known—was, in round figures, £87,000, of which, it being a for-

midable epidemic, the Union Health Department contributed £35,000, leaving the sum of £52,000 to be shouldered by the ratepayers. And yet there are those among us who oppose the spending of money on health measures and building reform. Why, even that £30,000 would have provided at least a hundred houses for the poorer classes. Oh, the *pity* of it.

As I have said, at the end of my first year as a councillor, I was elected Chairman of the Housing and Estates Committee. At that time the housing question was very acute. It was, and for that matter still is, a world-wide problem, and as all know was due to the inevitable building inactivity during the Great War. It has baffled the ingenuity of the world's greatest statesmen, and to my mind, is likely to do so. In an attempt to ease the situation the South African Government stepped into the breach with a Housing Loan and the Cape Provincial Council passed a measure known as The Municipal Provision of Homes Act, both of which the Housing and Estates Committee had to administer, and while in a measure these brought some relief, as far as the poorer classes were concerned they hardly touched the fringe of the matter. But a vast amount of propaganda work has been carried on by social workers and housing enthusiasts who recognise the needs of, and our obligations to, those, who by force of circumstances, cannot help themselves. The civic conscience has been aroused, and this city is now embarking upon a comprehensive housing scheme which, I fancy, will be something in the nature of a world's object lesson. I sincerely hope that it may be so.

My first period of office as councillor expired. I was again returned for Ward 1. Another three years passed and again I was re-elected unopposed.

It was after my second un-opposed return that I was chosen by my brother *and* sister councillors to be Deputy Mayor of the city, and it was while I occupied this position that the Prince of Wales visited South Africa.

Among other forms of entertainment we gave a Civic luncheon in the City Hall in his honour.

The special committee appointed to make all arrangements for the reception of the distinguished guest and to administer the £7,000 specially voted by the Council for his entertainment, discussed the question of the correct dress to be worn at the luncheon. Some were of opinion that black morning coats were indispensable.

"But," I argued, "what of those who *haven't* black morning coats?" For this article of dress is not too popular in South Africa.

"Well, those who haven't them should have them made," said one.

"Indeed," I said, "is that so? Well, as a matter of fact I have one, but if I hadn't I should certainly not go to the expense of getting one."

When the function took place the Prince put everyone at his ease by appearing in a grey lounge suit and wearing a blue shirt with collar to match.

The subject of tail coats hasn't been mentioned again. We sent out over 3,000 invitations for the City Hall Reception that same evening, and 10,000 people were clamouring to be asked and as each was as much entitled to an invitation as the other, it was extremely difficult.

There was a reception and ball given by his uncle, the Governor General at Government House.

The then Administrator of the Cape Province, Sir Frederick de Waal—an astute and clever man—gave an open-air luncheon at the Government Wine Farm "Groot Constantia," one of the most beautiful spots in the whole of the beautiful Cape Peninsula and the home of one of the early Dutch Governors—Simon Van der Stel. Inspections were made, Institutions opened, foundation stones laid and the Prince was invested with his robes as Chancellor of the University. Capetown excelled itself.

At the suggestion of the Mayor we had a rehearsal before the coming of the Prince, rehearsing just how we should stand so that the prompting His Royal Highness had received should be in order. You know how it is.—

“ The third man on the right will be so and so, you met him at so and so, he is so and so, you must be interested in him.

Then we rehearsed how we should shake hands, how we should bow, and exactly what we should say, and most of us were instructed to say nothing.

My friend, in his own peculiar legal phraseology, the hereinbefore-mentioned Mac ——, who stated that he would be absent from town during the Royal visit (he possibly feared a knighthood), undertook to act as Prince during the rehearsal, and, if I may say so, almost *lived* the part. So autocratic did he become that he inspired the following lines from my pen which appeared in the then current number of “ The Cape.” I headed them:—

“ When ‘ Mac ’ became Prince of Wales.”

We were practising our movements, we were learning how to stand, Instructed what we had to do to shake the Prince’s hand; We’d numbered from the left and right, formed fours from single file;

They told us just what we should say and just how we should smile— Not one of us should make a speech but simply pass along And bow like little gentlemen; and if we did it wrong His Worship said he’d punish us, he’d take our robes away And stand us in the corner; “ for,” he said, “ you must obey.” “ You’re just like little children,” said the Mayor, a little vexed, “ Though some are quite white-headed they’re so *easily* perplexed.” “ Now let us try again,” he said, “ let’s try again, and since Not one of you knows what to do, will someone act as Prince?” A breathless silence filled the room; quite speechless there we stood; For no one wanted to be Prince and couldn’t if he would. “ Now gentlemen,” His Worship said, “ it’s confidence you lack, Will *no* one act as Prince of Wales?” Then out spake gallant “ Mac ”—

“ I’ll act as Prince,” MacCallum said, “ I’m of the Scottish race, Who never shirk their duty, sir, so I will fill the place.”

Escorted by His Worship, bowing low, he took his stand; And graciously he welcomed us and took us by the hand. A Noble Prince that day was he, with courtly air he stood Receiving our addresses; so that anybody would Have thought he was the Prince himself; he bowed with noble grace. (At councillors he did not like he pulled an ugly face.) But this is the prerogative of Princes, as you know,

As "Mac" was quite aware of when he undertook the show.
 But when the drill was over and each one knew his place,
 And everyone knew what to do with dignity and grace,
 We could not get the Prince away, *more* homage he required,
 He made us all "fall in" again and bow till he was tired.

And now that all is over, and the Prince has come and gone,
 Now bells have all stopped ringing and the city looks forlorn,
 Now banners are not waving and the fairy lights are down,
 Now no more bands are playing and we're just a business town,
 Still "Mac" persists that he's the Prince and gives a courtly bow
 Where'er we chance to meet him, no matter when or how;
 He says that he is thinking of conferring on us all
 "The Order of the Garter," which you'll own is rather tall,
 "The Order of the Boot," he means—it's just his happy way
 Of saying things he doesn't mean (he mentioned it to-day).
 The hat he wears is larger now, his chest is fuller too,
 He speaks about "My Dad the King," it's just what he *would* do.
 Refers to us as "*subjects*," not as objects—if he dare
 He would do this; as Prince of Wales he doesn't seem to care.
 It has altered all his outlook, and he takes no pains to hide
 His own superiority, he simply *bursts* with pride.

Now when the story's written of the coming of the Prince,
 Historians will tell the tale which we've told ever since,
 When our children gather round us, to the day our memory fails,
 We'll tell them of the day we made MacCallum *Prince of Wales*.

The duties of Deputy Mayor are not very exacting.
 In the Council Chamber he takes his seat on the dais next
 to His Worship the Mayor. On public Civic occasions
 he is distinguished by wearing a gold medallion bearing
 the arms of the city and his official gown differs from
 those worn by his fellow councillors in as much that it
 is trimmed with sable. At functions which the Mayor
 cannot attend the Deputy appears for him, but generally
 speaking, the organisers of public meetings, congresses,
 fêtes, bazaars, luncheons, banquets, sports, receptions
 and dances require the Mayor and *not* his Deputy, no
 matter how capable the latter may be.

Should His Worship for any reason be unable to
 attend a council meeting or should he be out of town, then
 the full responsibility falls upon the Deputy.

It does not follow, that is, as far as the City of
 Capetown is concerned, that the Deputy is the next in

succession for Mayoral honours, not at all. In some cities the outgoing Mayor becomes the Deputy Mayor and this has its distinct advantages, for by the experience he has gained as Chief Citizen, he can be of almost invaluable assistance to his newly fledged successor, and then again, having passed through the chair, there is no thought of succession and the councillors are free to elect whom they will when the next Mayoral election comes along without feeling it to be obligatory to elect the one who has filled the position of Deputy.

With a new Mayor and a new Deputy there is a complete change, and, for a time, both are compelled to rely on the Town Clerk and the heads of the various departments for guidance and assistance. One might describe the office of Deputy Mayor as position without authority. He could be and *would* be, were he allowed, a very valuable help to his colleague. For instance, there are almost numberless leases, agreements, municipal loan certificates, etc., to be signed which occupy much time; surely such work could be quite as capably done by the Deputy as by his more elevated brother, and it would relieve the latter of at least some of his multifarious duties, but the public, as a whole, will not have it, they want the *Mayor* and no substitute is acceptable, which is sometimes rather hard on His Worship.

The Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress support the Mayor and Mayoress at all Civic receptions. They meet in the Mayor's Parlour and, with the principle guest or guests of the evening proceed to the Reception Room together, in turn shaking hands with the various guests as they arrive.

I remember on one occasion when my wife and I were assisting at a Reception given in honour of the officers of some foreign squadron which was at anchor in Table Bay, one guest in shaking hands with the Deputy Mayoress (my wife), bowed very politely and in the kindest possible manner said: "Welcome to our shores, Madam," but seeing that "Madam" was born on "our shores" the welcome was somewhat superfluous. I sup-

pose this ultra courteous guest had mistaken my wife for the wife of one of the officers and yet she doesn't look *particularly* foreign. It is a jest in my family to this day and whenever she returns from a holiday we always make a practice of "Welcoming her to our shores."

We elected the Mayor under whom I served as Deputy for three successive years and a very excellent Mayor he made. Had the South African Government in its wisdom not having passed a law banning all titles, even to the absurd extreme of vetoing Capetown's right to be raised to the dignity of a Lord Mayoralty, there is little doubt that he—Councillor Verster—would have been knighted as many of his predecessors had been and which honour he richly deserved.

Then came the question of his successor. Before this happens all the Councillors are invited by the outgoing Mayor to meet at a private caucus from which all municipal officials are excluded, and at which the Mayor elect and the chairmen of the various standing committees are nominated. Before the proceedings commence it is agreed that the decisions arrived at at this caucus shall be binding on the councillors when the formal investiture takes place in the Council Chamber a day or so later.

By this, it must not be supposed that the Mayor's caucus is the *only* caucus. As a matter of fact it is only the final one; before this the supporters of the various candidates for the Mayorship hold their own little caucuses and, for the time being, the atmosphere in City Hall circles positively *reeks* with intrigue, and speculation is rife as to who will be the chosen one. But let me say this, no matter how high feeling has been running—and it is surprising how bitter it sometimes becomes—once having been invested with his chain of office and taken his seat in the Chair of Van Riebeeck (the first Governor of the Cape in the old Dutch East India days), there is a genuine desire on the part of all, to support the Mayor.

It was at a Mayoral caucus such as I have described

that I was nominated Mayor of Capetown which resulted in my election to what, to my mind, is the highest honour to which any man can attain. A knighthood or title of any kind is usually the result of a recommendation from the Premier. The position of First Citizen is an expression of esteem and trust of one's fellow councillors as representing the feelings of the citizens and to my mind, as I have already remarked, it is the highest honour to which any man can attain.

Oh what crowded memories surged upon me when I knew that I had been chosen. The city which had refused to employ me and had practically driven me from her, had 35 years later, accepted me as its Mayor. There was no self-aggrandisement in the thought, rather one of extreme thankfulness. I had arrived in the Mother City of South Africa friendless and almost penniless. I had made a heart-breaking effort to find employment. I had left it, as it were, under a cloud, something that nobody wanted. I had sailed away on the old "Grantully," shamed and humiliated with failure, from the city which would have none of me, and had now become its *Chief Citizen*. My election was due to no particular ability on my part, save perhaps for the *social* side of the position, but was largely due to the terms of good fellowship and friendliness which existed between my brother and sister councillors and myself.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAYOR OF CAPETOWN.

