THE CONQUEST of CANAAN

By BOOTH TARKINGTON,
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CHAPTER I.

A DRY snow had fallen steadily throughout the still night, so that when a cold, upper wind cleared the sky gloriously in the morning the incongruous Indiana town shone in a white harmony—roof, ledge and earth as evenly covered as by moonlight. There was no thaw. Only where the line of factories followed the big bend of the frozen river, their distant chimneys like exclamation points on a blank page, was there a first threat against the supreme whiteness. The wind passed quickly and on high, the shouting of the school children had ceased at 9 o'clock with pitiful suddenness, no sleigh bell laughed out on the air, and the muffling of the thoroughfares wrought an unaccustomed peace like that of Sunday. This was the phenomenon which afforded the opening of the morning debate of the sages in the wide windows of the National House.

Only such unfortunates as have so far failed to visit Canaan do not know that the National House is on the Main street side of the Courthouse square and has the advantage of being within two minutes' walk of the railroad station, which is in plain sight of the windows, an inestimable benefit to the conversation of the aged men who occupied these windows on this white morning even as they were wont in summer to hold against all comers the cane seated chairs on the pavement outside.

Mail time had come to mean that bright hour when they all got their feet on the brass rod which protected the sills of the two big windows, with the steam radiators sizzling like kettles against the side wall. Mr. Jonas Tabor, who had sold his hardware business magnificently (not magnificently for his nephew, the purchaser) some ten years before, was usually, in spite of the fact that he remained a bachelor at seventy-nine, the last to settle down with the others, though often the first to reach the hotel, which he always entered by a side door, because he did not believe in the treating system. And it was Mr. Eskew Arp, only seventy-five, but already a thoroughly capable cynic, who almost invariably "opened the argument," and it was he who discovered the sinister intention behind the weather of this particular morning.

The malevolence of his voice and manner when he shook his finger at the town beyond the windows and exclaimed, with a bitter laugh, "Look at it!" was no surprise to his companions. "Jest look at it! I tell you the devil is mighty smart! Ha, ha! Mighty smart!"

Through custom it was the duty of Squire Buckalew (justice of the peace in 1859) to be the first to take up Mr. Arp. The others looked to him for it. Therefore he asked sharply:

"What's the devil got to do with snow?"

"Everything to do with it, sir," Mr. Arp retorted. "It's plain as day to anybody with eyes and sense."

"Then I wish you'd p'int it out," said Buckalew, "if you've got either."

"By the Almighty, squire"—Mr. Arp turned in his chair with sudden heat—"if I'd lived as long as you"—

"You have," interrupted the other, stung. "Twelve years ago."

"If I'd lived as long as you," Mr. Arp repeated unwincingly in a louder voice, "and had follered Satan's trail as long as you have and yet couldn't recognize it when I see it I'd git converted and vote Prohibitionist."

"I don't see it," interjected Uncle Joe Davey in his querulous voice. (He was the patriarch of them all.) "I can't find no cloven hoof prints in the snow."

"All over it, sir!" cried the cynic. "All over it! Old Satan loves tricks like this. Here's a town that's jest one squirmin' mass of lies and envy and vice and wickedness and corruption"—

"Hold on!" exclaimed Colonel Flitcroft. "That's a slander upon our hearths and our government. Why, when I was in the council"—

"It wasn't a bit worse then," Mr. Arp returned unreasonably. "Jest you look how the devil fools us. He drops down this here virgin mantle on Canaan and makes it look as good as you pretend you think it is—as good as the Sunday school room of a country church, though that"—he went off on a tangent venomously—"is generally only another whited sepulcher, and the superintendent's mighty apt to have a bottle of whisky hid behind the organ and"—

"Look here, Eskew," said Jonas Tabor, "that's got nothin' to do with"—

"Why ain't it? Answer me!" cried Mr. Arp, continuing without pause: "Why ain't it? Can't you wait till I git through? You listen to me, and when I'm ready I'll listen to"—

"See here," began the colonel, making himself heard over three others, "I want to ask you"—

