

A BIT OF DIPLOMACY

An English Official Who Outwitted a French Admiral.

HOW PERIM ISLAND WAS WON

The Interesting Story That is Told by a White House on the Foreshore of the Arabian Coast at the Southern Entrance to the Red Sea.

On the foreshore of the Arabian coast in the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, at the southern entrance to the Red sea, stands a large white house concerning which the travelers to the far east may hear a curious story. In the middle of the nineteenth century, when M. de Lesseps after many difficulties had successfully floated the Suez Canal company, the governor of the British port of Aden, about 100 miles distant, was surprised one morning by the visit of a French squadron of very unusual size for that part of the orient, which, having encountered a terrific storm off Sokotra, had put in for repairs.

In the mind of the governor curiosity was at once aroused as to the destination of so large a command, a curiosity which increased as he found it impossible to extract any further information from the French admiral or his officers beyond the statement that they were upon an ordinary cruise, an explanation which the former was not the least inclined to believe.

Firm in the belief, therefore, that some political move of great importance was afoot, if not afoot, the governor, in order first of all to gain time, gave orders to go very tortoise-like on the repairs and then set to work to take the Frenchmen off their guard by giving a succession of such entertainments as both his slender means and the awful barrenness of the place would afford.

But, though at the end of two weeks the French and British officers had got upon the best of terms, the immediate destination of the French squadron remained as much of a mystery to the governor of Aden as before, and in spite of all possible delay the repairs were nearly completed.

Now, it happened that the wife of the governor possessed an Irish maid, who had been receiving attentions from one of the French petty officers—attentions which the girl did not regard seriously. It occurred to the governor that by such means something might be learned of his unexpected visitor's plans, and a private conversation between the governor's wife and her maid resulted in another between the latter and her French admirer, by which it was discovered that Perim Island was the objective point.

At this information the governor opened his eyes wide indeed, for, if the Suez canal were cut through, Perim, as commanding the southern entrance to the Red sea, in the middle of the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, would be a place of great strategic importance, over which, without doubt, it was the intention of the French admiral to hoist the tricolor.

Secretly giving orders, therefore, for a gunboat to immediately embark a detachment of soldiers and steal away in the night for Perim Island, the governor then announced a farewell banquet and ball for the day but one following, a final act of courtesy with which the French admiral would willingly have dispensed, for he was anxious to sail, but which he could not well refuse on account of the use he had made of the British supplies and machinery at Aden.

So the dinner and party in due course came off, the governor being in high spirits, because in the meantime he had received the news of the occupation of Perim, which under the circumstances would surely be followed by the longed for promotion, and the French admiral was equally happy, for he hoped on the morrow to add the same important little speck of land to the dominion of his own country, thereby covering his breast with the stars and himself with maritime glory.

Next day, after an interchange of cordial farewells, the French squadron sailed away to an apparently unknown destination, until, when clear of the land, the course was laid full speed direct for Perim Island.

Then what were the dismay and disappointment of the French admiral and his officers when, on coming in sight of their destination, they beheld the British flag flying and a company of soldiers drawn up to give them a proper salute. It is said the French admiral was so mortified at being thus outwitted that he first flung his cocked hat overboard and then followed it himself into the sea.

Be this as it may, as Perim was clearly already occupied by the British, the only counter move which the French could make was to take possession of a strip of the foreshore on the opposite Arabian coast, where they built the fortified white house in question, but as the place was entirely at the mercy of the guns on Perim Island it was shortly abandoned, to remain to this day as a monument of a French admiral's undoing.—Exchange.

In Honor of Minerva. The most notable festival at Athens was in honor of Minerva. All classes of citizens on this particular day marched in procession. The oldest went first, then the young men, then the children, the young women, the matrons and the people of the lower orders. The most prominent object in the parade was a ship propelled by hidden machinery and bearing at its masthead the sacred banner of the goddess.

ABSOLUTE ZERO.

The Freezing Point of Helium Gas is Just Above It.

Although familiar to scientists, it is not generally known that the true zero of heat has been determined. By this absolute zero is meant a temperature which cannot get any colder, which means that no heat whatever exists or can exist at that point. This point is only about 450 degrees below the zero of our ordinary Fahrenheit thermometers or 273 degrees below the zero centigrade. To realize what it signifies a few words must be placed here defining heat itself.