TWO days later, to be exact, on Thursday, September 11th, 1925, 35 years after my first arrival in Capetown, I had the great honour of being invested as Mayor of the City. My fellow councillors in their robes were assembled in the Council Chamber, the public gallery was filled to overflowing and councillors' wives were accommodated below. I took my seat as Deputy Mayor on the dais, the Mayor gave a review of the year's work and made his farewell speech from the chair. The Town Clerk then called for nominations for the position of Mayor for the ensuing year, at which my friend, Councillor Goldstein arose and formally proposed me.

Just a word in passing concerning Councillor Goldstein. He had been elected to the Council a year or so after me. Like most of us just at the commencement, he was strange in his new position, and in some small way—I forget now exactly in which way—I had been able to assist him. This seemed somehow to draw us together, and by and by we exchanged confidences when I discovered that while I was an apprentice in the East End of London, he was a small boy attending the Jews Free School with that eminent author, the late Israel Zangwill for his teacher. Sam, as he is more familiarly addressed, was born in the salubrious neighbourhood of Fashion Street, Spitalfields—a street well known to the members of “The Jack the Ripper Syndicate.” He is a type of Londoner familiar to most, cheerful, generous, pushful to a degree, honest to a fault and with the redeeming sense of humour. He is a man who has travelled widely, knows the world, and, like Sir Joynson Smith in that delightful book of his, “My life story,” is not

ashamed to speak of his early struggles. This, then, is Samuel Goldstein, City Councillor, auctioneer, draper, and general business man, whose friendship I am proud of and whose esteem I value.

As I have already explained, according to arrangement, there were no other nominations, the question was put and I was duly elected. I say it without the least idea of boasting, *it was the proudest moment of my life*, as it should have been. In retrospect I could see myself refusing the position of railway porter at Beaufort West. Once again I thought of my decision to apply for the position of prison warder. For a moment I was making that weary pilgrimage round the various drapery establishments seeking in vain for work. I imagined myself secreting my month's board money in my shabby-looking tin trunk—and to-day— I was Mayor of this noble city. Surely, as I say, a little pride was pardonable.

The actual election over I retired with the ex-Mayor—not the “late” Mayor as so many people will insist upon referring to me as, and to whom I retort: “I’m not *dead* yet, I’m ex- but not “Late”—to be invested with the Mayoral chain and scarlet robe of office and returned, accompanied by my proposer and seconder, was duly installed into the Chair of Van Riebeeck amid the cheers of my fellow councillors and the acclamation of the assembled public.

My esteemed friend, A. B. Reid, was then elected Deputy, and, from my point of view, no better selection could have been made. He was a man after my own heart, and for the whole of my two periods of office, we worked harmoniously together for the welfare of the city. My association with him made a by no means easy task a distinctly pleasant one. When wanted, he was there. He was loyal, sympathetic and true, and our intimate association has created a life-long friendship.

My friend MacCallum—the gentleman who had sent specially for me when I first stood for election to the City Council to advise me of the fact that he was *not* voting for me, had, quite consistently I admit, strenuously

opposed my election as Mayor. When, some two years later, I relinquished that high position he was magnanimous enough to admit that "*he may have made a mistake,*" which is as near to acknowledging an error as he has ever been known to go. On the occasion of the election of the Deputy Mayor, who, by the by, was a "brither Scot," he remarked in the course of his speech, "We have made an Englishman Mayor and a Scotsman Deputy Mayor to keep an eye on him," which goes to prove that the story of Flodden Field still rankles in his mind. But I forgive him, oh yes, I forgive him.

For the first few days I had to run the gauntlet of the press photographic fiend. For their published pictures of me I fully and freely forgive the newspaper proprietors. Until then I had never quite realised what a vicious, forbidding-looking fellow I was. Some said the pictures were libellous, others again, were of opinion that the photographers had flattered me. I will not express an opinion either way, but will say this, photographers are not as popular with me as they were.

The Mayor of Capetown is provided with two motor cars; one is always standing in readiness to convey him to wherever his engagements require him to be, and to give some idea of the manifold nature of these engagements I am including a list of the more important at the conclusion of this volume; and I think that all will admit, that if only from the social side alone, the position is no sinecure. The other is the state car which is generally used by the Mayoress, whose public duties are by no means inconsiderable, and at night when both Mayor and Mayoress attend officially any public function.

He is also provided with a private secretary, who assists him with his voluminous correspondence and helps him in the selection of guests who are invited to the many civic functions. He undertakes the seating of guests in order of precedence at luncheons and dinners, and besides this interviews the many callers, draws out of them the object or nature of their call and decides whether or not the matter is of sufficient importance to allow them

access to the Mayor. Were this not done His Worship would never be free from visitors—good, bad and indifferent. There are so many who call merely to sit and talk and I had serious thoughts of causing a notice to be placed on the door of the Mayor's parlour reading:—

“ If you've got nothing to do, please don't do it here.”

I always preferred to prepare my own speeches. On one or two occasions my secretary suggested a different line of thought or an alteration in my method of expression, to which I would reply: “ Excuse me, it isn't what my notes say, it's the way I deliver what I have to say that matters.” And in most cases I think you will agree. If one has self-confidence and is never at a loss for a word he will make good. To my mind, the great thing is to avoid the prosy style and never give the appearance of stage fright. Speak with a smile on your face, if not always a smile, then at least try to wear a pleasant expression, it creates an impression of pleasure in speaking. Avoid all appearance of nervousness for there will be many present who will be nervous for you and you will spoil their enjoyment if you cause them to think that there is a danger of your breaking down. Try to introduce a friendly atmosphere at every table (if the function is a luncheon or banquet), with every guest. It's easily done; true, it may not be quite in order to toast individual guests, but then you are the conductor, as it were, to all intents and purposes. It is *your* show, you are the host and it is to you your guests look for a lead. They all appreciate a personal recognition which tends to make what otherwise might prove to be a heavy, stodgy affair into a happy, sparkling, jovial gathering. You should remember that your guests are not there simply to eat, they are all quite well enough off to pay for a dinner or a lunch. I am speaking, of course, from my own personal experiences. Some will lift their eyebrows and remark that such methods lack dignity, but, I submit there need be no lack of dignity in friendliness and the man who is out all the while for *dignity* will miss entirely

the more human side of the office, for dignity overdone is frequently nothing less than an exhibition of bad manners. And over-valuation of dignity is sometimes regarded as conceit—an exaggerated idea of our own importance. Just be natural, just be friendly, just be as kind and as generous as your purse will allow. You will then be clothed with a natural dignity which people will esteem and honour. Avoid artificiality, be sincere, always courteous and approachable, avoiding all appearance of superiority, and this is *true dignity*. An assumed dignity is either ludicrous or distinctly offensive.

As I have already said, very few guests attend a luncheon or banquet with the idea of making a heavy meal but for the pleasure and distinction of being among the guests. The tables may be loaded with good things, as they always are, and yet the function be as flat as a pancake. So those of you who are destined to become Mayors or to preside at public functions, don't underestimate the value of a smile or the friendly atmosphere. It counts all the while and you will have the gratification of hearing what a success that particular gathering was, and this let me say, is the only reward you will receive for your efforts and the *only* reward you desire.

The Mayor has what is called his "parlour" in the City Hall, where he is to be found daily, and it is there that he receives the numerous callers. Distinguished people visiting the country call and pay their respects to the city authorities through the Mayor, who, in due course, if such visitors are remaining in town for any length of time, returns their call, and if any important function is taking place during their stay they receive invitations.

The commanders (attired in full Naval uniform) of any foreign war ships touching at the Cape always call upon the Mayor and no sooner have they left than His Worship gets into his tail coat, dons his silk hat and accompanied by the Town Clerk, steps into his waiting motor car, drives down to the docks, returns the call, and probably receives an invitation to lunch on the ship.

I remember on the occasion of a visit from the Argentine training ship—The “Sarmiento”—I gave a civic luncheon in honour of the captain and officers. For some unknown reason—I suppose it was sheer carelessness—I got it into my head that the name of the ship was the “Sacramento.” At this particular luncheon the Commander-in-chief of the Cape Station, Vice-Admiral Murray Anderson, was seated on my left and the captain of the “Sarmiento” on my right. In speaking of the ship to the Admiral I used the word “Sacramento.”

“No, no, Mr. Mayor,” said the Admiral, “not ‘Sacramento’ ‘Sarmiento,’” but so obsessed was I with my own word that when I rose to propose the toast of “Our Guests,” although I had been warned, I toasted the Captain of the “Sacramento” to the amusement of all present, all of whom thought I had done this purposely, but which was merely a slip of the tongue.

Some months later I was lunching with Count Labia, the Italian Consul, and he reminded me of my error. “You know,” he said, “the word you used is a swear word in Italy.”

This was the one and only occasion during my Mayoral career that I was accused of using profane language, but I am thankful to say it led to no international complications; on the contrary, a few days later I was invited to lunch on board the ship, the Consul for the Argentine (Dr. Lenares) and I are still excellent friends, so “all’s well that ends well.”

There is a diary in the Mayor’s Parlour which is divided into sections representing each half hour of the day in which his multifarious engagements are duly entered. He is to open a Printers’ Conference at 11 a.m., lunch with the Administrator at 1 p.m., open a wild flower show at 3 p.m., and preside at the annual meeting of the Athletic Association at 8 p.m. The rest of the day is his own.

The next day’s engagements may be a little lighter. At 9 a.m. there is a deputation from the unemployed. At 10 a.m. a visit from the Paramount Chief of Basutu-

land with his Councillors. At 1 p.m. a Civic luncheon to the members of the visiting English Tennis Team. In the afternoon a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, for as Mayor, he is a member of every committee and sub-committee of the Council. In the evening, being at a loose end as it were, he may prepare his speech for to-morrow's function.

The speeches which, as Mayor, I had to make, were almost bewildering in their variety. From Benevolence to Boxing Contests, from Boy Scouts to Bioscopes, from Beauty Shows to Blind Schools. One thing I shall always maintain, and that is that no matter how mediocre a Mayor may be when he enters upon his official career, he must, of necessity, at the expiry of his term of office be a very much better informed man, for no matter how poorly he may speak, he must be more or less familiar with his subject to permit of his speaking to the point which necessitates more or less research work. I have addressed the students at agricultural and technical colleges, I have spoken at gymnastic displays and swimming contests, have opened exhibitions of paintings, have presided at congresses of Civil Servants, Societies of Journalists, Publicity Associations. The heads of Orphanages and Churches have inveigled me into speaking, I have even discoursed on the subject of Leprosy, until, at last, my head is crammed with a mass of heterogeneous knowledge to be let loose as the occasion demands. If my brain could be reduced to plain reading matter, it would be a veritable "Enquire within upon every subject."

Such difficulties do not appeal to Mayors whose speeches are prepared for them, but, personally, I would far rather listen to the original remarks of a man, however lame and halting his delivery, than to hear him read a speech that has been written for him. They are not *his* thoughts at all, but merely the views of a third party, and one can never hope to be convincing when one simply repeats the words and views of another.