"No, sir!" Mr. Arp pounded the floor irascibly with his hickory stick. "Don't you ask me anything. How can you tell that I'm not going to answer your question without your asking it till I've got through? You listen first. I say, here's a town of nearly 30,000 inhabitants, every last one of 'em—men, women and children—selfish and cowardly and sinful if you could see their innermost natures; a town of the ugliest and worst built houses in the world and governed by a lot of saloon keepers, though I hope it'll never git down to where the ministers can run it. And the devil comes along and in one night—why, all you got to do is look at it! You'd think we needn't ever trouble to make it better. That's what the devil wants us to do—wants us to rest easy about it and paints it up to look like a heaven of peace and purity and sanctified spirits. Snowfall like this would of made Lot turn the angel out of doors and say that the old home was good enough for him. Gomorrah would of looked like a Puritan village, though I'll bet my last dollar that there was a lot, and a whole lot, that's never been told about Puritan villages. A lot that"—

"What never was?" interrupted Mr. Peter Bradbury, whose granddaughter had lately announced her discovery that the Bradburys were descended from Miles Standish. "What wasn't told about Puritan villages?"

"Can't you wait?" Mr. Arp's accents were those of pain. "Haven't I got any right to present my side of the case? Ain't we restrained enough to allow of free speech here? How can we ever git anywhere in an argument like this unless we let one man talk at a time? How"—

"Go on with your statement," said Uncle Joe Davey impatiently.

Mr. Arp's grievance was increased. "Now, listen to you! How many more interruptions are comin'? I'll listen to the other side, but I've got to state mine first, haven't I? If I don't make my point clear, what's the use of the argument? Argumentation is only the comparison of two sides of a question, and you have to see what the first side is before you can compare it with the other one, don't you? Are you all agreed to that?"

"Yes, yes," said the colonel. "Go ahead. We won't interrupt until you're through."

The "argument" grew heated. Half a dozen tidy quarrels arose. All the sages went at it fiercely except Roger Tabor, who stole quietly away. The aged men were enjoying themselves thoroughly, especially those who quarreled. Naturally the frail bark of the topic which had been launched was whirled about by too many side currents to remain long in sight and soon became derelict, while the intellectual dolphins dove and tumbled in the depths. At the end of twenty minutes Mr. Arp emerged upon the surface, and in his mouth was this:

"Tell me, why ain't the church—why ain't the church and the rest of the believers in a future life lookin' for immortality at the other end of life too? If we're immortal we always have been. Then why don't they ever speculate on what we were before we were born? It's because they're too blame selfish; don't care a flapdoodle about what was. All they want is to go on livin' forever."

Mr. Arp's voice had risen to an acrid triumphancy, when it suddenly faltered, relapsed to a murmur and then to a stricken silence as a tall, fat man of overpowering aspect threw open the outer door near by and crossed the lobby to the clerk's desk. An awe fell upon the sages with this advent. They were hushed and after a movement in their chairs, with a strange effect of huddling, sat disconcerted and attentive, like schoolboys at the entrance of the master.

The personage had a big, fat, pink face and a heavily undershot jaw, what whitish beard he wore following his double chin somewhat after the manner displayed in the portraits of Henry VIII. His eyes, very bright under puffed upper lids, were intolerant and insultingly penetrating despite their small size. Their irritability held a kind of hotness, and yet the personage exuded frost, not of the weather, all about him. You could not imagine man or angel daring to greet this being genially—sooner throw a kiss to Mount Pilatus!

"Mr. Brown," he said, with ponderous hostility, in a bull bass to the clerk—the kind of voice which would have made an express train leave the track and go round the other way—"do you hear me?"

"Oh, yes, judge!" the clerk replied swiftly in tones as unlike those which he used for strange transients as a collector's voice in his ladylove's ear is unlike that which he propels at delinquents.

"Do you see that snow?" asked the personage threateningly.

"Yes, judge." Mr. Brown essayed a placating smile. "Yes, indeed, Judge Pike."

"Has your employer, the manager of this hotel, seen that snow?" pursued the personage, with a gesture of unspeakable solemn menace.

"Yes, sir. I think so. Yes, sir."

"Do you think he fully understands that I am the proprietor of this building?"

"Certain, judge, cer"—

"You will inform him that I do not intend to be discommoded by his negligence as I pass to my offices. Tell him from me that unless he keeps the sidewalks in front of this hotel clear of snow I will cancel his lease. Their present condition is outrageous. Do you understand me? Outrageous! Do you hear?"

