

The Wife's Secret, OR A BITTER RECKONING

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was Sir Geoffrey's first dinner party, and Ethel felt just a little nervous as she received the guests. Captain Pelling was watching her in the pauses of his chat with Bertha Collins. He caught her eye presently and smiled at her reassuringly, for she had confided to him her dread of the awful occasion.

"You are an old friend of theirs, are you not?" Bertha was saying to the captain. "We all think Miss Malling quite charming. I took her from the first; but, do you know, she is not easy to get on with. Of course she is all one could wish for a hostess; but it is impossible to sit all one says and showing up anything that is absurd without certainly in the least intending to give offense. You would hardly believe it, I dare say, but I have adopted the habit of trying to talk seriously when she is listening."

"I think that is the greatest compliment you could pay her. Will you adopt the same practice with me?"

"I should not dare," she replied, with mock gravity. "If I were to get a reputation for seriousness I should probably die an old maid. Men always prefer frivolous talkers for their wives. There is the dinner bell. Are you to take me down?"

Later in the evening Miss Collins dropped into a quiet corner and discussed the things with the utmost freedom with an intimate friend whom she had not seen since the end of the season. She was describing the breaking up of the party when Pauline's intended marriage had been discovered.

"Now tell me—could there be anything more ridiculous than her running away from her own house and marrying, or trying to marry, a man secretly, when there was no one to prevent her doing it openly? My dear, you should have seen our faces when Mrs. Sefton read us the note she had left behind, as we dropped in, one after another, to lunch-oon! At first everybody looked very surprised, and then the absurdity of the whole proceeding struck us. Why could she not have been married properly? No one could have objected to her marrying that good-looking artist if she chose to do so."

"Was she very much 'gone' on him?"

"Awfully! It must have been a terrible blow to her when her husband turned up."

"Rather! Isn't it odd, his being here?"

"I don't think so. He was very good to Sir Geoffrey when he was in less affluent circumstances, I believe."

"Things seem a bit mixed. From what I could make out, he had believed himself a widower, until they met in the church. Don't you think it probable that, while he was under the impression that his wife was dead, he may have had a liking for Miss Malling?"

"I believe you are right," Bertha replied, energetically. "For I saw him looking at her before dinner with his heart in his eyes."

"It is certainly very strange that he should have fallen in love with the girl who was being kept out of her right position by his own wife. It looks like the finger of Fate, doesn't it—though which way the finger is pointing I can't see."

As the guests, one after another, took their departure, Ethel felt her burden lighten. Her first party had been an unqualified success, but she was none the less glad to have it over. Lord Summers stayed behind, talking earnestly with Sir Geoffrey.

"I admit I was disappointed when I heard that she had taken the family jewels with her," he said, in allusion to Pauline. "I'm afraid she has inherited some of her father's want of principle. The Luftons were never particularly distinguished for honesty. What do you mean to do about it, Geoffrey?"

"Nothing openly. I am in communication with her waiting maid, who had promised to let me know if there is any idea on Pauline's part of selling them, and I shall, unknown to her, become the purchaser."

"An excellent idea and a very generous one. By the bye, as things have turned out, how fortunate it is that the engagement of our charming Ethel and young Dornton was—"

He stopped suddenly as Ethel and Pelling came back from bidding farewell to Miss Collins. They both caught the drift of his words, and Ethel glanced at Pelling's face; but it was calmly unconscious. Thinking this a good opening to talk of Jack, he said:

"If you are not too tired, I want to show you a delightful style of title page that I came across this morning. I thought you might elaborate the idea for your 'Central Africa.' It is on this table somewhere."

"I am afraid my share of 'Central Africa' will not be anything to be proud of," he replied with a smile.

"That is nonsense, and you know it, Captain Pelling! I have made up my mind that your sketches are to be the principal attraction of the book. It is really unkind of you to make light of your work after all our interest in it!"

"That is just it," he returned, laughing. "I have become so accustomed to working in company that I find I can't move a step by myself."

"You would not be offended at anything I should say for your good?"

"Go on," he said, and waited with knitted brows for what she had to say. Ethel, in her short life, had often had unpleasant tasks to perform, but never one so unpleasant as this.