Heat is caused simply by the thousands of little molecules in any body or thing vibrating very fast and thus sending out waves into the ether. When these waves strike any matter they cause that matter to become hot, as we say. Now, the faster these molecules vibrate the more heat is given out and the hotter is the body itself. The slower the molecules the colder the body. So, if a condition could be reached where the molecules did not vibrate at all, there could be no heat, and therefore the body would be absolutely cold. This condition of affairs is reached at the above mentioned number of degrees below our ordinary scales. It is needless to say, however, that this absolute zero of heat has never been attained on this earth, the closest ever reached by man being one degree above it. This is 272 below zero centigrade and is the freezing point of helium gas, which a German professor claims to have frozen at that temperature.

From this theory of heat a peculiar view is obtained of our bodies and articles of matter. We would find, if we had a microscope to see small enough, that every bit of matter at any temperature that we can now get is a seething mass of moving molecules and vibrating particles. One proof of this is when a metal expands on becoming warmer. If we weigh it we find that a hot body weighs no more than the same body cold, yet it gets larger, both longer and broader. To do this it must be composed of moving particles that on becoming excited get farther apart. Another proof is that liquids and gases have been forced through every solid that exists almost. Thus water has been forced through lead, sulphur dioxide through iron, etc. The computed size of these molecules is rather interesting. It is claimed that if a drop of water represented the earth the number of molecules in the drop would be about equal to the number of grains of sand in the earth.—Exchange.

Changing Her Mind. By an unwritten law it is held to be the privilege of woman to change her mind, a license of which she rarely fails to avail herself. The German proverb has it that "women are variable as April weather." According to an old English adage, "A woman's mind the winter winds change oft." In Spain it is much the same; "Women, wind and fortune soon change, and she can laugh and cry both in a wind." The old Latin poet Catullus was of opinion that "what a woman says to her ardent lover ought to be written on the winds or on running water." Even the gallant Sir Phillip Sidney wrote:

He water plows and soweth in the sand
And hopes the flickering wind with net to hold
Who hath his hopes laid on a woman's hand.
—Kansas City Star.

A High Day. "Yassah, I suitingly would do dat job for yo', colonel, and proud o' de chance to extinguish muhse'f. Would borrow right in on it dis minute, sah, if 'twuzn't for one thing" said a certain lopsided colored citizen who was so unafraid of manual labor that he would often fall asleep in its presence. "and dat is, sah, dat I never likes to stigmatize muhse'f by working on a holiday."

"Why, this is not a holiday," returned the would be employer.
"Yassah; 'Tis wld me, if you'll dare skuse me, sah. It's de university o' de day nuth oldest boy was done sent to de penitentiary."—Puck.

Wild Animals in New York City. It is a remarkable fact that there are always more wild animals about than any but the expert has an idea of. For example, there are within twenty miles of New York city fully fifty different kinds—not counting birds, reptiles or fishes—one-quarter of which at least are abundant, or more particularly within the limits of Greater New York there are at least a dozen species of wild beasts, half of which are quite common.—Country Life in America.

Getting Used to 'Em. "I just have heard of the arrival of the third child in the Jones family," remarked the woman. "The announcement of the firstborn was made by beautifully engraved cards tied with tiny white ribbon, the second was by telegraph, and this third one, though a much wished for boy, was made merely by a postal card."—New York Press.

She Could Talk. Cynicus—That girl never says much, does she? Sillicus—Why, she talks all the time. Cynicus—That doesn't alter my contention.—Philadelphia Record.

Doubted the Statistics. "How did Harkins act when he heard he had triplets in his family?" "He could hardly believe his own census."—Boston Transcript.

Our wealth is often a snare to ourselves and always a temptation to others.—Cotton.

CURIOS EPIGRAMS.

Brevity on a Tombstone.—Douglas Jerrold's Suggestion.

