The Skeleton In the Closet

Thereby Hangs a Tale.

By F. A. MITCHEL

The city of New York was founded on the southernmost point of Manhattan Island and first grew to the eastward. Later it started up Broadway, and the east side, as it is called, fell into decadence. But till after the beginning of the nineteenth century the handsomest residences were in the neighborhood of the East river.

Some years ago workmen engaged in tearing down an old dwelling near Franklin square—in which Washington lived when first inaugurated president—came upon a closet built in a wall in which was a skeleton. How it got there was a mystery, for there was no opening to the closet, it being inclosed within four thick walls. The find was referred to a historical society, which appointed Heileger Bogardus, an antiquarian, to investigate the whole matter and report. The following is extracted from the papers filed with the society:

"The fact that the skeleton was found within four solid walls is easily explained. The house was repaired and altered during the last decade of the eighteenth century, and the wall wherein was the door to the closet was made whole. The apartment inclosed was of such size that workmen would not necessarily have seen what it contained, especially since there were no windows to admit light in that part of the house.

"As to there being such a closet at all, the story connected with it is a sufficient explanation, for the opening, which was walled up, was closed by a sliding panel. What has not been satisfactorily explained is the use for which the closet was designed. At the time the house was built such secret chambers were not unusual, especially in the homes of those who were in constant danger from some enemy. But in America when the country was first settled avenues of escape were rather tunnels through which the settlers might save themselves from besieging Indians. It seems probable that the house in Franklin square was thus provided by its builder, Meinheer Van Vranken, simply because he had a similar closet in his residence in Rotterdam, for it appears that his ancestors were prominent officials in the Netherlands during that period when the bloodthirsty Duke of Alva held the country in his grip."

But to the story I have unearthed concerning the skeleton found in the closet. Meinheer Van Vranken came to America in 1658, bringing with him what was in those days a fortune. Soon after landing he sent to Holland for brick with which to build his residence and completed it in 1662, modeling it after his home in Rotterdam, even to the secret closet. When it was completed the house was the finest in the city, which was then a Dutch town and called New Amsterdam.

Now, it was in 1664 that the city was captured by the English, the Dutchmen refusing to make an effort to defend it despite the protestations of their governor, Peter Stuyvesant, who stamped with his wooden leg and swore by St. Nicholas that they were an arrant set of cowards, unworthy of the protection of their patron saint.

This change in the government was also a bitter pill for Meinheer Van Vranken to swallow. He was Dutch from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, and his ancestors, who had been sailors, had fought the English when the Netherlands were a power on the sea. Now, meinheer had a very pretty daughter, Anneke by name, who much more readily adapted herself to the new country than her old father, who could be content in it only so long as it was Dutch. When the English landed many of the inhabitants of New Amsterdam went down to the Battery, where the aquarium now stands, to see them come ashore. Among them was Anneke Van Vranken, buxom and with eyes as blue as the heavens above and two ropes of flaxen hair hanging down her back.

One of the boats which brought supplies ashore was commanded by Ralph Eggleston, a midshipman, nineteen years old, three years Anneke's senior. Though six feet in his stockings, he wore the jacket of a middy, decorated with brass buttons, that shone resplendent in the sun and added to the attractions of his handsome person. His eye lighted upon Anneke, who stood among those looking on, and Anneke's eye lighted on him. To her this young man giving orders to a dozen stalwart men, who obeyed his slightest command, was little less than a god. But the young man was on duty and, having unloaded his boat, set off for his ship, lying out in the Hudson river.

Busy as he was, however, young Eggleston found time to give Anneke Van Vranken an admiring glance, and in return there was a rapture in her eyes at what was to her a heavenly vision. It was but a few days after this that while walking under the guns of the fort, whereon the English had replaced the Dutch flag, Anneke met the midshipman, who was on shore leave, strolling about with a brother officer.

This meeting seems to have resulted in an acquaintance between Ralph and Anneke, but how it was brought about is not known. First sight lovers are not apt to be kept apart through the want of an introduction. Be this as it may, the two went together down to the southernmost point of the island and passed the time there till sunset (when the midshipman's leave expired), sitting on a rock making love with that rapidity which can only be attained by persons in their teens.

Eggleston wished to visit Anneke in her home, but she told him that the sight of an Englishman was enough to throw her father into a fit, and if he knew that she had made the acquaintance of one of those who had taken the city and changed its name from New Amsterdam to New York he would sail back to Holland with her by the first vessel going there. Therefore, not being able to meet the girl who had charmed him in her own home, he made an appointment to meet her elsewhere.

The next meeting between the Englishman and the Dutch girl was in this wise: Anneke was standing on the shore of the East river just north of the wall that gave the present name to Wall street, not more than five or six minutes' walk from her home. A boat pulled by a single oarsman was coming round the southern end of the island and approaching the shore where Anneke stood. She went down to the water's edge, the boat's stern was swerved to the shore; she stepped in, and the boat continued its course in the direction of the islands lying to the eastward.