"Out of your own mouth shall you be judged," she began, smiling at him to hide the trembling of her lips. "You say you have become so used to working in company that you cannot move a step by yourself; but I say you must take the one useful step by yourself that will secure you good company to work in for the rest of your life. Go to Paris at once, seek out your wife, and give her the protection of your presence. She will

yield. You must not judge her by her words when you last met. You had her at a cruel disadvantage. Think what an awful shock your sudden appearance must have been to her! It is very, very hard for me to say this to you, after all your kindness to us in the past; but you will not misjudge my motive. I am speaking for your good. By and by, when you are quite happy with each other, you will be thankful to me for sending you away in this abrupt manner."

"You wish me to go at once?" he asked.

"That is a very cruel way to put it," she answered, gently. "You know I do not wish you to go at all. True friends are not so plentiful that one can afford to play battles and shuttlecock with them for one's own pleasure. For your own good, Captain Pelling, I advise you going at once."

"You are one of the best women that ever lived," he exclaimed, "and I am proud to have had you for a friend! I ought to have known my presence would give you pain, and refused Sir Geoffrey's invitation. Don't speak until I've finished," he went on, hurriedly, holding up his hand to check any interruption. "I shall follow your advice to the letter. I will thrust aside my own inclinations, and run over to Paris and see what Mrs. Pelling is doing, spend Christmas among the Frenchmen, and perhaps in the New Year Captain and Mrs. Pelling may have the honor of receiving Sir Geoffrey and Miss Malling at the Wigwam."

For once Ethel looked at him with her eyes brimming with tears; but she did not dare make an attempt to speak. He took her hand in his, and held it close as he finished.

"You must make some plausible excuse to Sir Geoffrey for my abrupt departure in the morning; or, better still, I will wire from town. I shall write to you from Paris, if I may. And now, before I say good-night, I must give you this letter. I received it two days ago from Dornton. I know it will please you. He and I correspond regularly; so I shall keep you posted up in his movements. Good-by, my true, honest little friend."

She sat, as he left her, holding Jack's letter in her hand, hearing his voice very faintly in the distance as he excused himself with the plea of fatigue to her father, and wondering how it had happened that this interview, which she had brought about for the sole purpose of hearing news of Jack, had ended in so sudden a determination on the captain's part to seek his wife. She knew his resolve was the result of her advice, and she hoped devoutly that good might come of it.

And Pelling mounted the wide stairs very slowly, deep in thought as he went. "She is quite right, as she is always. It is the only thing to do; and I never saw it myself. My place is undoubtedly by my wife's side."

CHAPTER XXV.

"I tell you your presence here is an unwarrantable intrusion! If you do not leave my apartment of your own free will, I shall be compelled to have you ejected!"

It was the third day since Pelling left Ethel, and this was his wife's greeting! He had had a long battle with himself; but duty had been triumphant, and his mind once made up he was not to be discouraged by a few bitter words.

"That is not necessary. Of course I will leave you; but you will not refuse to answer me one or two questions first?"

"Ask your questions then, and, if I choose to answer them, I will. If I don't choose, I will not. But, for heaven's sake, get over them quickly!"

"Will you tell me something of our child, Pauline?" he asked.

She sprang up with a look of desperate fright on her face.

"How dare you come here to brow-beat me like this?" she exclaimed, vehemently; and then she sank back on the couch again. But, after a pause, she sat quietly enough. "Of course you have to hear what there is to tell. My baby was born a weakly little thing. I had hard work to keep body and soul together in those first days after my father's death. I knew from the first she could not live long. She died when she was three months old."

"I wish she had lived."

"Why do you wish such a mad thing as that?"

"Because, if it had not been for seeing her grave, I should have gone on searching for you until I found you."

"Ah! And if you had found me then, if you had come to Mallingford quietly and said, 'Pauline, you are my wife; come with me; do you know what I would have done? I would have killed you! I would kill you even now, if your death would undo any of the harm you have worked me! But it is all over, and the next thing you will hear is that I have killed myself!'"

"Why do you hate me so bitterly, Pauline?" he asked; and he studied her attentively while she answered:

"Because you have been by evil genius ever since I became your wife. If I had not married you, my life might have been as happy and pleasant as other women's lives are. No sooner did I know that I was my uncle's heiress than my happiness was destroyed by hearing that I was to inherit only on the condition that I did not marry without my guardian's consent. Thanks to you, this condition was already broken; and my six years of possession have been embittered by the certainty in my own mind that you were alive somewhere and would surely find me some day, and deprive me of all that I had risked so much to obtain."

Pelling sighed heavily and took up his hat.

"You will let me come and see you again?"