It was very shortly after I had accepted the office

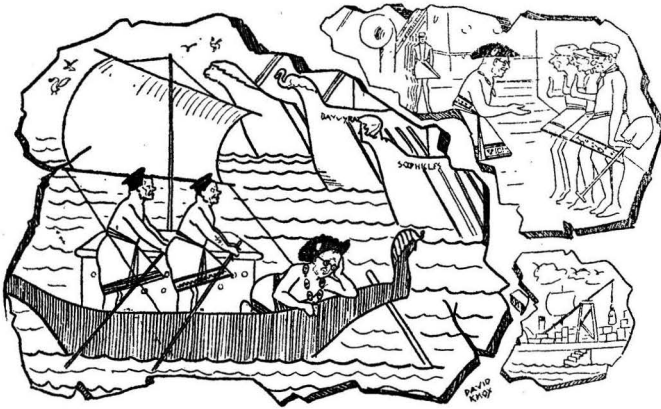
of Mayor that the great Shipping Strike, to which I have already briefly referred, occurred, and which completely dislocated the shipping of the Empire. Many ships were laid up in Table Bay on account of various crews refusing to work. The shipping companies were at their wit's end. It was suggested that, as Mayor, I might act as intermediary. Arrangements were made accordingly, and accompanied by the Town Clerk and my private secretary we put out to sea to visit the mutinous—no, I must not say that or I shall get into trouble, let me rather say *idle* ships, yes, that's better.

We first visited the Windsor Castle, interviewed the captain, who summoned the crew, firemen and stewards, and from the upper deck I addressed them and must say, received a very courteous hearing.

From there we went to the "Kenilworth Castle;" here the men were assembled on the main deck, some looking very threatening and not a few putting some rather truculent questions, but on the whole they gave me a fair hearing. We next proceeded to the "Kildonan Castle" where again I made an appeal and was rather severely heckled by some of the firemen. In each case when leaving the ship I left a message with the captain to the effect that if there were those among the men who wished to have done with the strike, I was willing to receive a deputation and would arrange for them to interview the Company with the least possible risk to themselves.

Returning to the city I found a deputation of the strike leaders, among them Mr. Walsh, in the City Hall waiting to interview me. I listened attentively to what they had to say, but in the middle of the interview the Town Clerk entered the Mayor's Parlour, he called me aside, and in an agitated manner informed me that the deputation I had invited to visit me from the ship had arrived. Here was a pretty kettle of fish, in the one room were the strike leaders whose slogan was "No Surrender," and in another were representatives of those who wished to end the strike, who represented by far the

greater number, and were anxious to come to terms with the owners. If the strike leaders saw the others or even suspected they were there trouble was bound to ensue. We thereupon arranged that he (the Town Clerk) should accompany the strike breakers to the Castle Company's offices leaving the City Hall by one of the back doors, while I returned to the Parlour to continue the debate with the irreconcilables.



[*"Cape Times,"* Oct., 1925.

Fish, the Chief Citizen, sailleth upon the waters of the Great Table to settle the Seamen's Strike.

It was a distinctly unpleasant meeting, an attempt at browbeating was made to which I retaliated by remarking that if they had come to bully, then I should refuse to discuss matters any longer. We came to no understanding; on the other hand, the strike breakers were more successful, and either that day or the next the Castle Company's ships left Table Bay, which virtually broke the strike.

The next week the accompanying cartoon appeared in "*The Cape.*" It might almost be described as libellous for I was never sea sick, and did not wear my Mayoral

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robe and chain of office, which are distinctly unsuitable for sea life. But I magnanimously forgave the repentant editor.

When Parliament assembles the Mayor is invited to attend the official opening by the Governor General. It is usually a very brilliant affair, glittering with gay uniforms and beautiful dresses. Usually the least conspicuous are the members themselves. This is followed at 1 o'clock by a lunch in the dining room of the House at which the Prime Minister presides, and to which the Governor General, his lady, and the various members of the Government and other private members with their friends are invited. It is quite an informal affair. Gorgeous uniforms and robes of office are replaced by the ordinary lounge suit. There are no speeches, it is just a friendly gathering. After this the session commences and continues for six months.

A week later the Mayor and Council give a Civic Reception in the City Hall, usually the most brilliant of his year of office, and to which their Excellencies the Governor General and his wife, all the Members of Parliament with their wives, Provincial Councillors and *their* wives, City Councillors and *their* wives and sons and daughters, representatives from the Navy, Army, Law, the whole of the Consular Staff, and a very large number of the public are invited. It makes a most impressive and dignified gathering, the principle guest being the Premier, the Governor General and the Government House Party arriving later. At a given time the Mayor and Mayoress, Deputy Mayor and Mayoress, with the principle guests assemble in the Reception Room. The doors are then opened, the various guests are announced by an official, they pass along shaking hands as they go, and emerge into the grand hall, all beautifully lighted and decorated. The Mayor, Mayoress and party receive for about half an hour during which time they will probably shake hands with between 1,500 and 2,000 people, which is no light task. The smile with which each guest is welcomed has the effect of creasing the face somewhat,

and frequently, when there has been a momentary lull in the proceedings I have turned round to the Deputy Mayor and said: "Now Mr. Deputy, let us get our features in order," at the same time massaging my face with my hands. This little piece of by-play, it is necessary for me to state, is *not* seen by the guests.

The receiving over, the little cavalcade, preceded by the mace bearer, followed by the Mayor and Mayoress and the others of the receiving party, proceed to the Grand Hall where the guests are all assembled. A pathway is made, the Mayoral procession passes through and having reached the further end of the hall disperses itself among the guests, the Mayor and Mayoress proceeding to their Bay, where during the evening many of the guests call and pay their respects. After this the dancing commences and at 10 o'clock or thereabouts, refreshments are served in the Minor and Banqueting halls and a sit-down supper is provided for the more distinguished guests in the Mayoress's Parlour, to which their Excellencies The Governor General and his wife, if they are present at the function, are graciously pleased to accept an invitation.

The Town Clerk is notified by the Controller of the Household of the time of their arrival and at that hour the Mayor and Mayoress are in attendance to meet them on the steps of the City Hall. They accompany them to the Mayor's Parlour where the Government House Party leave their wraps and then proceed to the Mayoral Bay. The Governor General enters first, the orchestra plays God Save the King, their Excellencies bow to the guests below and the ball proceeds.

At first the receiving of the Governor General and his gracious Princess is somewhat of an ordeal, especially when they belong to the Royal House, but being what they are—kindly, gentle folk, they speedily put you at your ease. There is no stiffness or starch about them and, at the same time, no familiarity, just pleasant, kindly people, fully conscious of their high position—as they should be—but never emphasising it. One is usually

up against more stupid conceit among monied nobodies than among the highly born.

In the panels on the walls of the Mayor's Parlour are photographs of past Mayors. As a whole, it is not a handsome collection and on one occasion Princess Alice was looking at them and was informed that because of this exhibition the Parlour is called by some "The Chamber of Horrors," at which she was greatly amused. There's many a true word spoken in jest. When I relinquished the office of Mayor and my portrait was added to the collection, I was told that it was my tombstone. Unkind, unkind!

Possibly the most difficult task I had to perform during my terms of office was the issuing of invitations to the various Civic functions. When I took office I discovered that no record had been kept and no proper method observed in dealing with this difficult problem. Naturally every ratepayer is entitled to an invitation at some time or another. But unless they call, sign the visitors' book and leave cards, no record can possibly be kept.

Thousands of people do this and I caused a specially ruled and indexed book to be made in which the name of every visitor was entered in alphabetical order. The particular function was written at the top of each column and those not invited to one would be invited to another. It was obviously impossible to invite 10,000 to the same reception. Space reasons alone forbade it. By this means everyone who called received an invitation to one function or another. There was no discrimination; I would look down the list of names and would say to my secretary: "Ah, so-and-so was not invited to the last, I'll place a tick against his name this time." So it became not a question of names but of ticks. Fair as this system would appear to be, there were still discontented people.

I remember on one occasion the phone in the Mayor's Parlour rang. I answered it.

"Is that the Mayor's secretary?" enquired a woman's voice.

“ No Madam, the Mayor is speaking.”

“ Oh, Mr. Mayor,” continued the speaker, “ will you tell me *why* we have not been invited to this evening’s function?”

“ Madam,” I replied, somewhat taken aback, “ what do you mean by “ *why*.”

“ Well,” she said, “ we are *always* invited.”

“ Ah, then that’s where things have been wrong, Madam,” I answered, “ you shouldn’t have been invited “ *always*,” there are 10,000 who have as much right to be invited as you, and I am endeavouring to give every-one an opportunity.”

“ Then you won’t send me one?” she asked, petulantly.

“ I fear not, Madam,” I said.

I made another enemy, but did the right thing.

It was about this time that I determined to drive a motor car. As I have said, the city provides the Mayor with two cars and for ordinary little trips about the city I felt that I wished to be independent of chauffeurs, the state car was a totally different matter, but I couldn’t tolerate the idea of a man sitting in the car the whole day long simply waiting for me in case my services might be required somewhere in the city.

CHAPTER XXII.

MORE MAYORAL DUTIES.

IT was my privilege—on behalf of the city—while occupying the Chair of Van Riebeeck, to entertain many eminent and distinguished visitors and sporting teams from overseas to luncheon. The invitations to such functions are necessarily limited because seating accommodation in the Banqueting Hall does not exceed 200.

Among the first functions of this nature for which I was responsible was one to the British Visiting Farmers who had arrived to tour South Africa. In looking through the list of their names and from whence they hailed, I discovered that one was farming at Bishops Stortford, which, in addition to being the birthplace of the great Cecil Rhodes, is only four miles distant from the small village of Sawbridgeworth where, as a small boy, I had lived. I referred to this in my speech of welcome at the luncheon and the man from Bishops Stortford waited upon me in the afternoon to beg a photograph for publication in "The Herts and Essex Observer."

The next year, to return the compliment, as it were, at the invitation of the British Farmers, a party of our South African Farmers decided to visit Great Britain and the Continent. As Mayor I was asked to give a small function of farewell. His Excellency the Governor General sat on my right and among those on my left were that great South African General Smuts and Sir Thomas Smartt, who as plain Dr. Smartt had at one time represented Dordrecht in Parliament.

In bidding them an official farewell, I remarked: "I notice by your itinerary, Gentlemen, that you are visiting Hatfield House, the seat of the Marquis of Salisbury. The next day you are due at Bishops Stortford, the birth-

place of the famous Cecil Rhodes, and sandwiched between these two places, as it were, you will find a small village called Sawbridgeworth.

"What is *that* place famous for, Mr. Mayor" interjected General Smuts.

"Sir," I said with mock seriousness, "it is famed for the fact that His Worship the Mayor of Capetown spent the happiest years of his life there."

This caused a roar of laughter which the General enjoyed as much as any.

Then on behalf of the citizens I was privileged to entertain at a Civic Luncheon the Premier of the Union of South Africa—General Hertzog—on his return from the Imperial Conference in England.

I made what the "Cape Times" rejoices in describing as one of my "characteristic" speeches, and concluded thus, "Sir, I have just one—*only one* grievance against you. It is the old, old story of Jacob and Esau which has persisted through the ages, and will continue to persist in all the ages that are to follow. You, sir, have robbed me of my birthright, you have visited my native city and have been presented with the freedom of London. And my claims—the claims of birth, sir—have been entirely overlooked. I do trust that you will take this matter up with the Lord Mayor, Sir Roland Blades, without delay to see that my rights are protected—and that, in due course, my birthright shall be restored to me."

General Hertzog in his reply promised to do so, but I grieve to say that so far nothing has been done and Esau has triumphed.