"Yes, judge, I do so," answered the clerk, hoarse with respect. "I'll see to it this minute, Judge Pike."

"You had better." The personage turned himself about and began a grim progress toward the door by which he had entered, his eyes fixing themselves angrily upon the conclave at the windows.

He nodded to the only man of substance among them, Jonas Tabor, and shut the door behind him with majestic insult. He was Canaan's millionaire.

Naturally Jonas Tabor was the first to speak. "Judge Pike's lookin' mighty well," he said admiringly.

"Yes, he is," ventured Squire Buckalew, with deference; "mighty well."

"There's a party at the judge's tonight," said Mr. Bradbury—"kind of a ball Mamie Pike's givin' for the young folks. Quite a doin's, I hear."

"That's another thing that's ruining Canaan," Mr. Arp declared morosely—"these entertainments they have nowadays. Spend all the money out of town—band from Indianapolis, chicken salad and darky waiters from Chicago!"

A decrepit hack or two, a couple of old fashioned surreys and a few "cut-unders" drove by from the 10:45 train, bearing the newly arrived and their valises, the hotel omnibus depositing several commercial travelers at the door. A solitary figure came from the station on foot, and when it appeared within fair range of the window, Uncle Joe Davey, who had but hovered on the flanks of the combat, first removed his spectacles and wiped them, as though distrusting the vision they offered him, then, replacing them, scanned anew the approaching figure and uttered a smothered cry.

"My Lord A'mighty," he gasped, "what's this? Look there!"

They looked. A truce came involuntarily, and they sat in paralytic silence as the figure made its stately and sensational progress along Main street.

It was that of a tall gentleman, cheerfully, though somewhat with ennui, enduring his nineteenth winter. His long and slender face he wore smiling, beneath an accurately cut plaster of dark hair cornicing his forehead, a fashion followed by many youths of that year. This perfect bang was shown under a round black hat whose rim was so small as almost not to be there at all, and the head was supported by a waxy white seawall of collar, rising three inches above the blue billows of a puffed cravat, upon which floated a large, hollow pearl. His ulster, sporting a big cape at the shoulders and a tasseled hood over the cape, was of a rough Scotch cloth, patterned in faint gray and white squares the size of baggage checks, and it was so long that the skirts trailed in the snow. His legs were lost in the accurately creased, voluminous garments that were the tailors' canny reaction from the tight trousers with which the 80's had begun—they were in color a palish russet, broadly striped with gray and in size surpassed the milder spirit of fashion so far as they permitted a liberal knee action to take place almost without superficial effort. On his feet glistened long shoes, shaped, save for the heels, like sharp racing shells. These were partially protected by tan colored low gaiters, with flat, shiny, brown buttons. In one hand the youth swung a bone handled walking stick perhaps an inch and a half in diameter; the other carried a yellow leather banjo case, upon the outside of which glittered the embossed silver initials "E. B." He was smoking, but walked with his head up, making use, however, of a gait at that time new to Canaan, a seeming superbly irresponsible lounge, engendering much motion

"My Lord A'mighty," he gasped, "what's this?"

of the shoulders, producing an effect of carelessness combined with independence, an effect which the innocent have been known to hail as an unconscious one.

With everything in sight he deigned to be amused, especially with the old faces in the National House windows. To these he waved his stick with airy graciousness.

"My soul," said Mr. Davey, "it seems to know some of us!"

"Yes," agreed Mr. Arp, his voice recovered, "and I know it. It's Fanny Louden's boy Gene, come home for his Christmas holidays."

"By George, you're right!" cried Flitcroft. "I recognize him now."

"But what's the matter with him?" asked Mr. Bradbury eagerly. "Has he joined some patent medicine troupe?"

"Not a bit," replied Eskew. "He went east to college last fall."

"Do they make the boys wear them clothes?" persisted Bradbury. "Is it some kind of uniform?"

"I don't care what it is," said Jonas Tabor, "if I was Henry Louden I wouldn't let him wear 'em around here."

"Oh, you wouldn't, wouldn't you, Jonas?" Mr. Arp employed the accents of sarcasm. "I'd like to see Henry Louden try to interfere with Gene Bantry. Fanny 'd lock the old fool up in the cellar."