"Why? You do not care for me in the least. Why should you take so much trouble to be civil to me?"

"You are my wife. No amount of dislike or shortcomings on your part alters that fact. We have been very unfortunate in the past. I can see you are unhappy; and, in an indirect way, I am the cause of your unhappiness. I would give a great deal to make things brighter for you, if you would let me."

She was touched by the earnestness of his manner and tone.

"You are very good," she said; "and I am sorry I behaved so badly to you." She stood silent for a few moments, Pelling watching her quietly; while they stood the clock on the mantelpiece struck 12.

"You must go now," she told him hurriedly. "I have an appointment to ride with some friends. Come again at this time to-morrow."

He did not attempt any outward display of affection, but passed down the stairs. He met Babette half way down.

"With whom does your mistress ride to-day?" he asked.

"With the Baroness de Bellette"—a woman well known for the pertinacity with which she had clung to the extreme edge of respectable society for the last five years. "They have a wager as to who will ride the greatest distance on a horse belonging to Monsieur Crevel which has always refused to carry a lady."

Pelling went on with a little unacknowledged anxiety in his heart. He would go back and try to dissuade Pauline from this mad freak, but that he knew it would be useless; and any show of authority on his part just now might perhaps undo the little good he believed he had accomplished.

He drove straight back to the hotel, and sat with his chin resting on his hands at the little table in the window of his room. He was in a strange state of mingled hope and dread. He did not know what he wished; he only knew that he meant to do what he conceived to be his duty; the rest he must leave in higher hands.

While thus musing over the past, he was brought back to the present by the sight of his wife cantering by in company with several others; and, following them, he noticed a fidgety chestnut horse, with a side-saddle on, which was being led by a groom. Pauline looked up and bowed gravely; he returned the greeting.

How handsome she looked! How well she sat her horse! How proud he might have been of her if she had never allowed the love of riches to crowd the womanliness out of her heart! He leaned forward and watched her as far as he could see from the window.

An hour later Pelling was stooping over his wife's poor crushed body in one of the little chalets in the Bois de Boulogne. She had been thrown and trampled on, and was dying of internal hemorrhage. Her voice was very low, and her words came slowly, with many pauses.

"It is heaven's justice! After you had gone this morning I made up my mind to do as you wished. I thought I would try to love you—you were so good—and we should be happy together. I had no right to be happy—after my wickedness, and heaven has—settled it."

"My poor mistaken girl!"

"Yes, that is true. I've been mistaken all my life. No one ever—tried to make me good. I was always left to servants—when I was a child. Heaven is just, and the great Judge will remember my—great temptations. Will you kiss me—just once, Alec? Say you forgive me—it will make my mind easier."

In spite of his efforts not to disturb her last moments by any show of feeling, a large tear dropped upon her face. She looked at him wonderingly, and put up her finger to his cheek.

"For me," she said very softly—"you cry for me. I do not deserve—to have one mourner—at my death bed. I have done evil to every one—but Jack. Give him my love—No, I will not leave messages; they might bring a curse."

Another spasm seized her, and, when it had passed, the hue of death was creeping over her face. It was all finished now, and the strong young life that had been so misused had come to an end.

Pelling took out a card and left it with the people of the house, and then went straightway to see that all the necessary arrangements were made for the interment of her who had once been very dear to him. He wrote a short letter to Sir Geoffrey that night. It ran:

"Dear Sir Geoffrey—Your niece, my wife, was killed by a fall from her horse to-day. We were reconciled at the last. Tell your daughter I can never express my gratitude to her for sending me here; it will always be a source of thankfulness in my heart. The family jewels are intact, Babette tells me, and they will be sent by special courier. When the funeral is over, I think I shall join Dornton in Italy, and toward the spring we may work our way homeward in company. Ask Miss Ethel to keep us ever green in her memory. I've set my heart on seeing our young friend Jack a Royal Academician before many years. With his talent, he wants only a little judicious pushing, and I mean to devote my time to pushing him."

"Always your sincere friend,"

"ALEXANDER PELLING."

Ethel was greatly affected by this letter, and she went about with a very sober face for some weeks, until the preparations for Christmas absorbed her, and left her no time for thinking of handsome young artists or anything else. But, even in the midst of the excitement of Christmas, there was always a craving in her heart, a dreary sense of emptiness, which grew and grew until she was compelled, with many blushes, to admit its presence, and to acknowledge to herself that only one person in all the world could fill the void.