I also entertained at Luncheon Mr., now *Sir* Alan Cobham, the airman who had flown from England to South Africa. A most interesting man. In proposing his health I quoted a verse from an old song we used to sing in the 80's when I was an apprentice in London—this was before the era of the aeroplane and recounted the experiences of two men who made a balloon ascent, and it ran thus, which, in the circumstances, was appropriate:—

“ They presided over ‘ banquets,’
Quite looked down upon the ‘ Mayor,’
And certainly were the ‘ overseers ’
Of every parish there.”

Then came a visit from the Royal Air Force under Flight Commander Pulford. He and his officers I also entertained, and while sitting next to me at lunch, I carelessly remarked that my dear old father was living in London.

“ Indeed,” he said, “ if you care to write to him, I will take the letter by air mail.”

It is needless to say I *did* write, and in due course the letter was received, one of the very first, if not *the* first to be conveyed from South Africa to London by aeroplane.

He (Pulford), was very anxious that I should make a flight over the city. The temptation was *too* great—“ Why, in future,” I thought, I shall be able to boast that I rose higher than any of my predecessors in office, and the fact will not be disputed.” A date and time was arranged forthwith, and in due course, I made my first and only flight.

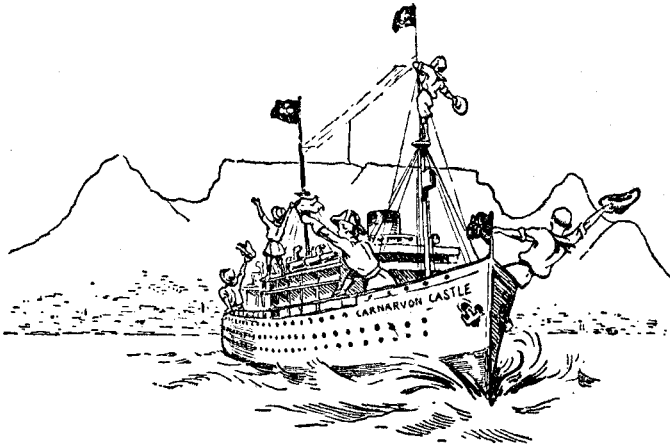
CHAPTER XXIII.

RE-ELECTED TO THE MAYORAL CHAIR.

THE end of my first year of office drew to a close. The usual caucus was held, and, to my great gratification, I was unaminously elected to the chair for another year. It seemed to be the common wish of my brother and sister councillors and the public alike. On the day of his investiture it is customary for the Mayor to give a luncheon. This is more of a domestic function to which the heads of departments and the higher officials are invited. There is a homely touch about this particular function at which employers and employed come into closer contact with each other. I think these particular gatherings appealed to me more than any. There was an absence of stiffness and an altogether friendlier atmosphere which made them extremely pleasant. On such occasions, there was usually more private toasting than usual. The speeches were more of a personal nature. If I had *my* way, I would increase the number of invitations to employees at such gatherings. It should be one and not the only occasion when councillors and staff meet on terms of freedom and equality, on the splendid "Toc. H." principle. No, as I have remarked, I won't say the "One Occasion," there might well be more occasions, which would make for a better understanding. At all events, I know the City Hall officials appreciate the fact that they were the honoured guests of the occasion, and better work was the result.

There was the coming of General Sir Robert Baden Powell, of Boy Scout fame. The Scouts of the Peninsula held a Rally in the City Hall and I was privileged to introduce their famous Chief and his charming wife to them. Peter (Sir Robert's son) was there with his mother in the Mayor's Bay and I called upon him to stand to allow all the scouts to see him; Peter, although not too pleased at such notoriety, received an ovation.

Before the Chief Scout left South Africa I had the honour of entertaining him at a Civic Luncheon, and a very happy luncheon it was. Here is a copy of the farewell card he sent me when leaving.



With heartfelt Thanks we send our cry,
 "Good Luck to all! Good Camps! —
 Good bye!"

Olave Baden Powell Robert Baden Powell

1 April 1927

Now comes a sad episode, but life is made up of grave and gay, we have the sunshine and we have the clouds. Shortly after I assumed office, accompanied by the Town Clerk, I made the customary courtesy call upon the Commander-in-Chief (Admiral Sir Maurice Fitzmaurice), at Simonstown.

From the first time I met him there was something in him which appealed to me very much and I have reason to believe that that esteem was mutual. He was a large-hearted breezy man—a typical sailor. His time was expiring, his successor (Admiral Murray Anderson) had already been appointed. It seemed to me that a man who had identified himself so wholeheartedly with the affairs of the city was deserving of some public recognition. Accordingly I wrote to him asking whether he would allow me to give a Civic Luncheon in his honour. He accepted graciously.

Accordingly my secretary put the invitation cards in hand. The proof was delivered to me for approval and correction. As I was glancing over it at my desk in the Mayor's Parlour, a message came over the phone to the effect that the Admiral had been taken suddenly ill and that, in consequence, all engagements were cancelled.

In two days the dear fellow was dead. Here is the appreciation I wrote of him which appeared in the Press.

THE ADMIRAL.

(Vice-Admiral Sir Maurice Fitzmaurice, Commander-in-Chief, African Squadron, Died at Simonstown, January 23rd, 1927.

Muffle your oars. Toll for the brave! Lower the flags to half-mast, for our gallant Admiral Fitzmaurice has gone aloft to deliver his dispatches to the Great Commander-in-Chief. He fought the good fight, and surely his reward will be: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

It was my great privilege to meet him on many occasions. He was unvaryingly genial and courteous, ever kind and generous, genuinely appreciative of any function he attended, and, despite his distinguished and responsible position as Naval Commander-in-Chief, always took a deep and personal interest in the Civic affairs of our beautiful Peninsula. I can hardly realise that the dread Reaper has taken him, and that his charming personality will be seen and felt no more among us.

He was a great lover of the organ, and frequently, during some large reception, at which he was always an honoured guest, he would disappear from the festive throng and would eventually be found sitting in the organ loft with the city organist.

He was a lover of the more cultured and refined pleasures; the limelight had no attraction for him. He was ever dignified but never unapproachable, essentially a kindly, lovable man. Snobbery and side were entirely foreign to him. Enlarging just for one moment on his kindness, let me give one small illustration.

When I was first elected Mayor I wished to pay my official respects and phoned to Admiralty House at Simons-town asking when it would be convenient for me to call. He named a date and suggested that we (the Town Clerk who accompanied me, and I) should time our visit for mid-day and lunch with him in his home.

Now I have a son—my youngest son who at that time was a cadet on South Africa's first Training Ship the "General Botha." I was too busy with my official duties to accompany him to his ship when he first joined her and had not seen him since he left home.

The Admiral, the Town Clerk and I were sitting on the verandah of Admiralty House just prior to lunch. We were chatting away and I was mentally taking in and admiring the beautiful and picturesque surroundings which seem just like a little piece of Old England transplanted, a perfect cameo of loveliness, when suddenly, Sir Maurice stopped talking and, looking up with that familiar merry twinkle in his eye, said:—

"Hello; I say, what's this then? Who's this I wonder?"

I looked round and there, to my infinite astonishment and pleasure stood my boy Harold, saluting us. I had a queer, choking sensation in my throat as I said:

"This is very good of you, Sir Maurice; my heart was on the "Botha" all the time you know."

"Yes," he replied quietly, "I thought it would be. I had to write a very humble letter to the captain of his ship, and, as you see, he has given him leave."

My boy was invited to lunch too. What a friendly, happy lunch it was. How we discussed "Captain Marryat," "Midshipman Easy," "Peter Simple," and that stirring old "Boy's Own Paper" story by W. H. G. Kingston, "From Powder monkey to Admiral," which the Admiral, being a man of my own age, had read at the same time as I had.

After this I had the temerity to air the little sea knowledge I *thought* I possessed and was informed afterwards by Crombie, the Flag Lieutenant, that my data was altogether wrong.

I can still recall the gallant Admiral interesting my small boy with stories of his midshipman days on board the "Britannia."

("Dear me," I thought, "the first and only time I saw that ship was when I left Dartmouth for South Africa 35 years ago.") And that little cadet's eyes got larger and larger and rounder and rounder as he listened. Sir Maurice must have lived his boyhood over again in that all too brief hour.

All the *world* knows of the Admiral's distinguished naval career. I never heard him refer to it—heroes seldom speak of their gallant exploits, but we all know that during the Great War his ship "The Triumph" was torpedoed and this splendid officer was nearly drowned.

This is all I wish to write. Abler pens than mine will tell of his distinguished career as a sailor. I have confined my remarks to the homelier, kindlier and more

human side of him. The City mourns the loss of one who loved her. His manly figure, warm heart, and breezy personality will be missed, but we have just one consolation and this is the knowledge that he sleeps for ever in the land he loved and was so loath to leave. As the sailor's poet, Dibden, wrote:—

“ Thus death who Kings and tars dispatches,
In vain his life has doffed.
For though his body's under hatches,
His soul has gone aloft.”

I attended his funeral in the small, wind-swept cemetery at Glencairn, near Simonstown, where he rests within a few feet of his beloved sea. The Governor General was present to pay his last tribute of respects, and, as the Last Post sounded, just as the glorious sun was setting, I murmured to myself:—

“ Good night. All's well.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONTINUED MAYORAL DUTIES.

THE various functions I have referred to form only an infinitesimal portion of those I actually took part in. As on almost every occasion a speech was required of me, you will perhaps sympathise with the mayor of an important community whose duties are never-ending and who is called upon to speak on almost every subject under the sun from Mahomet to Moses.

Time and space will permit of my referring to only a few of these functions.

Between whiles there were smaller, semi-official luncheons at the City Club to which about thirty would be invited to meet some travelling celebrity or some world-famous man, in which case the guests would be limited to the Chairman of the various Standing Committees of the City Council.

In the Mayor's Parlour I was *always* busy, either receiving callers, interviewing deputations or chatting with brother councillors. Sometimes my duties would take me to writing cheques in response to the many appeals that reached me and attending, whenever I could, to a by no means small business correspondence, for it must not be forgotten that all the time I was the head of my Dordrecht business which I dare not neglect and wouldn't if I dared.

One lady in England wrote and asked me to provide her with a husband. I replied that we required all our young men to marry our own girls. I never heard from the young lady again, but am willing to provide any likely suitor with her name and address.

Two of the happiest functions which fell to my lot as Mayor were the Christmas entertainments to the orphans of the city. On each occasion we invited about

1,000 children and it was worth all the work, trouble and expense to witness the pleasure it gave to those dear children.

The preparations for this entertainment were in the hands of my wife. A huge Christmas Tree was the first item, with a present for each little guest selected according to age and sex. This meant many many weeks of hard and discriminating work, buying, sorting and hanging.

The Grand Hall has to be decorated and here the electricity department came to her aid and a beautiful job they made of it. Someone undertook to act as a *real live Father Christmas*. Then we arranged for a bioscope entertainment with which our huge family were overwhelmed with delight. Next came refreshments, heaps and heaps of sweets, cakes, buns, tea, ginger beer and fruit just as much as they could stow away. These refreshments were served in the Banqueting Hall. Then back to the Grand Hall again to receive their presents from the Christmas Tree and at the same time each received a large coloured balloon with Christmas Greetings from the Mayor and Mayoress printed on it. Oh, what wonderful parties they were to be sure. How happy each child appeared to be. To many of the dear mites it was the one day of their lives. Then, when all the presents were distributed, all the refreshments consumed, we all adjourned to the little park at the back of the City Hall which is, by courtesy, called the "Mayor's Garden," where we were all photographed. The very happiest party in Capetown that day and a happy memory for many a long day after with many of us. Then three ringing cheers for the Mayor and Mayoress and another for Father Christmas. What lungs those small people had to be sure. Then the good-byes. Many crowded round to be kissed, and we kissed the dear mites, of course we did, at the same time wishing each one of them "A Merry Christmas." The kindly heads of each institution collected their respective little companies and off they went full of happy memories.

