

In Besieged Mafeking.

The most dramatic of all the features of the war, the siege of Mafeking, continues to occupy the first place in the attention of the British people, and every scrap of information that comes from the beleaguered little garrison is welcomed. There are strong expectations in official as well as general circles at this time of writing that news of relief by Plumer's or some other force will come soon. It is certain that no disaster in South Africa would cause such deep and widespread disappointment and grief in England as the failure to save Baden Powell's brave band. A budget of interesting details of the siege, which somehow has found its way through the cordon of Boers around the town and then through Rhodesia and overland to the sea, has at length reached London. It brings down the story of the siege to Jan. 20, two long months ago. Later news has come by cable but it is the bald, scrappy intelligence. The writers of these communications are Lady Sarah Wilson and the correspondent of the Times. Lady Sarah's letter appears in the Mail and from it the following paragraphs are taken.

A feature of the town at present is its bombproofs or shelters from shell fire. From rough holes, hastily dug and covered over with deal boards and earth, which were at first constructed at the arrival of the monster 'Creusot' Boer gun, which fires a projectile of 94 pounds, these refuges have been improved upon till they are now luxurious chambers, roofed over with best steel rails and sand bags, ventilated and lighted by round windows and large drain pipes.

Mine, for instance, measures 18 feet by 15 feet and is 8 feet high with boarded floor covered with matting and panelled wood walls painted white. With three large portholes for windows, it much resembles the cabin of a yacht, and its efficacy has been thoroughly tested, as it is, I think, the only shelter in the town on the top of which a 94 pound shell actually exploded—without even making the glasses jingle, or disturbing various war trophies hung on the wall inside. As an example of the curious effects of these shells and the marvelous escapes recorded I may mention that a fragment of this one went through a room of Mr. Well's adjacent house, taking a canary and cage with it through the window, and leaving that at some distance, while another piece went into a house across the street, making mince meat of a sewing machine and a new dress a young lady was making, and which she had felt but three minutes before. Except this misfortune and the death of the canary no harm was done—but, alas, the same tale cannot always be told.

Scarcely a day passes without some white man or native being added to the already sadly long lists of those in this tiny community who have been martyrs to this one-sided bombardment. Women and

children have not escaped scot free; only this morning a shell exploded in the women's laager—the locality of which the Boers know perfectly well—killing, curiously enough, a little Dutch girl of 12 years of age, holding a baby (the latter was uninjured), besides fatally injuring a Kaffir girl.

And thus it is most days; apart from our losses among the soldiers—B. S. A. P. [British South African Police] and Cape police in the various and gallant sorties which have been all duly recorded in the papers—civilians and innocent individuals are struck down and terribly mutilated, suddenly and almost without warning. I say almost, for when the big gun is loaded the lookout at headquarters, from whence all her movements can be accurately watched gives the alarm by sounding a deep-toned bell, and when the gunners go to fire her this is supplemented by the shrill tinkle of a smaller bell—not much louder than our ordinary muffin bell—but which can be distinctly heard in this clear atmosphere. After this second warning about three seconds elapse before the explosion.

Apropos of this wise measure, which has been the means of saving many lives, the town dogs have by now fully grasped its meaning, and whenever the bell rings begin to bark loudly in all quarters; so that if by chance one fails to hear the hasty shrill tone of our trusty little friend the dogs' voices in unison cannot fail to warn one to take shelter.

The dogs, indeed, play a great part in this siege—one belonging to the base commandant has been wounded no less than three times; another, a rough Irish terrier, has accompanied the Protectorate Regiment in all its engagements; a third assumes itself by running after the small Maxim shells, barking loudly and trying hard to retrieve pieces; while the Resident Commissioner's dog is a prudent animal, and whenever she hears the alarm bell tears into the bomb proof attached to her master's redoubt, and remains there until the explosion is over.

