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***The Passing Show***

***A Record of Personal Opinion and Dissent***

With the relief of Mafeking the tale of Boer inefficiency in sieges is complete—Kimberley, Ladysmith, Wepener, Mafeking. The Boers are a warlike people, not a military. Nothing could better mark the distinction than their failure to capture any one of the towns which they invested, and which, with one exception, seemed to have been presented to them by the God of Battles, as a peanut is tossed into the lap of a menagerie bear. It is easy work to lurk among rocks and fire at an uncovered assailant, to construct field fortifications commanding one another, to defend them successively and when driven from one to retire to another by which it is dominated. Any kind of soldier can do that, though it must be said these Afrikaner cattlemen do it uncommonly well. Successful prosecution of siege operations is a very different thing. It taxes to the utmost the highest qualities of the trained intelligence, presenting difficulties which only the educated military engineer can overcome. On the part of the common soldier, also, it demands a discipline not found in any loose aggregation of imperfectly responsible units that may choose to think itself an army because it is but half a mob. Great Britain's superiority lies, not altogether in her numbers and inexhaustible material resources, and not at all in courage and enterprise. In face-to-face trench work either defensive or aggressive, she has an incomparable advantage in the skill of her engineers. If the Boers are to save themselves from capture they must not permit themselves to be cooped up at Johannesburg or Pretoria. Operations which they could not conduct they cannot resist. They are good riflemen, but they wield with a faulty efficiency and erring precision that most formidable of weapons, the spade.

By the way, the relief of Mafeking supplies a striking illustration of how largely political and sentimental considerations enter into military operations. In a purely military sense Mafeking, with its little garrison and hundreds of miles away from the theatre of profitable war, of no strategic value, was not worth relieving. Governed by military considerations alone Lord Roberts would long ago have sent word to Co. Baden Powell to make the best terms he could and surrender. Many a time the soldier in him must have deplored that officer's stubborn courage, entailing so serious a derangement of his plans. Yet no duty was so imperious as relief of Mafeking, and in its accomplishment the British empire feels a keener gratification than it will find in the fall of Pretoria and the collapse of the Boer government. Gentlemen enamored of the horrors of peace will have the goodness to observe that quite a tidy bit of heart manages to get itself injected into the soldier's dreadful trade.

The most effective relief work done in the famine districts of India appears to be done by cholera.

In his hearing before the House Committee on Military Affairs, Secretary Root is reported to have given "strong reasons" why the Adjutant General should be made a Major General. I don't believe that any strong reasons exist for such a change as that, but it is only

fair to the officer in question to admit that under conceivable circumstances one might exist. For example, if he were now a Lieutenant-General.

Through His Susuga, commander Tilley of the Navy, the high chiefs of our new dependency, Tutuila, have expressed their loyal esteem for His Afloga, the President of the United States. Thanks tremendously—in return we beg leave to assure Their Goodthingnesses, the chiefs, of our high (and immediate) consideration.

Of the nearly one hundred “jurors” allowed to the United States in the Paris Exposition only three are women, and the homely darlings of woman suffrage are affected with a pain in consequence. Now, if they will only be accessible to reason they will understand that this is not the fault of Commissioner Peck. He cannot change his spots; his partiality to the Needless Male is inherited from his mother.

Fitzhugh Lee—What are you doing, my little man?

Joseph Wheeler—Preparing my bed, if you please. I am about to retire.

F. L.—That looks like a nice bed; pray what do you call it?

J. W.—A Brigadier-Generalship in the Regular Army!

F. L.—God rest your weary bones. I should not mind having a couch like that myself. What did it cost you?

J. W.—Nothing.

F. L.—What? A beautiful folding bed like that free of charge?

J. W.—You did not say so. Nothing is what I paid. A vacancy is nothing. For this bed I gave up a vacancy in the House of Representatives.

F. L.—Alas, I have not the price.

The thrifty Parisian’s immemorial addiction to the habit of plucking American pigeons is finding its natural consequence in a general scattering of those featherless bipeds from the centre of defledgment, and not only are the nude fowl legging it away from the Capital of Extortion to be skinned in Berlin, boned in Vienna and devoured in Rome, but many in full plumage are going to the extreme length of remaining at home. Outbounders are so scarce on the trans-Atlantic liners that the companies are seriously considering the horrible necessity of reducing the rates of passage to all except those who cannot afford to pay them as they are. Steerage passengers will not be molested. Altogether, it looks as if the American people were having a lucid interval—which may last long enough to make the Paris Exposition the ghastly failure that it deserves to be. A show which an American cannot attend without being robbed, an Englishman without being insulted, or a German without danger of assassination, may advantageously be left to shine in solitude, spectacularly dead.