(To be continued.)

Proverb Comes Out.

Miles—You remember Supleigh, who went west a couple of years ago and married an heiress, don't you?

Giles—Yes. What of him?

Miles—I understand his wife got a divorce from him recently.

Giles—I'm not surprised to hear it.

Miles—Why?

Giles—Because a fool and his money are soon parted, you know.

Trouble Afoot.

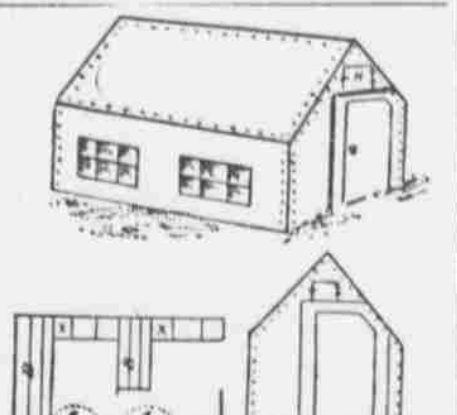
The Two-Step—They are all after my scalp.

The Waltz—Well, you're the fellow who crowded me out.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.



Practical Poultry Houses.

A practical poultry house may be built of four upright piano boxes. The backs and ends which come together are removed, together with two of the tops. The two remaining tops are inclosed at the middle end of the house and at the front, and a small door made in the gable end of one, which portion of the house is used for



PIANO BOX POULTRY HOUSE.

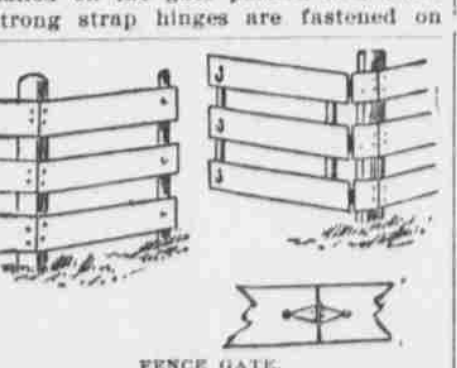
the storage of grain. A sloping roof is built over the entire structure, and the building covered with waterproof paper, thus cutting out any possibility of trouble in the way of leakage or drafts which might result from the joining. Two windows are made in the lower front of the house facing the south, and directly under each window a dusting box is made, which will afford the fowls much pleasure, as they enjoy the sunshine. Roosts are placed at one end and in the middle, and nest boxes on the side opposite the windows.

Arranging the Window Garden.

How often do we notice a shelf filled with small plants in the window garden, many varieties grouped promiscuously until the characteristics of each are entirely destroyed. Arrange each class of plants in a separate clump, and you will be surprised to note the difference in their appearance. Take such plants as primroses, cyclamen, violets and ferns and arrange them alternately on the plant shelf. Now group all the ferns in the center of the shelf, the tall sword fern in the middle, with the broad-leaved sorts next, and the beautiful maiden-hair fern and other dainty varieties drooping from the edge of the shelf. On one end of the shelf, at a little distance from the ferns, group the different varieties of primroses in such manner that contrasts in foliage and blossoms will be readily noted. On the other hand, arrange the cyclamen blossoms, nodding daintily above the dark foliage, and the great difference between the careless and artistic arrangements will be at once apparent.

Good Fence Gate.

Where the farm is divided into a number of fields it is often somewhat of a laborious task to pass from one field to another, and especially when animals are to be driven from one section to another of the farm. A gate such as here described is easily placed in a section of any division fence, whether of wire, rails or boards. Arrange the point of opening so as to have firm corner posts, then make a gate four feet wide; a light post is set before the ends of the boards are cut if the gate is erected as a part of a board fence. Two strong strips are nailed on the gate portion and three strong strap hinges are fastened on



FENCE GATE.

the boards where cut next to the post. Strong hooks and screw-eye serve as fastenings at the other end of the gate. It costs but little to arrange several of the handy gates about the farm, and they will be found useful. The illustration shows the idea clearly.—Indianapolis News.

Keep Good Horses.

We know a farmer who has not less than \$700 invested in old plug horses, says Chicago Inter Ocean. Ringbones, spavins, wire cuts, curbs, etc., are conspicuous when you look over his herd. He has ten or a dozen head, and none of them can be depended upon for a decent day's work. This man thinks he needs lots of horses with which to do his work, and he bought this assortment because they were cheap. We know another farmer with only three head that cost \$500, but they are good ones, and he can do more work in a day with them than the other man can with his ten head. The moral is, Keep less horses, but have good ones.