What are even more to be feared than the monster gun's projectiles are the shells from the high velocity Krupp gun, for which no warning can be given, as the flash and explosion are practically simultaneous, and the poisonous little 1 pounder Maxim shells, which seem to come everywhere, and are generally fired in threes or fours. As the latter whirled overhead the sound resembles that of a very long cattle whip sharply cutting the air, cracked and manipulated by a master hand; very different is the sickening whirr of a big shell, followed by the dull thud and crash denoting where it has dealt death and destruction. At least 700 of the 94 pounder shells have been fired into this undaunted little town, and it is computed in all cer-

tainly 5,000 missiles of different kinds of destructive power from the Boer artillery have found their billets here. There is something very cowardly in the fairly regular evening shell from the big gun, which is usually loaded and aimed at sundown and fired off between 8 and 9 p. m., or even later, over a partially sleeping town, very early hours being kept here, when the Boers must know men and women may be killed indiscriminately.

For this last shot women and children generally wait before leaving their shelters and seeking their beds in their various houses; but sometimes as a refinement of cruelty, it is not fired at all, and these evenings the poor things creep to bed at last with many forebodings.

A curious phase of the Boer character is the much vaunted observance of the Sabbath, and on this day, by a sort of mutual agreement, neither side fire a shot. Pale women and children emerge from the laager, dressed in their Sunday best, the shops are open and do a lively trade, services go on in the little English church, still almost uninjured, and every one is able safely to ride and walk about the town and outside on the veldt within our lines. So different is the aspect of everything that one could hardly believe it is the same town. In the afternoon, under the auspices of the C. O., sports are organized, the band plays, and every one thoroughly enjoys himself.

Other Sundays the officers of the garrison engage in a polo match and dispense tea to their friends, and almost the whole town turns up on the polo grounds, fairly revelling in the fresh air and sunshine. There is no doubt that to every one, but more especially to the women and children, this happy one day in the seven is an inexpressible boon and that their spirits are kept up and their health improved by living in anticipation of this outing.

The Times correspondent sends this graphic personal sketch of the man who is undoubtedly the greatest hero of his day in the eyes of the English nation.

Col. Baden-Powell is young, as men go in the Army, with a keen appreciation of the possibilities of his career. His countenance is keen, his stature short, his features sharp and smooth. He is eminently a man of determination, with great physical endurance and capacity, and extraordinary reticence. His reserve is unbending, and one would say, quoting a phrase of Mr. Pinero's, that fever would be the only heat which would permeate his body. He does not go about freely, since he is tied to his office through the multitudinous cares of his command, and he is chiefly happy when he can snatch the time to escape upon one of those nocturnal, silent expeditions, which alone calm and assuage the perpetual excitement of his present existence. Out-

wardly, he maintains an impenetrable screen of self control, observing with a cynical smile the foibles and caprices of those around him. He seems ever bracing himself to be on guard against a moment in which he should be swept by some unnatural and spontaneous enthusiasm, in which by a word, by an expression of face, by a movement, or in the turn of a phrase, he should betray the rigors of the self control under which he lives.

Every passing townsman regards him with curiosity not unmixed with awe. Every servant in the hotel watches him, and he, as a consequence, seldom speaks without a preternatural deliberation and an air of incisive finality. He seems to close every argument with a snap, as though the steel manacles of his ambition had checkmated the emotions of the man in the instincts of the officer. He weighs each remark before he utters it, and suggests by his manner, as by his words, that he has considered the different effects it might conceivably have on any mind as the expression of his own mind. As an officer, he has given to Mafeking a complete and magnificent security, to the construction of which he has brought a very practical knowledge of the conditions of Boer warfare, of the Boers themselves, and of the strategic value of the adjacent areas. His espionage excursions to the Boer lines have gained him an intimate and accurate idea of the value of the opposing forces and a mass of data by which he can immediately counteract the enemy's attack. He loves the night and after his return from the hollows in the veldt, where he has kept so many anxious vigils, he likes awake hour after hour upon his camp mattress in the veranda, tracing out, in his mind, the various means and agencies by which he can forestall their move, which, unknown to them, he had personally watched.