It is unnecessary to mention that the oarsman was Ralph Eggleston, who had pulled around from the Hudson river to meet his new found sweetheart to take her for a ride on the East river, where they could make love without being interrupted. Instead of pulling across the river and thence south on the opposite shore and returning by Governors island, they very foolishly went directly past Anneke's home. True, the house was some distance from the shore and perhaps she thought that she might not be seen from there. She did not reckon on the fact that the house was on a hill and that her father had brought to America the very spyglass with which his father, Captain Van Vranken, had discovered a British ship that he had attacked and sunk. Meinheer happened at the time of this boat ride to be strolling about his grounds. Unfortunately for the lovers the sunlight was reflected from the gold trimmings of the officer's uniform. Meinheer Van Vranken, wondering what one of these hated naval men was doing out on the water with a woman—who must be Dutch—went to the house, took down Captain Van Vranken's spyglass, brought it to bear on the occupants of the boat and, to his horror, discovered his daughter there in company with a British officer.

I know not what immediately followed the revelation. The next link in the chain of the story is that Meinheer Van Vranken determined to shake the dust of Manhattan Island off his shoes—since it had become English soil—and go back to Rotterdam with his family. By this move he intended to separate Anneke from the English midshipman who had crept into her affections while her father was drinking destruction to the English fleet in drafts of schnapps.

Anneke was put under a strict watch during the period in which the preparations were being made for the return to the Netherlands, for there was much to be accomplished. Even the heavy four post bedsteads required the strongest horses on the island to drag them to the landing and a lighter of extra size to take them to the ship. Anneke was in charge of Katrina Lemke, an old maid who had no sympathy for young lovers and hated the English. This woman was enjoined not to let her charge out of her sight for a single moment, and since the father feared the young midshipman might, under pretense of searching the house for arms, bring a party of men to take away his sweetheart a six pound cannon was mounted at the only gate in the high wall surrounding the place.

The day the family were to sail for Holland Katrina Lemke and Anneke were left in the house till the last minute, while Meinheer Van Vranken superintended the hauling of the last of the household goods to the landing. When he had finished his task and seen his family and goods put on board the ship he returned for his daughter and her duenna.

He found the house vacant.

From this point the story is vague. It does not appear that Katrina Lemke was ever found. The next heard of Anneke Van Vranken she was living in England, the wife of Captain Sir Ralph Eggleston of the British navy. The loss of the duenna and the escape of her charge are to be accounted for only by conjecture, though there is an unsubstantiated tradition that it was explained by Lady Eggleston. This explanation accords with the recent discovery of the skeleton in the closet.

The tradition is that while the two women were alone together in the Van Vranken home Anneke broke away from her jailer and hid in the closet. The duenna followed her and entered the closet, and Anneke slipped out and shut the door. Anneke, thinking only of flight, left the place and communicated with her lover, who came ashore, married her and took her to his ship.

Anneke did not know—what I now suppose to have been the case—that in closing the door of the closet it had been held by a spring lock. The panel closed automatically with the closing of the door. My theory is that Katrina Lemke was caught in the closet, could not release herself and perished. Doubtless the skeleton discovered there was hers. This theory is borne out by the fact that it is the skeleton of a woman.

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

1 Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 14, block E.

2 Two fine building lots in block G, East View add.

3 For rent, house, barn, 3 lots; $6; Ellis street. Property for sale.

4 For Sale, 2 good lots, on Pine street in block K, cultivated.

5 Lots 13, 14, 15, 16, block O, at a bargain; $100 cash, bal. on terms at 8%.

6 Two lots, 6-r. house; fruit, berries, city water, electric light; close in, bargain.

7 For sale, One acre, adjoining city limits, with 5-room house. A bargain at $425, terms. House to rent.

8 For sale — 9 acres, partially improved; house, timber; spring and living stream; near western city limits; price, $1000, half cash.

9 For sale, one acre, cultivated, fruit, berries; 6-r. house insured for $1400; elec. light, city water, cesspool; price $1050; all cash, or $700 cash, terms on balance.

10 For sale, 7 lots (all of block A) in Montgomery's addition to Falls City; good garden ground, fenced; city water; price $1100 if bought within the next 30 days.

11 For sale, fine home in city, with 25 acres, 10 cultivated.

12 For sale, lots 7, 8, 14, 23 block K, and lots 11 and 12 block E. Will trade for Portland property.

13 For sale, lot 2 block M, M. ad.

14 For sale, 80 a. 1½ mi. north of city 20 a. improved; 25 a. good timber; plenty of pasture and water.

15 To rent, 12-r. house.

16 Two acres, cultivated, fruit, berries; 6-r. house, sheds; water, electric light; will divide.

17 Three acres, adjoining city.

18 Five acres, in city.

19 Six lots, no improvements; cheap

20 Lot 5 and 20 ft. of lot 4 blk D, 70 feet front, on North Main street, is for sale at a bargain; best building lot in town. See F. K. Hubbard.

