

JOHANNESBURG HIS.

EVENTFUL LIFE OF A RECENTLY DECEASED BRITISH OFFICER.

He Owned Johannesburg, But Mr. Kruger Confiscated It, and He Died in the Workhouse at Guildford—He Had Paid £350 for the Site of the South African City.

The Daily Graphic says: There died at Guildford the other week a man of whom the following remarkable story is told: His name was James Outterson Pratt, and it is said that about forty-five years ago he purchased the site on which the town of Johannesburg now stands for the sum of £350. For several years before his death Pratt was an inmate of the infirmary of Guildford Union Workhouse. He was born in 1833, and was the son of a barrister. Shortly after Pratt's birth his father succeeded to a life interest in some estates in Northumberland, and at the age of thirteen Pratt was sent to the East India Company's Naval College at Finchley. Later he went and saw fighting against Malay pirates. He was made a Lieutenant at 21. Owing to illness he obtained leave of absence, during which he served with Sir Robert Lakeman's levies in the Kaffir war in 1852-53, receiving a medal. When the Crimean war broke out he served with the Naval Brigade before Sebastopol, being severely wounded by the bursting of a shell. His left leg was shattered, and his left arm, collar-bone, and three ribs were broken, the second finger of his right hand being also shot away, and a severe wound inflicted on his head. After a careful nursing Pratt recovered sufficiently to proceed to India, where, it is stated, he saw fighting during the Mutiny. For distinguished service with the Calcutta Naval Brigade, which got the name of "Pratt's Own," he was rewarded, and after the quelling of the Mutiny he is said to have been appointed Resident Magistrate of one of the districts in the Bombay Presidency. He afterwards married a niece of Sir William Chaytor, Bart., and five years later sent his wife to England for the purpose of having their two daughters educated, but the ship they went by (the Madeira) was wrecked off Cape Coast, and all on board perished. Pratt was shortly afterwards invalided home, but as his condition was so critical he was landed at Cape Town, and for nearly two years he was practically insane. During that time some one reported him as dead to the authorities, and consequently when the East India Company's affairs were taken over by the Government his name was struck off the list of persons entitled to pensions. Notwithstanding frequent representations his claims were repudiated.

Later on he started sheep farming at Rondebosch, and made coast surveys for the Cape Government. A geologist who was prospecting in the Transvaal advised Pratt to buy a piece of country near the Limpopo River, bounded by the Witwatersrand on one side. Johannesburg now stands on the site. It was nearly 18,000 acres in extent, and for it Pratt paid £350, and settled down as a farmer. When the Zulu war broke out he, with some volunteers, served under Lord Chelmsford. Later, in the Boer revolt of 1881, he raised 600 volunteers and joined the military force in Pretoria. When the Transvaal Republic was proclaimed Mr. Kruger offered Pratt service under the republic, but he declined, saying that he had always been an Englishman and meant to die one. He refused to take the oath of allegiance, and his property was confiscated and he himself escorted across the border. When he returned to England he found his relatives dead, while the War and India Office authorities refused to recognize him, he being registered as

dead for fifteen years. This shock to an old man brought on paralysis, from which Pratt never recovered, and afterwards, his private means becoming exhausted, he was obliged to enter Guildford Workhouse. Recently Pratt's case was brought to Mr. Chamberlain's notice, and the Colonial Secretary forwarded the papers connected with the case to the High Commissioner a few months ago, but Sir Alfred Milner's reply had not been received when Pratt died.

A MORGAN TAKE-OFF.

Punch's Amusing "Diary of An American Abroad."

Punch, too, is responsible for this amusing "Diary of An American Abroad."

Monday, 10 a.m.—Reached England. Country half asleep.

4 p.m.—Reached London. Village awake, but not really spry.

8—Dinner. Arranged to turn dining room into ante-room for callers. Tired. Counted checks. Bed.

Tuesday, 9 a.m.—Read Times at breakfast. Leader disparaging our company. Must see to this.

10—Saw proprietors of Times.

11—Bought Times.

3 to 6—Interviewed the company's competitors: three minutes each.

6 to 7—Wrote checks.