He is a silent man. In the noisy day he yearns for the noiseless night, in which he can slip into the vistas of the veldt, an unobtrusive spectator of the mystic communion of tree with tree, of twilight with darkness, of land with water, of early morn with fading night, with the music of the journeying winds to speak to him and to lull his thoughts. As he makes his way across our lines the watchful sentry strains his eyes a little more to keep the figure of the Colonel before him, until the undulations of the veldt conceal his progress. He goes in the privacy of the night, when it is no longer a season of moonlight, when the fresh fragrances of the Molopo, although, as he walks with rapid, almost running, footsteps, leaving the black blur of the town for the arid and stormy areas to the west, a new wind meets him, a wind that is clear and keen and dry, the wind of the wastes that wander forever over the monotonous sands of the desert. He goes on, never faltering, bending for a moment

behind a clump of rocks, screening himself next behind some bushes, crawling upon his hands and knees. His head is low, his eyes gaze straight upon the camp of the enemy; in a little he moves again, his inspection is over, and he either changes to a fresh point or startles some dozing sentry as he slips back into town.

The same correspondent describes the process by which the besieged sometimes get supplies of fresh beef at the Boers expense.

'Black and white alike take part in sniping, but to the native here the siege has brought the means and opportunity of indulging in a pastime of quite a different character. If sniping be the rule by day, cattle raiding by night gives to the natives some profitable employment. During last night the Baralongs secured by a successful raid some twenty-four head of cattle, and in the course of last week another raiding detachment looted some eighteen oxen.'

The native enjoys himself when he is liable to participate in some cattle raiding excursion to the enemy's lines, and, although the local tribe may not have proved of much value as a unit of defence, their success at liting the Boer cattle confers upon them a unique value in the garrison. We were deploring the poorness of the cattle which remained at our disposal only a few days ago, but the rich capture which these natives have made has given us a welcome change from bone and skin to juicy beef.

These night excursions are eagerly anticipated by the tribe, and almost daily is the consent of the Colonel sought in relation to such an object. During the day the natives who have been deputed to take part in the raid approach as near to the grazing cattle as discretion permits, marking down when twilight appears the position of those beasts that can be most readily detached from the mob. Then, when darkness is complete, they creep up, divested of their clothes, crawling upon hands and knees, until they have completely surrounded their prey. Then quietly, and as rapidly as circumstances will allow them each man 'gets a move on' his particular beast, so that in a very short space of time some ten or twenty cattle are unconsciously leaving the main herd. When the raiders have drawn out of ear shot of the Boer lines they urge on their captures, running behind them, and on either side of them, but without making any noise whatsoever. As they reach their staad, their approach having been watched by detached bodies of natives who, lying concealed in the veldt, had taken up positions by which to secure the safe return of their friends, the tribes go forth to welcome them, and when the prizes have been inspected and report duly made to the Colonel, they celebrate the event with no little feasting and dancing. Upon the following day merriment reigns supreme, and for the time the siege is forgotten."

Mysteries of the Century.

Sixty years ago Englishmen and Americans were rejoicing that steamers had succeeded in regularly crossing the Atlantic, that a voyage could be made in a fortnight and that the first of the Cunarders, the side-wheeler 'Britannia,' had come into Boston after one of the quickest passages ever known. Steam it was said, had conquered the terrors of the sea, and men who had gone to London, spent nearly a week in England, and come back all within thirty-three days, were regarded as wonderful examples of the new celerity in trans-Atlantic travel. One of the vessels which had not long before been launched, and which the English-speaking world hailed with admiration as a steam leviathan, was the 'President.' The liners which now plow their way across the Atlantic in five days are not more impressive than this ship with her two hundred and sixty-eight feet in length, her sixty-four feet in width, and her twenty-three hundred and sixty tons' register was to the generation which welcomed her into the harbor of New York. The ship was less than a year old when, on March 10, 1841, she left her dock and steamed slowly down the bay, her figurehead, which was a bust of Washington after Canova, pointing, proudly along the ocean route to England. In April reports began to come from Liverpool that the 'President' was overdue, that nothing had been heard of her, and that great anxiety was rife. The only ray of light that was shed upon the mystery was that a Portuguese brig had sighted a large steamer moving slowly under sail, but she did not hail the brig, nor did she appear to

be in a disabled state. Through the spring and far into the summer of 1841 there was agony of suspense in England and the United States. The superstitious fancied strange omens in the coincidence the first President of the United States who died in the White House—William Henry Harrison—had passed away at the time when the ship which bore the name of his office began to be missed.

