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## NARROW ESCAPES

Hudson Maxim Has Figured In Some Perilous Incidents.

LUCKY AT CHEATING DEATH.

On One Gun Testing Occasion a Sudden Impulse to Run, Which He Obeyed, Was the Means of Saving His Life—A Magazine That Got Its Second Wind.

One of the most thrilling adventures in my experience took place at the government proving grounds at Sandy Hook, N. J., when the United States government was testing maxims before adopting it.

Near a light frame building in which I was filling shells with maximit, a ten inch gun was being tested. A number of shots had been fired from the big gun. Just as I had concluded my work and started for the wharf to take the government tug for New York, the signal was sounded for another shot. I was walking along a stretch of railway track directly behind the gun.

At that instant I remembered that several years before, when one of these guns was being tested, the breechlock had blown out, passed through the bombproof and killed six officers and men, but I argued with myself that the chance was infinitely remote that the breechlock would be blown out of the present gun on this discharge at the very instant I was in range, but upon a sudden impulse I ran with all my might.

The gun was discharged. I looked round just in time to see the huge breechlock pass through a building near the one in which I had been at work. It came up the track, striking and breaking one of the rails over which I had passed. It ricocheted against the top of the old granite fort and glanced high into the air. A shower of stones and debris fell over a wide area and many fragments struck the ground close to me.

I walked back to the scene of the accident and found that the windows in the little building where I had been filling maximit shells were completely riddled with partly burned cylinders of smokeless powder that had been blown from the gun.

I once had another curious experience at Sandy Hook during some trials of the Maxim automatic machine gun.

Among the severe tests to which the gun was subjected was one intended to simulate what might occur in making a landing upon the seashore, where the mechanism of the gun might get filled with sand. The test is known as the "sand test."

The gun being tested at the time was of the kind using black gunpowder cartridges, for it was before the introduction of smokeless powder. There was so much energy in the recoil of the barrel that a great deal of sand could be thrown into the mechanism without interfering with the working of the gun.

The commanding officer did not arrive to see the gun fired until after the board in charge had completed the test. He then appeared and demanded that the firing should be continued for his benefit. The chairman of the experimental board demurred, saying that the gun had passed through the test admirably and that it was too bad to fire it more than was absolutely necessary, with its mechanism filled with sand. But the commander insisted.

A schooner was approaching near the line of fire. The commander said he only wanted to see a few rounds fired and that the firing would be completed before the schooner would come within range. Accordingly a belt of 333 rounds was inserted, and the firing begun. After perhaps fifty rounds were fired the command was given "Cease firing," but the gun kept right on. It afterward proved that the trigger was blocked by sand, so that it was impossible to stop the gun. The schooner came into range, and the bullets flew over and around her.

My assistant, who was firing the gun, did his best to work the trigger and stop it. It did not occur to him on the instant to unlumber the gun and swing it round so as to bring the schooner out of range. As the gun fired at the rate of 750 shots a minute the firing was all over inside half a minute.

Fortunately no damage was done. When the same gun was undergoing a sand test at Annapolis, Md., I came very near being killed by it.

The gun had passed successfully through a severe test—that is to say, locked the trigger, so that it could not be pulled—and began clearing the gun box.

Thinking that the gun was safe, I was just about to step round in front of it. Suddenly it fired a dozen or more shots so close to me that my clothes were seared by the powder gases.

One of the tests made at Annapolis was to fire a Maxim gun vertically into the air. We had fired a couple of hundred shots in this manner, when something struck very near us. It then occurred to the officer in charge that what goes up must necessarily come down. Firing ceased, and we sought cover for a few minutes to avoid the sudden rain—Hudson Maxim in Youth's Companion.

The best remedy for wrongs done us is to forget them.—Ryus.

## OLD CHARTER OAK.

Bells Were Told and Funeral Dirges Played When It Fell.

The charter oak of Hartford was a white oak. The story goes that when James, duke of York, ascended the throne of England and sent Andros to take away all colonial charters Connecticut alone refused to surrender here. Andros was furious over this defiance, and Oct. 31, 1687, he returned to the assembly hall of Hartford with a body of soldiers and demanded instant surrender of the charter, which lay in a box on the table. A hot dispute followed.

Finally Andros stretched out his hand to seize the disputed paper. Then the candles were suddenly extinguished, and the people who had gathered on the street outside rushed in a disorderly crowd into the hall. There was a period of wild confusion in the dark, and when the candles were finally relighted no charter was to be found. It had been removed by Captain Wadsworth and concealed in the oak, which ever afterward bore its name.

The oak was even then old. When the first settlers were clearing their land the Indians begged that it might be spared. "It has been the guide of our ancestors for centuries," they said, "as to the time of planting our corn. When the leaves are the size of a mouse's ears, then is the time to put seed into the ground." The Indians' request was granted, and the tree, afterward becoming the custodian of the lost charter, became famous for all time. It fell in a windstorm Aug. 21, 1856, and so deeply it venerated that at sunset on the day of its fall the bells of the city were tolled and a band of music played funeral dirges over its ruins.

At the time of its fall its circumference one foot from the ground was twenty-five feet, and it was estimated to be over 600 years old.—Kansas City Star.