Yes, these were unquestionably the happiest functions my wife and I were privileged to give and to enjoy during our two years of office.

I remember a party of Barnardo boys *en route* to Australia, stopped at the Cape for a few hours. An enthusiastic social worker—Mr. Townshend—who, by the way, had acted as Father Christmas for us, came to me one morning and said: “Mr. Mayor, these lads are visiting Capetown, will you do something for them in the shape of entertainment? they will only be here for a few hours.

“Barnardo’s Homes!” “Stepney!” I thought, “why in my apprenticeship days I wasn’t far from Stepney, why not?” “For auld lang syne,” as it were. Memories of those happy, careless days, with the one sinister thought of Greenwich, passed through my mind.

“Yes,” I said, “certainly I will. I’ll give them all a good dinner at one o’clock—a real, good blow out”—I added. I invited a few citizens and one or two councillors to the small feast, among them “Mac,” who, you will remember, on one occasion, acted as Prince of Wales.

We all sat down to a good wholesome meal which I didn’t spoil with a long speech. On such occasions boys don’t want sermons, but serving, and there’s no doubt they were served quickly and plentifully. I was just giving the dear chaps a few words of fatherly advice when “Mac,” who on account of pressing professional duties had been unable to dine with us, came into the hall and stepping quietly behind me, whispered:—

“Sorry I couldn’t be present, I wish you would give each of these boys five shillings from me.” Saying which he disappeared.

When I announced his munificence there was almost a pandemonium of joy. The Town Clerk came to my assistance. We sent to the bank, got the money (£12 or £13), all in half crowns and putting two into each separate envelope, they were handed round. Ah, one comes across many little spontaneous acts of unadvertised

kindness when one is Mayor of a large and prosperous city. Those gifts of five shilling spelt affluence to each of those lads, who went on their ways rejoicing, budding millionaires.

Some weeks later I received a very nice letter from Mr. Howard Williams, the Hon. Treasurer of Barnardo's Homes, thanking me for what I had done. Mr. Howard Williams, as all know, is the son of the late Sir George Williams, the founder of the Y.M.C.A., and also the head of the large drapery firm in St. Paul's Churchyard, a firm from whom I had carried many a parcel in my "city trotting" days.

When I was leaving for South Africa in '90, at my father's request, I called on Sir George who gave me a very nice open letter of introduction and also a book entitled "A young man's safeguard against the perils of the age." It was a work which had been written and dedicated to him by one of his many admirers. I wrote to the son and told him of this and, in reply, he sent me a very excellent photograph of the grand old man of the Christian cause. It hangs on my study wall to-day.

My wife and I gave many receptions—afternoon receptions—to the delegates attending various conferences and their friends.

We entertained in this way the members of the Congregational Union, the Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland (Dr. Morrison), Commissioner de Groot of the Salvation Army. But the biggest surprise I had was in connection with a conference of the National Council of Women. The organisers waited upon me to ask whether I would entertain the representatives or delegates in any way. I thought the matter over and decided on an afternoon reception.

"How many do you expect to be present?" I asked.

"About 300," was the reply.

I discussed the matter with my secretary and came to the conclusion that it would save a great deal of time and trouble if we made all the necessary arrangements, had the invitation cards printed and then handed them

to the secretary of the congress with permission to invite whom they wished, we, of course, paying the postage. This seemed to me the right and proper thing to do.

The afternoon of the reception arrived and attired in black morning coat, wearing the Mayoral chain of office and accompanied by my wife wearing her official emblem of office, we entered the banquetting chamber to find it filled with guests *and not one single member of the male sex present save myself*. One solitary man and he a Mayor, among 300 women. "*Never again!*" I murmured, bitterly; "*Never again.*" This was the result of my magnanimity in leaving the invitations in the hands of women. It was a distinct breach of privilege. After that the representatives of any similar gatherings were required to submit a list of the names of people they wished to invite and I took particular care to hold a watching brief for the so-called *sterner sex*.

Then there were celebrations of various episodes of the Great War; Delville Wood Day. Delville Wood, where our gallant South African lads fought so bravely and died in the defence of the British Empire, leaving a glorious and imperishable memory. This service was arranged for the Sunday nearest to the anniversary of that great epic fight. The platform filled with distinguished citizens. The Mayor and Council present in their robes. Ex-Service men wearing their uniforms and decorations and Ex-military nurses wearing their war dresses and medals and nurses in their war uniforms. An impressive gathering.

Then a stirring address by a local minister of religion or some other celebrity. The singing by the united choirs and the huge audience of that beautiful hymn:—

“O valiant hearts, who to your glory came,
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame!
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved.”

Then a collection in aid of the disabled soldiers, and thus ends a most impressive Memorial Service which I

hope will be repeated and repeated for all time "Lest we forget, Lest we forget."

From such a host of material it is difficult to select. I could write and write and write, for those two years were literally crowded with incident. Some may—and I have no doubt *will* remark, that it's a case of mere self-laudation. I trust not. In writing such an autobiography as this one could hardly fail to deal in a fairly comprehensive manner with the most interesting, if not the most momentous years of one's life. There is no self-glorification in it. God knows, I am not unmindful of my own shortcomings which are many, but in relating the various incidents of my mayoral career, I am merely recording the history of our city, of whose destinies I was for that period the humble custodian.

Two fuller years no man has ever had, but despite their strenuousness, they were distinctly happy years, for the strongest bond of sympathy and in some cases affection had sprung up between the public and myself, which made a heavy and exacting task an extremely pleasant one. Not only was I privileged to have the esteem of the public but the fullest loyalty and support of my fellow councillors.

Then again, every official—from the humblest to the greatest—did all in his power to assist me and I was on terms of good fellowship with them all.

I could speak of an occasion when there was almost a minor epidemic of ex-Mayors from various parts of South Africa and some from overseas floating about Capetown, all of whom called upon His Worship of Capetown, which was only right and proper. When I had invited this one to lunch, that one to dinner, two or three for a motor drive, I was at my wit's end to know what to do next, and determined, there and then, no matter in whatever capacity I was travelling, never, under any circumstances would I call upon the Mayor of any community. I decided to be as merciful as I hope for mercy. It would be irksome to refer to each public occasion at which I officiated; were I foolish enough to attempt it

it would fill three or four volumes and three or four volume works are not popular in this rapid age. It's only men with the reputation of an H. G. Wells who would dare attempt it and I don't think he is too pleased with his last experiment in this direction. But let me say this, in a city like Capetown where the social aspect looms so large, no Mayor can hope to make a success of his high office without the fullest co-operation of his wife as Mayoress. In this respect I was particularly fortunate, for my wife worked whole-heartedly with me and made light of the burden of it all. Being naturally of a retiring, somewhat nervous disposition, and essentially a home woman, it was, unquestionably, a greater ordeal for her than for me, but she performed her by no means easy task to the satisfaction of all. Her quiet, un-demonstrative ways appealing to all.

Once a year the Cape Hospital Board makes an appeal to the Mayoress to organise a Ball, the proceeds of which augment the funds for hospital work in the Peninsula.

This is no small undertaking, but the last was a gigantic success, which was due entirely to the work of my wife and her capable and untiring committee. How I fared during the period of organisation will be gathered by the following lines which appeared in the then current number of "The Cape." They were headed thus:—

"A PEEP BEHIND THE SCENES."

(Being a mere husband's reflections on the preparations for the Hospital Ball.)

The house is in disorder; there are tickets everywhere;
 My bedroom is an office and there's not a vacant chair.
 There are ink-stains on the carpet, there are posters in the hall,
 And life's become a burden 'cos there's going to be a ball.
 There's lists and lists of names arranged in every blessed room,
 And each one she is writing to—'twill all be over soon.
 My study's been converted to a pantry for a while,
 Where cake, and fruit, and things like that, are kept in first-class
 style.

The drawing room is being used for caucuses just now,
 'Tis here that the committees meet—I'm sure you will allow

That at least I am entitled to some quiet resting place
 Where I can sit and ponder with no visitors to face.
 Our dining room is crowded out with plants—all for the ball,
 Then, on our front verandah, pinned close up against the wall,
 Are tickets printed " *Cloak Room*," " *Refreshments* " and the like,
 A man is in attendance standing ready with his bike,
 He's sent with notes to Mrs. Brown to ask if she will wait
 Upon dear Mrs. Robinson; and, if it's not too late,
 To call upon the Jones's for the sub, they said they'd send--
 (No-one, I'm sure, will e'er attempt the Jones's to defend.)
 There's ladies calling all day long reporting what they've done.
 They're working all like Trojans, yes, they're working, every one.
 My car stands in the garage, engine going all day long,
 They never shut the petrol off, they think this would be wrong,
 'Twere waste of time to start her up, so there she works away,
 Absorbing quarts of petrol—" *most extravagant* "—I say.
 A sign board's fixed on every door—when visitors appear
 They have to ask no questions now, the way is made so clear.
 It's just like a museum—yes—our house of course I mean,
 A porter is in waiting now to supplement the scene.
 I sleep upon the kitchen floor, it's nice and comfy there,
 My sons have sought repose upon the first and second stair.
 My daughter has a hammock which is slung from wall to wall,
 My wife sleeps in a wicker chair lest anyone should call.
 A busy life we're leading now the hospitals to aid,
 And soon we'll need a ward ourselves where we shall all be laid.
 Still, after all, it's well to help, so why sit down and cry?
 The ball will all be over t'wards the middle of July.

One date seems to stand out more conspicuously than others on my long list of fulfilled engagements.

JUNE 8TH, 1926 "MONASTERY."

Ah, I must tell you about that, of course I must. I had not been too well, had complained of my interior; nearly every chemist in Capetown was familiar with my symptoms and nearly every chemist in Capetown differed as to treatment. I had consumed sufficient medicine to kill any ordinary man and certainly sufficient to start a Free Dispensary. I was a guest at the annual dinner of the Mountain Club and sat gloomily through it, eating nothing. The next morning my wife insisted that I should see a doctor and as I left the house to enter upon another day of my Mayoral duties, I promised I would do so, for when a woman—no matter how retiring she may be—insists—*well!*

At 12 o'clock, by appointment, I called on the doctor who examined me and whose verdict was "Operation,"

"When?" I almost gasped.

"Well, when can you have it done?" he asked.

"Oh," I replied, "when I have finished with the Mayorship."

"And when will that be?"

"Probably in about 18 months' time," I said.

"My dear fellow," he replied, indulgently, "if that is not attended to, you will be in Heaven in 18 months' time." (I have always been grateful to him for his optimism and good opinion of me).

"Well," I thought, "while in all probability I should have the distinction of being the first mayor to inhabit the Pearly Regions, I don't want to go there *just* yet, and, furthermore, I don't wish to rob Peter of his innings."

"When and where do you wish to operate?" I queried.

"To-morrow at 9 o'clock at the Monastery," was his reply. "You had better go there this afternoon, and you must eat nothing until the operation is over."

Leaving all my work just as it lay, requesting my secretary to cancel all my engagements, I motored home. When I told them the doctor's verdict there was much weeping, for most women have a habit of crossing York River before they come to it, and in anticipation of an operation, I was as good as dead and buried.