F. K. Hubbard Realty Company
In The News office, Falls City

Notice to Electric Light Users

All persons owing the Falls City Electric Light Co. for service prior to April 1, 1914, will please pay the amount to C. W. Lee at The News office. W. E. NEWSOM.

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Manufacturers and Homeseekers who want to know the facts concerning Falls City and its possibilites for future development are requested to read the information given in these two columns. For further and more particular information, address The News.

The Name

The city derives its name from the falls of the Little Luckiamute River, which flows through the city from the West.

The first sale of town lots occurred in 1889, though donation land-claim settlers came here many years before that date. In 1900 the population was 269; in 1910, 969; 1914, about 1,250.

The Location

Falls City is situated in the south central part of Polk County Oregon, in section 21, township 8, S., range 6, W., Willamette meridian, 27 rail miles southwest of Salem, and 73 rail miles southwest of Portland, in the narrow western end of the Little Luckiamute River valley, surrounded on the north, south, and west by the foothills of the Coast Range mountains. Elevation, 386.38 ft above sea level. Transportation—Salem, Falls City & Western Railroad, which extends from Salem to Black Rock, a rail distance of 30 miles, with S. P. main line connections at Dallas, Gerlinger, and Salem, and with the Oregon Electric at Salem.

Falls City is incorporated as a city, and contains 753.33 acres, valuation for taxation $268,837. The city administration is composed of mayor, seven councilmen, auditor and police judge, marshal, treasurer, engineer, health officer. Salaries: Marshal and water superintendent, $60; auditor, $25; attorney, $25.

Water and Wood

The city of Falls City owns the gravity water system. Its first cost was $30,000. Pure mountain water is piped from springs on Judge Teal's ranch, 3 miles away, at an elevation of about 300 feet above city level.

Oak and fir fire wood is plentiful and cheap.

Lumber, Fruit, Vegetables and Berries

Electric-power planing and saw mill, log pond, dry kiln and lumber yard in the city, lumber flume, logging roads and logging outfits, all owned and operated by the Falls City Lumber Co.

The surrounding bench and hill lands are as well adapted to the production of fruits and berries as any other section of the Pacific Northwest, and development on these lines is going on.

Vegetables and berries of many kinds grow to perfection in and adjoining Falls City, and many acres are planted to strawberries and loganberries. Market conditions are improving steadily, as production is increased.

Schools, Churches, Societies, Clubs

Falls City has a 12-grade school with a four-year high school course, with principal, assistant, and eight grade teachers. Its diplomas are accepted by the higher schools in lieu of examinations. The entire community is justly proud of the school.

The Religious organizations are: Adventist, Catholic, Christian, Free Methodist, Methodist Episcopal, German Lutheran.

The Fraternal societies: Ind. Order of Oddfellows, Rebekahs, Masons, Knights of Pythias, Pythian Sisters, Modern Woodmen of America, Royal Neighbors of America, Woodmen of the World, Women of Woodcraft.

Free reading room. Gem theatre, photoplay.

Hydro-electric light generated by the power of the falls; owned by the Falls City Electric Co., W. B. Stevens president, H. C. Brown vice-president and manager, A. W. Stevens secretary and treasurer.

Telephone system, with long-distance connections. C. J. Pugh local manager.

Business Enterprises

Falls City is well provided with the usual business enterprises. The News contains the announcements of the following business and professional men of the city:

Bakery, D. Toller,
Bank of Falls City, W. F. Nichols cashier.
Barber shops, Wm. Bohle.
Carpenters and Builders, Elle & Elle, S. Ouderkirk.
Clothier, Tailor and gents' furnisher, Chas. Hartung.
Confectionery stores: B. L. Ellis, R. B. Harrington.
Drug store, M. L. Thompson.
Dentist, Dr. A. G. Atwood.
Department store, N. Selig.
Funeral director, R. L. Chapman.
Furniture, J. C. Talbott & Co.
General stores. N. Selig, F. C. Lumber Co., F. C. Merc. Co.
Hardware store, J. C. Talbott & Co.
Hotels: Falls City Hotel, Fritz Droege, owner and manager; The Madena, Mrs. Mae Nichols, Mrs. Dennis, managers
Jewelry store. W. A. Persey.
Newspaper, the Falls City News, C. W. Lee.
Photoplay theatre, the Gem, C. J. Pugh.
Physicians, Dr. W. B. Officer; Dr F. M. Hellwarth.
Pressing and cleaning parlor, I. A. Johnston.
Railroads, Salem, Falls City & Western, Southern Pacific.
Real estate agent, F. K. Hubbard Realty Co.
Restaurant, The Madena; Wm. Finley, owner.
Saloons: The Oregon, C. W. Matthews; The Idaho, Chas. Mix.

Boost for a Gymnasium for the School