## Silent Auctions.

Japanese auctions are noiseless affairs. In many parts of Japan an odd little booth serves as such a room. The auctioneer holds aloft the object offered for sale in order that all may see it. To the stranger it appears that the object is not desired by anybody, although all seem to examine it closely. Not a word is said by any prospective customer, but a number of them march off to a little box in the corner, wherein they deposit certain little slips. If one's curiosity be aroused by this procedure a Japanese will explain the method of conducting the sale. The bits of paper represent the bids, and when all have been deposited the box is opened, and the highest amount offered buys the article. These noiseless auctions are much patronized by the Japanese.

## The Rich Turkish Beggar.

Beggars are never suppressed in Turkey. The story is told (and they say it is true) about an American lady who by mistake gave a beggar of Constantinople a gold piece. The man had left his post when she returned, but one of his colleagues told her where he "resided." It was a fine house, and at the door was a servant, who politely informed the lady that "my master is dressing." He will be down soon. And then the well groomed beggar, dressed for dinner, appeared and gladly returned the gold piece, exclaiming in the meanwhile that such mistakes were highly embarrassing.

## Remember Benefits Only.

To have a memory for benefits, not for offenses—these are the two pivots on which friendship may rest strong and abiding, friendships which pass to the greatness of noble minds. Be not like those who are more hurt and offended by an unkind word or by a word meant in fun and which escaped, as it were, from a cloister, unlocked for a moment by the tongue—yes, more hurt than they ever were pleased and comforted by a thousand renewed proofs of loving friendship.—Petrarch.

## Kaffir Greeting.

"Saku bona" are the first words a stranger learns of the Kaffir vocabulary. The expression is the common form of salutation used by the natives, and its literal translation is, "I see you." It is considered a mark of respect not to give the greeting immediately, the delay showing the reverence in which the native holds his visitor.

## Accurate.

"See here, landlord," said an angry tenant after he had signed the contract for a year, "this house is full of sewer gas."

"Yes, that's what I told you," "Told me?"

"Yes. You asked me if there was gas in every room, and I said there was."—London Answers.

## ECCENTRIC STEVENSON.

Anecdotes That Show Him in Some of His Many Quaker Moods.

Throughout his life Robert Louis Stevenson was often unreasonable, but this very unreason seems always to have had a quality and a charm of its own, which only endeared Stevenson the more to those who suffered under its caprice. Two anecdotes may serve to show:

A young Church of England parson, who knew him but slightly, was roused one morning about 6 o'clock by a message that Stevenson wanted to see him immediately. Knowing how ill his friend was, he threw on his clothes and rushed into Stevenson's room, only to see a haggard face gazing at him from the bedclothes and to hear an agonized voice say, "For heaven's sake—have you got a Horace?"

Another friend received from Italy a present of some Christmas roses, to which particular associations gave a personal sentiment and value. Stevenson was seeking high and low for some flowers—the occasion, I think, was the birthday of a girl who could never live to see another. He heard of the arrival of these. He came, he stated the paramount necessity of depriving his friend, and he bore the flowers away. The two stories might end here and show Stevenson in rather an unamiable light; their point is that neither of his friends ever dreamed of resenting his conduct or regarding it with other than affectionate amusement.

Often in the evening he would turn into the billiard room, and there his talk might be heard at its best. A fellow visitor has given a spirited and sympathetic description of him in those days and adds: "Once only do I remember seeing him play a game of billiards, and a truly remarkable performance it was. He played with all the fire and dramatic intensity he was apt to put into things. The balls flew wildly about, on or off the table as the case might be, but seldom threatened a pocket or got within hand's breadth of a cannon. 'What a fine thing a game of billiards is,' he remarked to the astonished onlookers, 'once a year or so.'—From Graham Balfour's 'Life of R. L. Stevenson.'"

## Untying the Knots.

There is a marriage custom among the Santals, a tribe in India, by which, after an agreement has been reached between the parents, who usually do the bargaining, the youth's friends, after a short interval, visit the girl and give her a piece of cloth as a sign of betrothal. The money is then paid—this is called "the binding down of the thatch"—and a date for the wedding is fixed. The next step is for each party to tie a knot in a string for each day that is to intervene before the wedding day. Then the parties separate. Day by day a knot is untied, and when the end of the string is reached the real knot is tied that makes the couple one.

## Soldiers in Battle.

Those who have taken part in a battle have confessed that were it not for the shouting and the noise they would lose their nerves and run away. There is always an interval of cowardice in the soldier, but it is quickly overcome, and he fights grimly, unmindful of impending death. Bands were, of course, invented to raise the spirits of soldiers. Martial music, whether from the drum or the bugle, has done a great deal in saving campaigns. Nobody can fight in a cold blooded manner, and in the excitement of a general engagement the most nervous of fighters recover wonderfully.—Exchange.

## Outreasoning Reason.

Little Raymond's mother had told him that she should put him to bed if he disobeyed her command in a certain matter. Temptation overcame him, and when his mother proceeded to fulfill her duty sobs of anguish filled the room.

"But, Raymond," said the mother gently, "I told you I should punish you in this way if you disobeyed, and mother must keep her word, you know."

Between muffled sobs Raymond managed to say, "You needn't break your word, mamma, but couldn't you change your mind?"

## Insect Notes.

The slow flapping of a butterfly's wing produces no sound. When the movements are rapid a noise is produced which increases with the number of vibrations. Thus the housefly, which produces the sound of F, vibrates its wings 21,120 times a minute, or 335 times a second, and the bee, which makes a sound of A, as many as 26,400 times, or 440 times a second. A tired bee hums on E, and therefore, according to theory, vibrates only 380 times a second.

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