Industrial discontent is daily discovering new fields of oppression, and enchanting prospects of resentment widen to the view. At Daleton, Ohio, the workmen in a coal mine all went out recently because one of the company’s mules was transferred to another mine despite the protest of a workman who, having formed a Platonic attachment for it, felt it a hardship to renounce the happiness of its companionship and the advantage of its example. At last advices from the “storm-centre” every loyal pitmate whose true heart taught him that

He should study to resist  
With his energetic fist  
Each dictatorial word,

was still out, cheerfully diligent in pummelling his non-union successor. Surely the incident “heralds the dawn of a new era” of fraternity when all shall be equal and happy, with Eugene Debs at the head of a trust and Edwin Markham at the handle of a hoe. If that is not what is understood by “Equality” and “Fraternity” by those who most use the words, I’m a mole and the light lies not upon my path.

“So runs my dream”, but I confess that “full many a glorious morning have I seen” which knew not its noonday of “Fraternity”. For example I once “hailed the dawn of a new era” when all the traffic on a canal was tied up because the skipper of a coal scow had kicked a deck-hand’s dog into the water. It was a false dawn: The new era did not part the gates of opportunity and set up its everlasting reign. The time may have been ripe for its advent, but I have sometimes ventured to doubt the sufficiency of the invitation. For the dog was a retriever.

It is reported hereabout that a syndicate composed largely of high officials of the government connected with Cuban affairs (I don’t know their names) is negotiating for possession of the Isle of Pines. If the gentlemen referred to are those whose brilliant management of the Cuban postal service has added so great a lustre to the administration, their purchase of the sister island will tend to revive its old distinction. It used to be known as the land of pirates.

I meet Dr. Jim McCue, of Marin County, here occasionally. Dr. Jim is seventy years young and has his old-time sharp eye for a good horse and a pretty girl. I’m not in his confidence, but am told if pressed pretty hard he would accept a nomination from either party for the vice presidency or an appointment as United States Marshal in Alaska. So far, I believe, all that he has positively obtained is the administration’s promise to shake him for the drinks.

President M’Kinley—Well, Meinherr, what can we do for each other?

Envoy Fischer—Haf your Egcellenzy not was invorm of vhat I vants?

P. McK.—My secretary of state says you bear a petition for promoting missionary work in Africa, but he is a great diplomat and not always to be believed.

E. F.—Your Egcellenzy, I coom to ask for Amerigon onterventionings bedween der Soud Ofrigon Ropoobligs and der dom Preetish.

P. McK.—Jeewhillikins.

E. F.—Vas?

P. McK.—Did my secretary of state know that? And he let you in?

E. F.—Yaw, your Egcellenzy.

P. McK.—Well, I’ll be gam doodled!—pardon; I mean I’ll be delighted. We call it gam doodled.

E. F.—Yaw, I shbeak der Amerigan longvidge very goot meinsel al der while somedimes yet.

P. McK.—Beautifully.

E. F.—Der Soud Ofrigon Ropoobligs dey soofer demselfs mooch. As your Secretary of Shtate he say, Gread Bridain she don’d do a teeng to us. Sheneral Yowbert—

P. McK.—Zhobair.

E. F.—Yowbert he is die of belly ache again, und Sheneral Cronje gif oop some more, und Sheneral Botha he droonk like a fittler’s—

P. McK.—And President Styne—

E. F.—Stain.

P. Mck.—Larrups the soldiers with a slambangbok.

E. F.—Yaw, yaw, und Bresident Kruger he vas von olt ladies, und der Preetish is aferyvheres, und Vebster Dafis don'd vas wort his monies, und—

P. McK.—“Oond,” in short, you fellows are licked out of your boots.

E. F.—Vas?

P. McK.—I was saying that, in the sympathetic judgment of this country, your admirable people are experiencing an unforeseen adversity.