The lofty vision lurched out of view.

"I reckon," said the colonel, leaning forward to see the last of it—"I reckon

It was that of a tall gentleman enduring his nineteenth winter.

Henry Louden's about the saddest case of abused stepfather I ever saw."

"It's his own fault," said Mr. Arp—"twice not havin' sense enough not to marry. Him with a son of his own too!"

"Yes," assented the colonel, "marryin' a widow with a son of her own, and that widow Fanny!"

"Wasn't it just the same with her first husband, Bantry?" Mr. Davey asked, not for information, as he immediately answered himself. "You bet it was! Didn't she always rule the roost? Yes, she did. She made a god of Gene from the day he was born. Bantry's house was run for him, like Louden's is now."

"And look," exclaimed Mr. Arp, with satisfaction, "at the way he's turned out!"

"He ain't turned out at all yet. He's too young," said Buckalew. "Besides, clothes don't make the man."

"Wasn't he smokin' a cigarret!" cried Eskew triumphantly. This was final.

"It's a pity Henry Louden can't do something for his own son," said Mr. Bradbury. "Why don't he send him away to college?"

"Fanny won't let him," chuckled Mr. Arp malevolently. "Takes all their spare change to keep Gene there in style. I don't blame her. Gene certainly acts the fool, but that Joe Louden is the ornerlest boy I ever saw in an ornery world full."

"He always was kind of mischeevous," admitted Buckalew. "I don't think he's mean, though, and it does seem kind of not just right that Joe's father's money—Bantry didn't leave anything to speak of—has to go to keepin' Gene on the fat of the land, with Joe gittin' up at half past 4 to carry papers, and him goin' on nineteen years old."

"It's all he's fit for!" exclaimed Eskew. "He's low down, I tell ye. Ain't it only last week Judge Pike caught him shootin' craps with Pike's nigger driver and some other nigger hired men in the alley back of Pike's barn."

"You ever hear that boy Joe talk politics?" asked Uncle Joe Davey, crossing a cough with a chuckle. "His head's so full of schemes for running this town, and state, too, it's a wonder it don't bust. Henry Louden told me he's see Joe set around and study by the hour how to save $3,000,000 for the state in two years."

"And the best he can do for himself," added Eskew, "is deliverin' the Daily Tocsin on a second hand Star bicycle and gamblin' with niggers and riffraff! None of the nice young folks invite him to their doin's any more."

"That's because he's got so shabby he's quit goin' with 'em," said Buckalew.

"No, it ain't," snapped Mr. Arp. "It's because he's so low down. He's no more 'n a town outcast. There ain't ary one of the girls 'll have a thing to do with him, except that rip-rarin' tomboy next door to Louden's, and the others don't have much to do with her neither, I can tell ye. That Arie Tabor"—

Colonel Flitcroft caught him surreptitiously by the arm. "Sh, Eskew!" he whispered. "Look out what you're sayin'."

"You needn't mind me," Jonas Tabor spoke up crisply. "I washed my hands of all responsibility for Roger's branch of the family long ago. Never was one of 'em had the energy or brains to make a decent livin', beginning with Roger—not one worth his salt. I set Roger's son up in business, and all the return he ever made me was to go into bankruptcy and take to drink, till he died a sot, like his wife did of shame. I done all I could when I handed him over my store, and I never expect to lift a finger for 'em again. Ariel Tabor's my grandniece, but she didn't act like it, and you can say anything you like about her for what I care. The last time I spoke to her was a year and a half ago, and I don't reckon I'll ever trouble to again."

"How was that, Jonas?" quickly inquired Mr. Davey, who, being the eldest of the party, was the most curious. "What happened?"

"She was out in the street, up on that high bicycle of Joe Louden's. He was teachin' her to ride, an' she was settin' on it like a man does. I stopped and told her she wasn't respectable. Sixteen years old, goin' on seventeen!"

"What did she say?"

"Laughed!" said Jonas, his voice becoming louder as the recital of his wrongs renewed their sting in his soul. "Laughed!"

"What did you do?"