Valley Frosts.

Three causes operate to produce valley frosts, which are: First, the air, made cold on clear nights, becomes heavier, rolls down the hillsides and settles at the bottom. Second, the winds do not reach the valleys, which allows unobstructed radiation of heat. Third, the richer soil of the valleys induces a later and more succulent growth, thereby promoting more rapid evaporation.

Protecting the Manure.

The annual question concerning the disposition of the stable-made manure comes up as the pile begins to assume formidable proportions. By far the best way of taking care of it is to spread it on the fields where it will go down into the soil and be in readiness for the crop which is to be sown in the spring. If it is to be stored, the ideal place is the pit with cement bottom, which will hold the liquid excrement. If this cannot be done, then store it under a shed, placing it in layers and let the hogs root it over. If even this is not feasible, then put it in piles not very high and cover with any old, rough boards—almost anything that will keep out the rain, which causes the liquid portions to leach away.

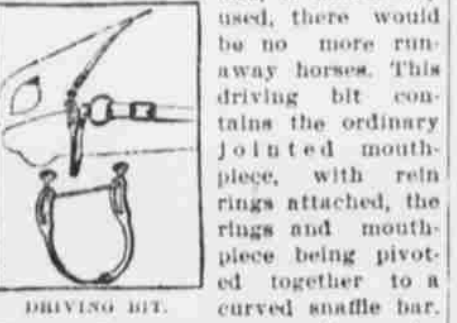
An excellent plan is to choose a place where the soil is of a clay nature, and dig a trench all around the space where the pile is to be, and in this way save some of the liquid, which may be scooped up and poured back on the pile. Use the pile as a receiver for the slop from the house, and see that it is forked over several times during the winter. The main thing, however, is to see that it is protected from the elements as much as possible.

Salt for Farm Animals.

Most farmers fully realize the importance of salt to the farm animals, but they too often forget to supply it at the proper time and in proper quantities. Possibly sheep should be handled a little more cautiously than other animals in this respect, and small quantities doled out to them daily. The other farm animals can safely be trusted with a lump of salt in the manger, to which they may have free access. Even the swine will do better if a lump of rock salt is put in the corner of the trough, although it is usually the better plan, with them, to season the slop given them with more or less salt. This is also the better plan of furnishing salt to fowls, using the mash each day but in small quantities—just about as much as the housewife would use in seasoning a mixed dish for the home table. Don't forget, however, that salt creates thirst, and that animals freely sated must be given clean, fresh water.

Controls the Horse.

A Seattle inventor has devised a driving bit which places the horse under the complete control of the driver, and, if universally used, there would be no more runaway horses. This driving bit contains the ordinary jointed mouthpiece, with reins rings attached, the rings and mouthpiece being pivoted together to a curved snaffle bar.



DRIVING BIT.

The snaffle bars meet at the center under the lower jaw of the horse and are hinged by a rivet, the overlapping ends of the snaffle bars being recessed to form a smooth joint. An overdraw check guard, consisting of a curved chain bar connects to the snaffle bars. An overdraw check bit passes through slots in the upper end of the check guard. The inventor claims that the overdraw check, when connected to either a snaffle bit or to a stiff mouthpiece bit, is humane in its action, does not force the jaws of the horse open to an extent to interfere with the proper breathing, will not pinch the sides of the mouth of the horse, and will not chafe and irritate the animal.

Feeding of Roots in Winter.

The countries that lead in quality of live stock use roots as food for the animals. England, which gave us our best breeds, would never have done so but for her large crop of turnips. The English market reports give prices of beets, mangels and turnips as regularly as do our journals for grain and hay. In some sections of this country the root crop is becoming an important one, but we rely mostly on corn, which produces not only largely of grain, but also of fodder; hence it is cheaper to grow corn than roots, but better results would be obtained if roots were added to the corn, hay and fodder. Labor-saving implements now cheapen the cost of producing roots, compared with former years, and with the use of roots the food is more varied, which promotes more rapid growth of young stock and greater yields from producers.

Packing Pork.

Clean the barrel thoroughly until all bad odors are removed. Then cover the bottom with three inches of salt and pack in a layer of pork, closely filling the space and covering the whole layer with salt three inches deep. Pound it down solid with an ax and start another layer, keeping on in the same way until the pork is all packed. Cover the whole with one-half bushel of salt and let it stand a few days, after which clean cold water should be added. A float with a flat stone on top will keep the meat from rising above the surface. This plan requires more salt than commonly used but is very sure for keeping meat.