My portmanteau was speedily packed and, accompanied by my wife, we drove to the Monastery, where my room was already prepared. The Monastery is a beautiful place, and, as a nursing home, splendidly conducted.

The next morning, after bidding my wife and family a cheery farewell, I was placed on a pneumatic tyred trolley, run into the lift and in no time whisked away up to the operating theatre, where, after the administration of chloroform, the operation was performed; and after some three hours of unconsciousness, I awoke to

find myself swathed in bandages, lying in my bed. Thank God for the man who discovered or invented chloroform. Then came the sickening nausea and consuming thirst. But who doesn't know of this? In three or four days, thanks to the doctor's skill, I was quite comfortable again and shall always be surprised how little pain there is with a very considerable cut. Had it not been for the fact that I was troubled with a bad cough at the time, I should hardly have known that the surgeon's knife had opened me up and that a portion of my interior had been removed.

As I lay in bed, the muse, as it sometimes does, overtook me and the good people of Capetown were shocked with the result:—

“MOANS FROM THE MONASTERY.”

I'm down here at the Monast'ry, I've been here far too long;
They're making me too comfy; in doing so, they're wrong,
For I can quite foresee a time—some not far-distant day,
When they'll wish to get rid of me, and I won't go away.
A gentle hint I shall receive, a hint—unless I'm blind—
I cannot fail to understand; in language firm, I'm blind—
They'll say: “Good sir, now you are cured. (This you'll not
fail to own),

“You're quite all right, naught's wrong with you, you've ceased
to ache and groan.

We've treated you with kindness great.” (“Indeed you have,”
I'll sob),

“A part of your anatomy the doctor had to rob,
This part, good sir, we're going to keep in spirits on a shelf,
A slight memento of you, sir, a small part of yourself.
This portion's all that we require, the *larger* part—the rest—
The part that's really *you*, good sir, the part that near went West,
Might very well be walking home along the broad highway.”
But I'll reply: “No Sisters, dear, I've come, and come to stay;
I'll keep the books, I'll mend the clothes, the garden I will tend,
I'll take the service in the church, the stockings I will mend,
I'll give each one his chloroform; I'll shave him in his bed”—
“Alas!” she'll say, “it will not do,” and sadly shake her head:
“We've no time here for handy men; while pensioners, it's true,
Are very grateful sort of men, we've naught for them to do.”
And Sister Emily will sigh—her message I'll delete,
While Sister Genevieve will sob as out into the street
I'm driven by those kindly souls—so much against their will,
They'll drive me through the open gates and half way down the hill.

Then they will bolt and bar the doors, and on the lintel pin
A notice, bearing this remark: "We can't allow you in."
And solemn masses will be sung; all jubilant they'll shout;
"A Festival we'll celebrate: this day we've got him out."

So never get *too* comfy when you're in a Nursing Home;
Don't think that you are there for life, for there's a time to come—
Yes, sure as fate a day will come—aye, come it will for sure,
When Sister This and Sister That will show you to the door.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE END OF MY MAYORAL CAREER.

THE end of my second Mayoral year was approaching. I was approached by some urging me to accept yet another year of office, but steadfastly refused for three reasons; the first being that in my opinion it is a mistake to cling too long to office. Deservedly or undeservedly I had won the confidence and good-will of my fellow councillors, the large municipal staff and the great outside public. To create the impression that I was, as it were, clinging on to the high office, might have had the effect of alienating the very esteem I had gained, and it is possible that at the end of another year of office I might have had the mortification of finding that I had lost what I valued so highly.

The second reason was that my two years of office—not only mine, but my wife's—had been so strenuous that we were both mentally and physically played out, for, as you will have gathered, the duties of Mayor and Mayoress of a very considerable city, is no sinecure, but a whole-time job. There were weeks when, in addition to the multifarious day functions, we never spent an evening at home. And thirdly, there was my business in Dordrecht which needed badly my personal attention, and which, for the previous two years I had had little opportunity of controlling. These then were my reasons for relinquishing the office. Far better to hand over the reins of office with the feeling that the public want more of you, than to serve longer and find that they are weary of you.

Shortly after it became known that I was not seeking re-election, I went as usual to the Mayor's Parlour to commence my daily duties and found a coloured drawing placed very carefully in the centre of my writing table. With the kind permission of the proprietors of "The



Drawn by Peter Fraser.

[The Tatler.

A Mayor's Tale.

The retiring Mayor, introducing his successor, wound up with, "As for myself, I own I feel a relief to be at the end of my morality, and to be able to return to the freedom of my former life."

Tatler " I am able to reproduce it. It speaks for itself. I only trust that I am not quite the pompous individual the mayor in the picture is represented to be.

During my term of office there had been some considerable discussion on the subject of " Beauty Shows " in connection with Capetown's Gala season. Rightly or wrongly I had taken up the attitude that if conducted with care and circumspection, they added to the interest and gaiety of the occasion. In this I was at cross purposes with my friend MacCallum of " Prince of Wales " fame. A local paper " The Nation " having reported the debate on the subject, published this clever cartoon.



[" South African Nation. "]

Disappointed.

The Mayor of Cape Town to Councillor A. J. MacCallum, a strong opponent of Beauty Competitions: " Well, if you object, Mac, we'll drop the idea, though I don't see any harm in it. "

To which I replied, as follows, in the next issue of that paper:—

“THE MAYOR’S LAMENT.

(We have received the following letter from His Honour The Mayor of Capetown, and as the opposite (picture) shows, part reparation for the damage and insult caused by last week’s cartoon has been made by us.)

Sir.—I am heart-broken; bowed down, as it were, with grief and shame, feeling that the finger of scorn and ridicule has been, and still is, being pointed at me, bringing me into shame and contempt.

I had almost reached the end of, what the public has been generous enough to remark, a most successful term of office as Mayor of this grand old city. I had already contemplated leaving the honoured chair of Van Riebeeck with the esteem and in some instances even the *love* of those I have been privileged to work among, when, just at the last moment, so to speak, you have launched your devastating bomb-shell, which, from the very heights of popularity, has been the means of dragging my name and reputation down to the very depths of ignominy. Oh, Sir, what have you done, what *have* you done? You have brought down my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave.

Pause for one moment please, and ask yourself—“What has he done to deserve this?” Have I, by word or deed ever injured you or yours. Have I not on more than one occasion actually contributed to the pages of “The Nation?” Will you deny that it has always been my earnest and constant endeavour to repress and discountenance anything in the nature of racialism? and, by way of appreciation and reward, you have seen fit to publish this highly improper, grossly libellous picture, one figure in which purports to be me. The face or expression I’m not concerned about because I know that most of your charitably disposed readers will remark in a kindly, tolerant way:—

“Ah well, poor chap, he can’t help his face, that

isn't *his* fault, if nature has been unkind to him, that's his misfortune."

Was not the late American President—Woodrow Wilson— responsible for the following Limerick in reference to his own homely features, which proves, I am pleased to say, that even the greatest men have their moments of levity, and to *my* mind are greater statesmen by reason of it.

" As a beauty I am not a star.
There are others more handsome by far,
My face—I don't mind it,
For I am behind it,
It's the others in front get the jar."

No, sir, unkind and uncharitable as your artist has been, the face does not worry me in the least, it is the perfectly immodest manner in which he has chosen to garb me, with skirts—mark you—with *skirts above the knee*. No, it isn't the face, neither is it the body, but those terrible legs and shocking-looking knees which both shock and shame me.

Since your atrocious print appeared, the Womens' Municipal Association, recommended thereto by Councillor Miriam S. Walsh, has passed a vote of censure on me. They give no reason—there *is* no reason in women—but I know full well that this is due solely to those legs; and I think you will agree, sir, if you have an atom of fairness in your composition, that men's legs should not be made the basis of a discussion by any Womens' Association.

As I write, the *picture!!!* (save the mark), is lying on my desk, and, ever and anon my pen ceases to function and an ague seizes me, " and all this," I sigh, " is because I refused to subscribe to Councillor MacCallum's views in the matter of Beauty Shows." Among the public your grossly libellous caricature will be more discussed than the contentious Flag Bill. Already there are dull, resentful murmurings rumbling through the city which, were they translated, would read:—

“ How long, O Lord, how long are we to be called upon to tolerate such wanton insult? Who else, save an antagonistic editor would have exposed the shapely legs of “ His Worship ” to the vulgar gaze of the populace?

People stop me in the street to enquire after my understandings, and photographers, representing various newspapers, have approached me with fabulous offers to allow my legs to be photographed for publication.

As I take my daily walks abroad I hear children whispering among themselves :—

“ That’s ’im, ‘ The Nation ’ says he’s the Beauty Queen, he’s ‘ Miss South Africa.’ ”

Oh, sir, I ask again, what have you done? what *have* you done? Only this morning I received a letter from one of our leading drapery firms suggesting that I should take a leading part in their next mannequin parade. As a draper I appreciate their initiative, but loathe their objective.

What reparation do you propose making? You have caused an estrangement in my family, sir, for my wife (God bless her) says she will never live with a man with knees like those, and, frankly, I don’t blame her.

My sons have received notice from their respective Chiefs to leave the institutions in which they are employed, on the grounds that their father isn’t respectable. It isn’t even a case of the unjust law of the “ sins of the fathers,” because in this instance I have not sinned.

All this trouble has fallen upon what was, until now, a peaceful, happy home, because of the publication of what, to most people, is a highly immoral and improper picture, and I must ask you not only for a cheque for £1000 sterling by way of moral and intellectual damages, a full and free apology to be published in every newspaper within the Union of South Africa, but also for a revised drawing, lengthening the skirt to one measuring not more than two inches above the shoes, to be approved by the members of the Women’s Municipal Association.

This, sir, is my *irreducible minimum*, and failing your

prompt response, it is my intention to place the matter in the competent hands of the other victim appearing in your sketch, with instructions to institute legal proceedings with the least possible delay.

The legs are wholly out of shape,
 The dress is far too short, sir,
 All people far and near will gape,
 And if they don't they ought, sir.
 I am no prude, no, not at all,
 The lady's dress I claim, sir,
 Is really just what one might call
 Immoral unto shame, sir.
 Just add twelve inches to that dress
 (The one that you've produced, sir),
 I hardly think you can do less,
 To sorrow I'm reduced, sir.

In the next week's issue of that paper, to, as it were, mollify me, this atrocity appeared.



[“ South African Nation.”

“ Mac ” Mollified.

Councillor A. J. MacCallum to the Mayor of Cape Town: “ Hech mon, ye look a leetle more deegnified the noo.”

A few weeks later the manager of "The Nation" called on me by appointment accompanied by a messenger carrying a parcel. It contained the originals of the two sketches neatly framed and between them appeared my reply. He explained that he wished to present this to me as a token of esteem from himself and his staff in recognition of my courtesy to them all and my services to the city. It was a splendid though undeserved tribute and I value it very highly. The next week's issue of "The Nation" contained the following:—

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

To "The Nation."—There is no desire to labour the matter, but if that absurd editor imagines for one moment that the framed originals of those monstrously libellous cartoons with a copy of "The Mayor's Lament" is the last word in the nature of damages or reparations, then he is grievously mistaken. As a matter of fact it is generally admitted that he has merely added insult to injury.