Among the 1,300 epitaphs collected by Ernest K. Stilling in "Epitaphia" are many quaint and curious specimens. Grinnald off the stage was said to be a sufferer from melancholia. It will be remembered that, going to a physician on one occasion, he described his case, when the worthy doctor briskly told him to "shake off the feeling. Go and see Grinnald, and if he does not cure you your case is indeed hopeless." "Alas," said the poor sufferer, "I am Grinnald." His epitaph reads "Here Am I."

A prize of £100 is said to have been offered by one Thorpe, who was desirous of being perpetuated but briefly on his tombstone. One competitor sent in "Here Lies Thorpe's Corpse." This was certainly brief enough, but finally it was cut to "Thorpe's Corpse."

Many of our readers know the Douglas Jerrold and Charles Knight story. They were dining together on one occasion when the conversation turned upon epitaphs. Knight half in jest suggested that Jerrold should write his (Knight's) epitaph. The subject dropped at the time; but, walking home together in the evening, they came to a spot where each had to take a separate road. Jerrold, extending his hand to his friend, remarked, "I've thought of a capital epitaph for you." "What is it?" said his friend, much interested. "Oh, very brief and very simple, 'Good Night!'"

There are many curious epitaphs on wives. Here's one from Uiverston, Lancashire:

Here lies my wife,
Here lies she,
Hallelujah!
Hallelujah!

An inscription placed over the grave of a missionary who was accidentally shot in India read thus:
Here lies the Rev. A. B.,
For many years missionary in B. district.
He was accidentally shot by his native servant.
"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

At Chelmsford, Essex, on a stone to the memory of "Mary Blewitt of the Swan" it is stated that she "was the wife of nine husbands successively, but the ninth outlived her." It is added, "The Text to Her Funeral Sermon Was, 'Last of All, the Woman Died Also.'"—Westminster Gazette.

A VERY QUEER BIRD.

The One Young Mark Twain Sprung Upon the Scientists.

Mark Twain's father was an ornithologist. He had several friends who were also enthusiasts on the subject of birds. Whenever any one of them discovered a rare avis it was the custom to have a consultation. Mark had been a witness of several of these bird inquiries and had noted the delight the old men took in discussing a new found specimen. One day it occurred to him to provide the Hannibal ornithologists with a real circus in the form of a bird. He killed a crow and also a barnyard rooster. Plucking out the tail feathers of both the crow and the rooster, he substituted the rooster's tail feathers for those of the crow, producing a unique effect. When he had the specimen nicely prepared he went to his father and, handing it to him, said:

"Here, father, is a very curious bird I shot. I thought you would be interested in it."

The old gentleman gazed upon the specimen with astonishment. That evening the ornithologists of Hannibal were assembled in Mr. Clemens' parlor. The rare specimen was put before them. The discussion was long and learned. The opinions expressed were various. One thought the bird was an offshoot of the bird of paradise family; others had equally ridiculous notions as to its ancestry. But there was one who refused to be swayed by the peculiarity of the bird's tail from the judgment that it was of the crow family.

"Why, just look here," he said, lifting the bird by its tail feathers. He got no further. The feathers came out. There was a quick closing of a door. Mr. Clemens started to leave the room.

"Gentlemen," he said, "please excuse me a few moments. I will see Samuel first and explain later."

The Commons. The "second chamber," or "commons," or "popular assembly," or "house of representatives," as it is variously termed, takes us back to the battle between the Patricians and Plebs in republican Rome. In the language of a very high authority on the subject, "The first real anticipation of a second (popular) chamber, armed with a veto on the proposals of a separate authority and representing a different interest (the interest of the body of the people as opposed to the interest of the hitherto dominant aristocracy), occurs in the Roman tribunate." When the Roman Plebs got their tribunes the very beginning of the modern machinery of the commons or house of representatives was established.—New York American.

Tommy's Defense. Mamma—Tommy, you've been fighting again. Your clothes are torn, and your face is scratched. Why can't you do like your little sister? She never fights. Small Tommy—Well, mamma, it's better to have a good square fight and get all the mad out of you than to carry it in you for months like girls do.—Chicago News.

Mom's the Pity. "Patience—It takes two to make a quarrel, you know. Patrice—And yet I have known quarrels to occur when two persons have been made one."—Yonkers Statesman.

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