"I went up to her and told her she wasn't a decent girl and shook the wheel." Mr. Tabor illustrated by seizing the lapels of Joe Davey and shaking him. "I told her if her grandfather had any spunk she'd git an old fashioned hidin' for behavin' that way. And I shook the wheel again." Here Mr. Tabor, forgetting in the wrath incited by the recollection that he had not to do with an inanimate object, swung the gasping and helpless Mr. Davey rapidly back and forth in his chair. "I shook it good and hard!"

"What did she do then?" asked Peter Bradbury.

"Fell off on me," replied Jonas violently. "On purpose!"

"I wisht she'd killed ye," said Mr. Davey in a choking voice as, released, he sank back in his chair.

"On purpose!" repeated Jonas. "And smashed a straw hat I hadn't had three months! All to pieces! So it couldn't be fixed!"

"And what then?" pursued Bradbury.

"She ran," replied Jonas bitterly—"ran! And Joe Louden—Joe Louden"—He paused and gulped.

"What did he do?" Peter leaned forward in his chair eagerly.

The narrator of the outrage gulped again and opened and shut his mouth before responding.

"He said if I didn't pay for a broken spoke on his wheel he'd have to sue me!"

(To Be Continued.)

Origin of Queer Phrases.

Lord Curzon has been speaking at Oxford of Mr. Kipling as the "poet of Empire." Mr. Kipling has long been known as the "bard of Empire," and, by Mr. Stead, as the "banjo bard of Empire." He will doubtless be proud to be known by either of the first two, with the banjo eliminated. A chance appellation is apt to make a lasting title, and it is always interesting to trace such terms to their source. To do so is sometimes surprisingly difficult. Nobody can say now who first employed the term "whole hogger" in the fiscal controversy, though Lord Rosebery seems to have the best title. There is less doubt as to Lord Hugh Cecil's first proclaiming himself and friends "little piggers." It is never certain that a phrase will catch the ear. Some one predicted that Mr. Chamberlain's description of opponents of the Boer war as "copperheads" would last, but it never entered seriously into competition with "pro-Boer." A deadly term was struck dead in the house of commons shortly after the exposure of the Pigott forgeries. "Pigottism!" "Pigottry!" were the cries raised. Speaker Peel at once banned the expression, and it has not since had a place in the political vocabulary.

We borrow money phrases from America and some from the Colonies. In many cases the American productions are but modifications of old English terms. With the colonial figures of speech it is different. Australia has a slang vocabulary which is as foreign as Russian to the Briton at home. Sir Robert Reid spoke in the Commonwealth parliament of an opponent as a "political smoodger." The term came over to England. It [illegible] unpleasant sound, and [illegible] ful for the political platform [illegible] few people here know [illegible] "Smoodger" is. It is Austr[illegible] a sneak or servile member [illegible] gang upon a squatter's rand[illegible] the same quarter comes "[illegible] a raw hand new from [illegible] World; and there is "ro[illegible] for the gentlemen in caps and [illegible] whom we are advised to e[illegible] our houses in place of maid[illegible] "Sundowner" is the pseudon[illegible] pleasant writer down under, [illegible] been applied to Australians [illegible] ly. Really the term is not [illegible] mentary, for it describes the [illegible] sional tramp who arrives at [illegible] and departs at sunup, with[illegible] ing worked for his bed and b[illegible]

"Boycotting," an expressi[illegible] unfortunately is very much [illegible] again in Ireland just now, [illegible] name, as everybody re[illegible] from the Captain Boycott [illegible] its first victim. The curio[illegible] is that he and the tenants [illegible] whom he had been at war [illegible] the end, to be the best of [illegible] When Ireland was a little too [illegible] for him, he took a trip to L[illegible] and one day strolled into a re[illegible] ant in the Strand. Having [illegible] a snug little dinner, he took [illegible] about him. The gentleman [illegible] eating his meal on the other [illegible] the little table meet his gaze [illegible] two men jumped, looked towa[illegible] door, thought better of it, [illegible] then heartily shook hands [illegible] stranger was Michael Davitt, [illegible] doubtable leader of the [illegible] League, and the man by whom [illegible] captain's rebels were led. F[illegible] after-events had nothing to do [illegible] that meeting. Anyhow, whe[illegible] fierceness of the contest died [illegible] landlord and tenant came to[illegible] and agreed to be the best of f[illegible] and never regretted their b[illegible]

—Obiter Scripta, Farm Ga[illegible]

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