Sheep on Small Farms.

A Western writer says: A small grass farm for sheep should be divided into small fields of five to ten acres each, according to the size of the farm and the number of sheep. The land devoted to sheep should be fully stocked to use the pasture to the best advantage, and forage crops should be provided for fall feeding when pasture fails, and the sheep need a little extra feed to put them in good condition for winter.

THE WEEKLY HISTORIAN



- 1135—Stephen crowned King of England.
- 1492—Columbus cast anchor in the Bay of St. Thomas.
- 1549—Death of Margaret, Queen of Navarre.
- 1552—Charles V. raised siege of Metz.
- 1560—First General Assembly of the Scottish church opened.
- 1562—Battle of Dreux. Condé taken prisoner.
- 1603—Mahomet III, Sultan of Turkey, died of the plague.
- 1620—The Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock.
- 1621—The English Commons claimed freedom of discussion.
- 1632—John Cotton, first minister of Boston, died.
- 1667—Many Scotch Covenanters were executed.
- 1688—King James II. of England fled to France. Throne declared abdicated.
- 1719—First issue of Boston Gazette published by William Brooker.
- 1745—City of Milan entered by Spanish invaders.
- 1747—Colonial House and records in Boston destroyed by fire.
- 1775—British Parliament ordered confiscation of all American vessels.
- 1776—Washington crossed the Delaware.
- 1777—Gen. Washington moved his troops to Valley Forge.
- 1782—United States frigate Charleston captured by British.
- 1783—Gen. Washington delivered his commission to Congress at Annapolis.
- 1791—Bank of United States commenced discounting in Philadelphia.
- 1795—Henry Clinton died.
- 1796—French surrender Fort Kehl on the Rhine to the Austrians.
- 1803—Louisiana taken possession of by United States.
- 1804—Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, born. . . . Election of Thomas Jefferson as President of the United States.
- 1805—Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, born at Sharon, Va.
- 1809—Joseph Johnson, publisher of Cowper's poems, died.
- 1811—Many persons perished in the burning of a theater at Richmond, Va.
- 1812—Fort Niagara captured by the British.
- 1816—Bible societies prohibited in Hungary.
- 1820—Wife of Gen. Andrew Jackson died.
- 1830—Prince of Polignac sentenced for life for treason. . . . Independence of Belgium recognized by the allied powers.
- 1831—Stephen Girard, Philadelphia philanthropist, died.
- 1832—Termination of civil war in Mexico.
- 1835—Independence of Texas proclaimed.
- 1841—Assassination of Sir W. MacNaughton at Cabul.
- 1842—Texas troops invade Mexico.
- 1845—Stenner Bellezaue sunk in the Mississippi river.
- 1848—Asiatic cholera broke out among United States troops in Texas. . . . Louis Napoleon made President of French republic.
- 1851—Dismissal of Lord Palmerston from office. . . . Lagos, Africa, destroyed by the British.
- 1852—Annexation of Pugn to British India.
- 1854—Armed collisions in eastern Kansas over slavery question.
- 1860—South Carolina seceded from the Union.
- 1861—Principality of Roumania created by union of Moldavia and Wallachia.
- 1864—Savannah occupied by Gen. Sherman.
- 1870—Tours surrendered to the Germans.
- 1874—Hoosac Tunnel turned over to Massachusetts by the builders.
- 1884—Mackay-Bennett cable opened to the public.
- 1894—War between China and Japan declared ended. . . . Capt. Dreyfus found guilty and sentenced to Devil's Island.
- 1898—French Chamber of Deputies by vote again sustained government in Dreyfus case.
- 1899—Cuban Junta in the United States dissolved. . . . Dwight L. Moody, noted evangelist, died. . . . Duke of Westminster, richest man in England, died. . . . Buchtel College, Akron, Ohio, burned.
- 1900—Treaty between Mexico and China signed at Washington, D. C. . . . Gen. Wood assumed office as Governor General of Cuba.
- 1901—William Ellery Channing died.
- 1902—First wireless telegraphic message transmitted across the Atlantic.
- 1903—East river bridge, connecting Manhattan and Williamsburg, opened.

This and That.

A shell from a 12-inch gun makes its flight of nine miles in forty-two seconds.