To begin with, where can such an outrageous insult be hung? The Mayoress—the sharer of His Worship's joys and sorrows (mostly sorrows), will not hear of this ill-omened "picture" being admitted into the Aquarium, which, as all know, is the appropriate name given to the Mayor's residence. The Town Clerk, in all humility, submits that it is not in keeping with the traditions of the City Hall. The trustees of the Michaelis Gallery remark that although it is unquestionably the work of a Dutch Master, it will clash somewhat with the pictures exhibited there. The Publicity Association is of opinion that an exhibition of such drawing will damage the reputation of the city to a far greater extent than did the Beauty Show, but not a word is said of the outraged feeling of His Worship the Mayor. It is perfectly true that the talented artist, inspired thereto by "The Mayor's Lament," *has* increased the length of that immodest skirt, but in doing so has gone to great pains to add indignity to indignity, and has aggravated an already aggravating episode.

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No doubt, in going to this expense, the proprietors of "The Nation" fondly imagine they have escaped the payment of damages so justly demanded, but, in reality, they have added to that claim which His Worship, acting on the advice of his solicitor, now assesses at £2000 instead of £1000.

If anything, the second picture is more improper than the first, for in it a certain article of female attire receives altogether undue prominence. No fault can be corrected by perpetrating another.

The dignity of the position of Mayor must, at all costs be maintained, and although the proprietors of "The Nation" have chosen to treat the matter lightly, almost—as it were—ridiculing His Worship's very righteous and justifiable indignation, it is far, far too serious a matter to be dismissed in this light-hearted manner. Justice must be done, for a more unprovoked or unwarrantable attack has never been made upon one of unblemished reputation.

"Mac" can look after himself, there's no one more capable of doing so. If anything, the artist has flattered him. The cartoonist for some reason or another best known to himself, has deliberately flattered him. May be, recognising the trouble his erring pen has got him into, he has attempted by this subtle method of bribery to get the law on his side, but this does not detract one iota from the injury done to His Worship, who regards with scorn and amazement this bare-faced attempt to deter him from taking the obvious and *only* course open to him. To add a greater to a less insult by way of reparation is a queer form of repentance. Instead of perpetuating the libel—as it were—piling Pelion on Ossa, the whole of those two issues of "The Nation" should have been forthwith destroyed, the editor should have donned sack-cloth and ashes and his staff should have shaved their heads (those of them who are not bald), and put into the very deepest mourning.

But there, why should His Worship enlarge when all know that no one has enjoyed this humorous little

episode more than he? These mock heroics are wholly insincere. He knows full well the merriment that the publication of these clever cartoons has produced in the city, and he, of all others, has entered fully into the spirit of the jest. It is only when we can accept a little harmless banter that we begin to regard matters in their proper perspective. There should be no venom or sting in a good-natured piece of raillery, and, generally speaking, it is only when we deliberately *look* for offence that we find it. As a general rule—at least this has been my experience in life—we discover that people desire to be just as pleasant and just as agreeable as we may strive to be ourselves.

When we can look at a man and call him to his face “A bally Dutchman” and *smile*—oh yes, in saying this a smile is essential, and he retorts with “Rooinek” and smiles too—yes, he *must smile too*, then we shall know that we understand each other. Just as to-day the Scotch and the English chaff each other over the victories and defeats of Bannockburn and Flodden, so the day will surely come when we shall laugh together over the victories and reverses of the Boer War without fear of wounding or giving offence and then we shall know that that treble-headed monster *Racialism* is *dead*. None can or will deny that His Worship has striven—yes, honestly striven—to establish a better feeling between the people of both races. None can approach him without experiencing the inward conviction that the friendliest relationships exist, that he has endeavoured to show during the two years he has been privileged to occupy the historic Chair of Van Riebeeck, that he knows no racial distinction. That it is possible, even while differing politically, to be friends, and, surely this is as things *should* be. He claims no superiority over the Dutch people and recognises no such claim by them, to attempt to make any such claim would be stupid and foolish in the extreme. It is primarily friendliness, good humour, a little harmless banter now and again, consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness and mutual respect and confi-

dence which is going to make of us one united and loyal family. And why not. If you had been privileged to witness the presentation of that framed libel in the Mayor's Parlour, you would have rejoiced. Just kindness and gratitude, it was one friend presenting a memento to another friend. The happiest references were exchanged, no thought of "Oh, he's English and I'm Dutch," such a thought never crossed the minds of either of the parties concerned, it was just an expression of mutual good-will and regard.

And, in conclusion, may this spirit of better understanding continue, until the day comes—as it assuredly *will* come, when we, as a people, shall marvel at our past differences, and, in the light of more pressing and more serious difficulties shall say: "How trivial, how foolish, how absurd to quarrel among ourselves over matters that occurred so *long* ago while real danger threatens at our very doors."

So, Good Luck to "The Nation," we may differ from some of your views, but the world would be a poor uninteresting place if all agreed; if you play the game, avoiding anything in the nature of racialism like the plague, then if it will give you any satisfaction, you are at liberty to produce and publish as many libels in the shape of cartoons of His Worship as you wish to, for beneath it all he will understand that nothing but the kindest relationships exist, for, after all, the man who in these days of dull depression can cause good, honest merriment, is a benefactor to society."

The weeks sped on. My friend and deputy—A. B. Reid—became the Mayor elect. The day of the Investiture arrived and in the scarlet robe and chain of office to which latter each retiring mayor contributes a link bearing his monogram, as does the mayoress with her chain, I took my seat for the last time in the Chair of Van Riebeeck. I gave the customary resume of the year's works and finished with a few valedictory remarks. Not as suggested by the picture in "The Tatler" which, by

the way is now framed and hangs on my study wall, but just a few words from the very bottom of my heart, I concluded thus:—

“ I should like to be remembered for having endeavoured to bring a certain amount of joy into public life. After all, it is far nicer to be remembered by a smile than a tear, for, to my mind a smile is as much an expression of hope as of happiness.

This is the real legacy I wish to leave behind in this Council Chamber, where, for the last two years we have worked so pleasantly and so harmoniously.

I spoke with some emotion, not that I wished to remain in office, oh dear no, I was thoroughly weary of the multifarious and almost bewildering number of duties, but because I knew only too well, that henceforth, I could no longer be on *quite* such intimate and friendly terms with the public.

This portion of the ceremony being over, I called for nominations for the position of Mayor for the ensuing year and my friend A. B. Ried was unanimously elected. We retired while he was invested with his mayoral robes and I resumed the quieter navy blue silk gown of an ordinary councillor.

After the election of the Deputy Mayor the usual speech of thanks was given from the chair and I was then presented with a beautifully illuminated address on vellum bearing the common seal of the city and the signatures of the Mayor and Town Clerk. A beautiful and artistic piece of work and framed in South African stink wood.

Later on my fellow councillors presented me with my portrait in oils and to my wife they gave a very handsome dressing case with fittings.

Thus ended *the* two most eventful years of my life, strenuous, but distinctly happy years, which will linger in my memory for all time.

It's a long, long journey from those sordid Greenwich days to the Mayoral Chair of Capetown; it's a long, long stretch from those heart-breaking, employment seek-

ing days in the year '90, but, as I have written I have lived through it all again.

When presiding over some great function my memory has frequently reverted to those unhappy days when I first arrived in Capetown when no one would have me and when I left the city shamed and depressed. But who knows but that it was all for the best? In my mature years—after spending many years in what Rhodes called the *Hinterland*, Capetown has, all undeservedly honoured me, and what to me is the most gratifying of all is the fact that I know that I am living in the hearts of not a few of the people. I am not making this statement in any boastful spirit—God forbid—too conscious am I of my many limitations and short-comings—but it is in a spirit of deep gratitude that I am able to make this statement.

Not one of us can tell what the future holds in store, but whatever happens nothing can rob me of the knowledge that both my wife and I were one with the people.

“The Cape,” after my retirement, published the following articles concerning us which I hope you won't think it presumptuous on my part to reproduce.

I can only reiterate, that any success which may have attended our efforts, has been largely due to the loyal support we have received from the councillors and the co-operation of the public.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOME PRESS COMMENTS.

“ To a Fish out of—*Office.* ”

An open letter to the ex-Mayor.

MY dear Mr. Fish.—You have jested so freely on your own name that I am sure you will take my jesting headline in good part. And if it is not a good jest, at least it has this in common with all good jests—that it is not *all* jest.

During the last two years of your mayoralty you have seemed so much in your element that it is difficult to realise that you no longer occupy the Chair of Van Riebeeck. I remember many mayors before your time, and I know that another worthy successor now reigns in your stead, but you identified yourself so completely and harmoniously with the high office which you graced that we got into the habit of thinking not of “ His Worship the Mayor, Mr. W. F. Fish,” but of “ The Mayor ” or “ Mr. Fish ” indifferently.

And now you tell me in a characteristic phrase in a letter on another page, that you are only a poor, out of work, down-at-heel ex-mayor, which, of course, is only your whimsical way of saying you are out of office. Your friends do not fear that you will ever be “ down-at-heel,” though you have worn out much good shoe leather in well doing. Still less do they fear that you will ever be out of work while there is work to be done for your fellow citizens.

Very many of us could have wished that you should emulate the record of the legendary Dick Whittington, who was “ thrice Lord Mayor of London, or even the actual Sir Richard Whittington, who served for

more than three years in that capacity. But you have given your best for two years and feel it wiser to take a rest. You are away to Dordrecht for a well-earned holiday "where they have no women councillors and where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." Is that a sly way of emphasising that on the general question on which we have differed in respect of a certain aspect, our broad views are not really far apart? That, however, by the way. I trust that your holiday will be thoroughly refreshing and as peaceful as your active mind can desire. When you return Councillor Mrs. Walsh and I will be entirely united in welcoming you.

Your two years in the Mayoral chair have been unusually strenuous. They have doubtless been more burdensome than your constant smile would lead the casual observer to suspect. Yet, I do not doubt that the smile has reflected constant joy in service. You have been described as "The Mayor with the kindly heart." It was Councillor MacCallum with whom you have so often differed, who recalled this when the time came for the council to bid farewell to you as Mayor. But could you have had a more acceptable tribute from your most consistent supporter?

You leave Capetown a slightly larger city than you found it. You leave the body of Municipal servants with very pleasant recollections of your period of office, to which they have given appropriate expression.

To recount *all* your achievements would be to re-tell every chapter that is creditable in the civic history of Capetown during the last two years. Almost your last official act was one of public encouragement to the effort which the Master Builders are making to provide better housing for the poorer classes of the citizens of Capetown. The sage who observed that the man who made two blades of grass grow where one had grown before rendered better service to his country than all the politicians, might well revise his saying to-day to the credit of the man who creates two homes where before one

home—of sorts—had to serve two families. The experiment of the Master Builders, which owes much to your encouragement, is as yet no more than an experiment; but it points the way to a very great and highly practical reform. So far as this great civic reform is concerned in which you have shown so keen an interest, you have abundant assurance that your successor will be as anxious for progress as you have been yourself.

Finally, sir, if there is anyone who should regard your vacation of the Mayoral Chair *without* regret but should rather rejoice in it, it is the readers of "The Cape" qua readers and not qua citizens. For you will, I hope, have more leisure for writing. Your articles have given pleasure to many thousands and I think particularly among them of that delightful description of an evening spent with your grandson, which was hailed in very many homes as a little masterpiece of humour and pathos.

Please let us have some more like it.

I am sincerely yours,

THE EDITOR of "The Cape."

The following appreciation of the Mayoress appeared in the same paper.