Among the passengers were two men who, although they had little in common with each other, had been each an idol in his profession, and who had given delight to multitudes in the United States. One was an actor who for the first time had raised the portrayal of Irish character upon the stage to the level of an art, and whose rich sense of native humor even Dion Boucicault probably failed to surpass in later years. Tyrone Power had been hailed in American theatres as the prince of comedians; he had made three tours of the country; we had written a book on his American impressions, and he was now returning to England at the height of popularity, still in middle age.

Even more striking was the personality of George Clugston Cookman, whose eloquence had spread his fame among American methodists, and to whom even men of the world, like Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, listened admiringly. Indeed, he carried with him when he went on board the 'President' the first dispatch which Webster as Secretary of State had written to England. The fate of these men, as well as of a son of the Duke of Devonshire,

and a hundred other passengers on the ship, had never been known. Whether the steamer foundered in some tremendous storm, as was thought most likely, or was crushed and sunk by an iceberg, or was destroyed by fire, no man to this day has been able to tell.

But no crime against the living has ever startled the country more by its mystery than a crime against the dead committed in New York a little more than twenty years ago. When Alexander T. Stewart died, in April, 1876, at the age of seventy three, he was reputed to be worth not less than thirty million dollars. The aggregate of the sales in his two great stores in New York during the last three years of his life was upward of two hundred million dollars, and he was commonly recognized as the richest and most powerful merchant in the United States. He died without children or blood relatives in this country, bequeathing the bulk of his estate to his widow, and one million dollars to Henry Hilton as executor of his will. In the great funeral procession there appeared a multitude of the most eminent Americans of the day who followed the body to the grave in St. Mark's Churchyard, New York City.

One morning in November, 1879, or about two years and a half after the body of the millionaire had been entombed, the late Judge Hilton walked into the office of the New York Police Department with the startling news that the grave had been rifled. It appeared that in the course of the autumn there had been some tamper-

ing with it, and that Judge Hilton had caused the slab which rested upon it to be removed to another place, and then shrewdly, as he believed had the words cut on the slab, 'A. T. Stewart Family Vault.' The knowledge that this had been done was confined to four persons. But so well planned had been the operations of the ghouls that they not only knew where the body was, but had made their excavations with almost mathematical precision. Three flagstones covered the entrance to the vault; the earth had been dug down to within a hair's breadth of the side of the central stone—it was undoubtedly the work of shrewd men.

When Mr. Stewart died his body was so emaciated that it was supposed to weigh not more than eighty pounds. It had been placed in a coffin covered with black cloth and fringed with gold braiding, and this coffin rested in a leaden case, which, in its turn, was inclosed by an outer box. From this the lid had been unscrewed; the leaden case was cut through and the inner coffin was opened. It was supposed that the thieves had deposited the corpse in a sack and carried it off in a wagon. Nobody had seen them; they had chosen a rainy night for the deed, and it was not until several hours after daylight that the discovery was made. They had left behind them only a newspaper, an iron shovel, a small bull's eye lantern, and a pile of fresh earth. But it seemed impossible that the ghastly plunder could be carried through the streets of the city or concealed without detection, or that if it had been taken out

of New York, it could have been transported across the ferries or reburied without exciting suspicion somewhere or leading to a sure clue.

Judge Hilton declined to make overtures for the surrender of the body; he declared that he would not be blackmailed, and when twenty five thousand dollars reward was offered it was with the condition that the sum should be not only for the body, but for information that would lead to the detection of the persons who committed the outrage. He counseled Mrs. Stewart not to compound with crime; and the widow, who is said to have been terribly affected by the blow, followed this advice during the ten years in which she survived her husband. Some time later there were clandestine hints of negotiations with the ghouls, who were said to be in Chicago. A vague impression was allowed to gain ground that the body had been recovered, and that it had been placed in the vault of the beautiful cathedral at Garden City, Long Island. But there has never been any proof of these assertions, and what became of the body, or who stole it, is still a mystery.

There is, perhaps, hardly an American family in the last twenty five years which at some time has not compassionately and tenderly pronounced the name of Charley Ross. The pathos of that little fellow's abduction touched millions of homes with the sense of bereavement. For years all the agencies in the pursuit of crime on which modern civilization prides itself were

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