8.30—Theatre. Play, "The Ironmaster." Don't like the sound; suggests rivalry; must see if rights are to be had.

Wednesday — Curiously unlucky morning. Admiralty wouldn't sell fleet. War Office refused to scrap guns. Colonial Secretary declined to let me have Jamaica as a tip for our ashes. At this rate no use staying out. Picked up Thames steamboat fleet for an old song on my way back. Will do to run on the canals inside our fitting shop.

Thursday, 5 p.m.—Things have been humming to-day. Steamboat deal evidently leaked out. Bought the P. & O., Cunard, White Star, Orient, Union Castle and North German Lloyd. Bought the London & North-western. Cabled to my company that they might begin making.

Friday, 10 a.m.—Cable from company asking me to buy less and sell more. Nonsense. Plenty of time for selling. Much best policy to buy up all our customers first. Sell to ourselves then and make sure of orders.

4 p.m.—Bought Holyhead harbour. Made an offer for St. George's Channel.

Saturday, 9 a.m.—Cable from home. "Rival trust formed. Under-selling. Return at once."

10 a.m.—Returning.

Underground London.

At last we have an authoritative pronouncement on the rumors of cracks in St. Paul's, and the consequent alarm about tube schemes. Mr. Somers Clarke, architect to the dean and chapter of St. Paul's, sends a long letter to The London Times from which I quote, writes a London correspondent:

Within the first hundred years after the structure of the cathedral was finished the immense weight resting on the foundations of the eight piers which carry the dome and on the foundations of its abutments caused those parts of the structure to sink a little.

The settlement thus caused has broken the arches and the windows of the clerestory over them in the nave, the choir and the north and south transepts, where they abut on the dome piers.

In the same way the great weight of the western towers has caused them to sink. In sinking they have cracked the west front in a vertical direction through the great door, the window above and the vaulted ceiling of the portico. They have also cracked through the wall of the chapel to the east.

Some 30 years ago the Metropolitan District Railway was under Queen Victoria street, cutting a large gash along the southern slope of the hill on which the cathedral stands.

Below the Underground Railway there has since been pierced the tube for the Waterloo and City Railway. How far this is down in the London clay I do not know.

Those who have studied earth movements, the result of deep excavations, know that a great deal of dislocation takes place in a line diagonally right and left of the parts excavated.

During the last 20 years fresh indications of settlement have been showing themselves in the walls of the church. The movements are still in progress.

But now comes the attack on the electric railways. One of these—the Victoria, City and Southern Electric Railway—proposes to come under the churchyard, taking a line between the cathedral and the great warehouses on the south. The line of the tube or tunnel would be about 400 feet from the southwest tower, and 50 to 60 feet from the south transept.

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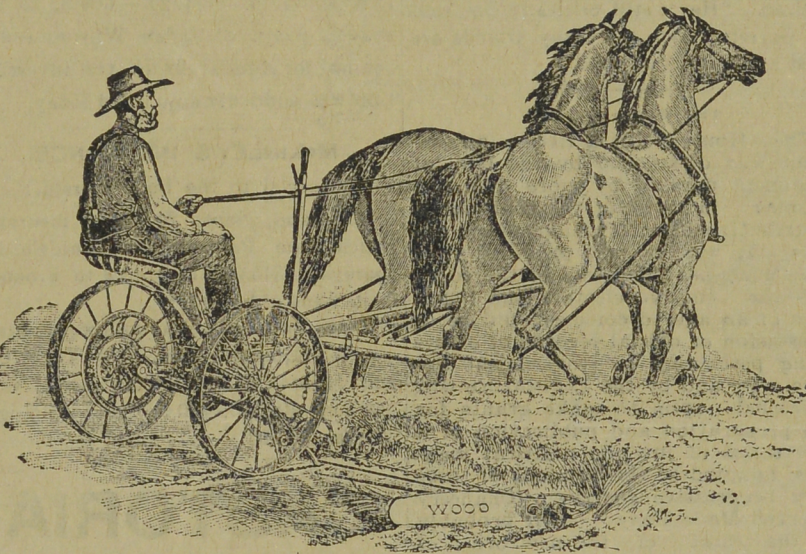
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