CAPETOWN'S MAYORESS! A FAREWELL

The time has come, alas, to say good-bye to Mrs. Fish in her capacity of Capetown's Mayoress. This we do with very real regret and a deep realisation of what we owe to her. For in her quiet, simple, and unassuming way she has, perhaps, achieved far more than anyone realises. She has not tried to emphasise the social value of her position, nor has she made any attempt to gratify her personal ambitions or to drag into prominence the dignities and prerogatives of her high office. She has simply stood—as a true woman and wife—shoulder to shoulder with her husband, and has made his long and arduous term of office, her duties and her interests identical with his. And in the sweet faced, demure, retiring

little woman on whose frail shoulders the weight of the Mayoral chains of office seemed far too heavy, Capetown's most popular Mayor has found, in all emergencies, whenever he needed it, her loyal, devoted and selfless co-operation and assistance. All through the years of his office she, who normally would have shrunk from publicity, and who is essentially a home woman, worked tirelessly, whole-heartedly and unselfishly, giving her best (which was a very great deal) to all who came to her for help, sympathy or encouragement.

"She and her husband will always be known as the 'Smiling Mayor and Mayoress,'" I heard someone say. And they deserve the title! For they have smiled with us all the time, and have given generously of the genial kindness and good cheer which go so far towards making smooth the rough and stoney ways of life. Mrs. Fish has endeared herself to people of all grades and classes. No one ever went to her in vain, and no one ever knew her to fail in a promise or resolve she had made, and in the bright, lurid glare of the publicity which it was her ordeal to face as Mayoress, there will not be found one unkind critic or the one unfriendly face or a single dissenting voice where she is spoken of in terms of praise and an almost personal note of affection. May the future hold much that is good for her and her family, and may the memories of her years of office be as sweet and fragrant as her many friends who have learned to know and love her as Capetown's Mayoress, would wish them to be.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

IT was the evening following my relinquishing the Mayoral Chair that the Municipal Employees invited my wife and I to a farewell social organised by them on our behalf.

It took place in the City Hall which was packed on the occasion. The new Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and many councillors were present. The Municipal Orchestra under the able leadership of Mr. Pickerell—and incidentally acknowledged to be the finest orchestra south of the line—had volunteered its services and rendered delightful music throughout the evening. Songs were sung, stories were told, jokes exchanged. Then came refreshments on a most lavish scale during which time my wife and I moved about chatting with those who had thus honoured us. All friendly, all reciprocative and all happy. Then we were requested to proceed to the stage where, to our great surprise we learned that a presentation was to be made. Mr. Pringle, the assistant City Treasurer, made it, and in a neat and humorous speech on behalf of the Municipal employees presented my wife with a handsome silver salver suitably engraved and myself with a beautiful marble inkstand bearing a silver plate inscribed thus:—

Presented to
WILLIAM FREDERICK FISH, ESQ.,
“ OUR MAYOR ”

By the Members of the
Capetown Municipal Officials Association
September 9th 1927.

“ Our Mayor,” how delightful! What greater honour or distinction could one have? “ Our Mayor,” to me that expression was infinitely more valuable than the gift that accompanied it. After I had replied—and at times in doing so my voice quavered a little which, perhaps, was hardly to be wondered at—the orchestra played “ For they are jolly good fellows,” in which all that large assembly joined. After this there was more singing and more laughter, and when the hour grew late, we all stood, and joining hands sang “ For auld lang syne,” and was it ever sung with greater feeling? I hardly think so. But *what* an evening! It will live in our memories for ever. It was a spontaneous expression of right down good-will, and we should be distinctly less human than we are did we fail to experience something in the nature of a thrill at the mere remembrance of it all. Why, even the cost of the beautiful and valuable gifts was met by subscriptions of shillings and two shillings collected from all, which is so much more appreciated than large sums from a few. I shall always look back upon that evening as marking the greatest honour which has ever been paid to either my wife or myself, it was an expression of good-will which falls to the lot of only a few.

The feelings of a mayor immediately after his retirement from office are peculiar. From taking precedence of Earls, Lords, Knights, Judges and of all highly placed men, he sinks to a little below the level of the most junior office boy, that is, of course, figuratively speaking. There is no place for him. From being the last word in Municipal Administration, he becomes a nobody, and it necessarily takes him some little time to accustom himself to the changed conditions. I am not singular in this respect, all my living predecessors in office have experienced the same feeling. There is nothing of an envious or resentful nature about it, but just a feeling, for the time being, of being most completely out of it. One’s sun has set, in other words, “ *Le Roi est mort, Vive Le Roi!*”

I fear I have told my story very indifferently, omitting that which might have been included and including a great deal which might well have been omitted. With such a mass of material at my command it has been a difficult matter to determine what to select. As far as my Mayoral duties are concerned I have dealt almost exclusively with their social aspect, for the social duties, owing to the ever-increasing popularity of this wonderful and beautiful city, attracting as it does visitors from all parts of the world, are becoming more and more exacting, and necessarily, it is along the social side that the more interesting features lie, but there are, in addition, very considerable administrative duties to perform.

Unquestionably the first person singular figures altogether too largely throughout my narrative, but it seems to me, little as one would desire it, the ego is almost inevitable in an autobiography, more especially when it happens to be the autobiography of a Mayor, who, by virtue of his position places, as it were, his name on his hat band. It is simply the plain story of a plain man, written I trust, without boastfulness and without the least suggestion of self-glorification. If the personal pronoun—as I suspect—figures too largely, then forgive me; on no account attribute it to self-aggrandisement, but rather to poor workmanship and a lamentable ignorance of book construction.

Possibly my many and varied experiences may interest some who have not forgotten *their* early struggles but who by energy and dogged perseverance have risen to affluence and high estate.

Again it is possible that some of my earlier adventures in business when the hills looked so very formidable and the goal seemed so *far* away, may fill some lad who is just setting out on life's journey, with ambition and courage. The mile stones stretch far away back to those remote days when I was a humble ink-smudged little office boy aspiring to an auditorship in the Knight-rider Street business. Some of them have no special significance, but here and there one stands out more pro-

minently than the others marking some great change or possibly indicating a place or time where I *should* have turned and failed to do so. For instance, one mile stone is inscribed with the figures " 1884," suggesting the year I left school. There is another engraved " 1890," denoting the year I left England to seek my fortunes in South Africa. " 1895 " recalls my wedding and opening the Dordrecht business. " 1896 " the coming of my first-born. " 1899 " speaks of the outbreak of the Boer War. " 1904 " indicates the joyful news of the coming of the dear little " Junior Partner," while " 1908 " records the pitiful story of his death. None will need reminding what " 1914 " means but " 1916 " marks my leaving Dordrecht for Capetown. " 1918 " denotes my election to the Municipal Council of that city. " 1924 " was the year of my election as Deputy Mayor and " 1925," " 1926," " 1927 " were the most eventful milestones of all, marking as they do, the period of my Mayoral career.

In closing this autobiography I cannot do better, I think, than quote the motto which, beautifully executed, was on a scroll over the stage in the great hall of my dear old Cowper Street School. It read:—

" Life, under all circumstances may be made heroic ; consecrated to noble deeds and in the faithful discharge of every duty."

As I have proceeded along life's highway I have often wondered whether the author of those lines was quite correct in his assertion or whether, perhaps, he was not making use of some high-sounding phrase, which had the virtue of looking and reading well, a sort of axiom that *ought* to be even if it isn't, so to speak, and I sometimes question whether " Life under *all* circumstances *can* be made heroic " unless, perhaps, heroism lies along the path of duty, if so, then it is possible for us all to be heroes, for there is little fear for the boy or man who is " faithful in the discharge of every duty."

The great Joseph Chamberlain once remarked:—

" No work is worth doing badly ; and he who puts his best into every task will surely outstrip

the man who waits for a great opportunity before he condescends to exert himself."

I offer this quotation to every lad, youth or man who is setting out on the voyage of life. Each one will encounter dangers and difficulties; to all the goal will look very distant and the chances of success very remote, but if they start off with courage and determination, leaving clock-watching to clockmakers, performing willingly the various duties allotted to them no matter how humble or monotonous they may be, more important tasks will follow; these more responsible and more important tasks will be all the easier to accomplish if, while they occupy the junior position they familiarise themselves with the work of the man immediately in front of them.

As I commenced with youth, so I feel I must have a final word with youth for youth holds the future of the world in it's grasp. I came across these lines a little while ago:—

"Isn't it strange how Princes and Kings,
And clowns who caper in sawdust rings,
And common people like you and me
Are working for Eternity?
To each is given a bag of tools;
A shapeless mass and a book of rules;
And each must make, e'er his day be done,
A stumbling block or a stepping stone."

Now none of us at the outset are out to make "stumbling blocks," we all commence with visions for the future, and every good, kind and usefule thing that we do, each duty well done is a "stepping stone" or example.

Most of the great rivers of the world were crossed originally by means of stepping stones. Travellers would seek the shallowest part, would drop stones or boulders into the stream over which they would pass leaving them there for others to use. In many cases from these humble stepping stones great and noble bridges have arisen, over which thousands and tens of thousands pass in safety

daily. Mighty engineering feats. But instead of regarding them as triumphs of mechanical skill, I wish to draw a moral for the young from these bridges which have followed in the wake of our humble pioneering efforts. May they be bridges of love, bridges of kindness, bridges of truth, bridges of honour and bridges of duty over which those who follow us may pass in safety.

This then, is my story, the only virtue that I claim for it is that the essential details are true in every sense. Covering as it does a period of 44 years it is necessarily incomplete. It may be and I doubt not *will* be termed by some "The autobiography of a nobody," but this will not distress me in the least. Each man's life, no matter how mediocre or common-place it may have been, contains a message for someone as I hope this plain story of mine may do. One last memory to conclude with and, if I may say so, one of the pleasantest memories of all.

The incident happened some two months after I had relinquished the reins of office as Mayor. Meanwhile I had been up to Dordrecht to go thoroughly into my business affairs, and to unravel the tangled skeins of business again. It doesn't matter how long one may be away from it, the old business training speedily reasserts itself. Having completed my business I had returned to Capetown.

One morning the Rev. William Mason (a Wesleyan minister) phoned saying that the Venerable Archdeacon Lavis and he (both true workers in God's Vineyard), would like to meet my wife and I at the City Hall that afternoon. We went and met them in the Robing Room into which they ushered 10 or 12 very respectable coloured people. They had come—so they explained—to make a small presentation to us in recognition and appreciation of what we had done during our two terms of office for the non-European people of Capetown (these number somewhere in the neighbourhood of 80,000). The "small presentation" proved to be no less than a beautiful oil painting which the Rev. Mason, in handing us this delightful and acceptable gift explained, had been

subscribed for in *Pennies*. He told us how on several occasions men and women had stopped him in the street to hand him *their* penny for the *Mayor* and *Mayoress*.

I am not often at a loss when a speech is required, but on that occasion the beauty of the thought and the kindness which had prompted the idea overcame me altogether, and I could not say one half that I felt and wished to say. What a *great* appreciation for the *little* we had been privileged to do.

The Venerable Archdeacon Lavis and the Rev. William Mason, members of different churches but always working together to help and uplift our coloured brethren. Surely this is the *real* Christianity. Can I be wrong in quoting :—

“ There’s only one gate when all’s over,
 The ways they are many and wide,
 And seldom are two paths the same. Side by side
 May we meet at the same little door when all’s done;
 The *ways* they are *many*, the *end*—it is *one*.”

And in this way I bring “ The autobiography of a counter jumper ” to a close.

THE END.

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