E. F.—Lort Roperts haf onvaded our sogred soil und he vil nod led go.

P. Mck.—My great and good friend, pardon me, but didn't your people begin that?

E. F.—We haft vice unpology made, but Lort Soolsbry he vil not ocept.

P. McK.—How strange!

E. F.—Ve appeals on der great und goot Yongee heart, vich loves us. It vas vun grand receptions vich der Amerigan beoplesvas gif us under Ny Yark som day!

P. McK.—Yes, it was. I have here a list of names of the Reception Committee, which [enter Secretary Gage] I will read to you. [Reads]:

Kiliaen Van Renssalaer, chairman	E. C. Sheehy,
	H.H. de Vos,
George M. Van Hoesen,	Denis Spellisy,
Alderman M. Kennedy,	William G. Davis,
Thomas L. Feitner,	John J. Rooney,
Edward Van Ness,	Paul F. Hoppe.
John E. Milholland,	T. St. John Gaffney,
E. T. McCrystal,	Patrick Galagher,
George W. Van Siclen,	Alderman M. I. Cahalan,
Professor Adolph Cohen,	Dr. J. N. Bishop,
M. J. Jennings,	J. B. Quininn,
Edward Lauterbach,	Father Thomas J. Ducey,
Coroner Antonio Zucca,	Theodore M. Banta,
Patrick Egan,	D. Moynahan.
John V. L. Pruyn,	

Secretary Gage—Mr. President, may I ask if the list of names was copied from the books of the Commissioner of Immigration at Castle Garden?

P. McK.—O, no; they are names of exponents of American public sentiment. They “received” this honest gentleman.

S. G. [eyeing honest gentleman]—Well, I fancy it would be more blessed to give him than receive.

E. F.—But, your Egcellenzy, shall ve haf der onterventionings already yet? I burn mit ombatience!

P. McK.—[to servant]—The gentleman burns. Put him out.

[Exist Envoy Fischer, pursued]

Voices in Street—Hoch! Hoch! Hurrooo!

Secretary Hay—Ah, glad to see you, gentlemen; punctuality is the politeness of princess. I feared we should have to postpone this Conference.

Secretary Long—Perhaps it would have been better. The newspapers have learned about it. As I entered there were seven hundred and fifty correspondents outside the door!

Secretary Root—The Navy Department is ever liberal in its estimates.

Long—I'll swear there are not fewer than a dozen: you saw them yourself.

Root—Not I. I entered by way of the chimney.

Hay—It is useless to try to conceal our movements; they learn everything.

Long—It is to be hoped they will not learn the purpose of this Conference.

Hay—That will depend on your discretion; mine is unquestionable.

Root—Is the door locked?

Hay—Sure, and the keyhole stuffed. We are absolutely inaccessible to the curiosity of the vulgar.

Long—Blast their tarry—

Hay—Mr. Secretary, I beg that you will not swear. Remember that the President is a pillar of the church.

Root—What church?

Hay [scratching the head of the State Department] —I'm damned if I know. I belong myself to the Church of England.

Long—Let us proceed to business; the crisis waits.

Hay—Gentleman [opening secret draw in table], I have the honor to put before you a [tumult outside and beating of sticks on the door]—What's that?

Root—The Filipinos!—the Filipinos! Where is Corbin?

Long—Sounds like the Democratic party.

Hay—Ah, I forgot; it is the correspondents. I have the honor to put before you, with appropriate glasses, a bottle of pure Kentucky Bourbon fifty-five years old—a gift from Governor Taylor to the President. As the President drinks nothing—

Long—Hoooowat!

Root—Wheeeew!

Hay—He drinks nothing from this bottle. I intercepted it [They drink and repeat. The Conference adjourns. Exeunt omnes.

The Baltidelphia "Tribald"—There was a consultation at the State Department this afternoon among Secretaries Hay, Root and Long, the latter two of whom had been sent for in great haste. Extraordinary precautions to secure secrecy were taken, but it is understood that German aggression in Brazil was discussed, and nothing is more certain that that the next few days will witness grave and startling movements of our warships in both the North and the South Atlantic. Senator Lodge's recent alarming speech on the Navy Appropriation Bill is recalled in connection with the subject, as is also Senator Pettigrew's significant silence. Nor is it forgotten that last week there was a persistent rumor that the government was about to consider the advisability of taking a step of which the importance could be determined only by its character and result.

Bryan—Good morning, Admiral. I am glad to see you look so well after your journey.

Dewey—thank you; you look pretty hearty yourself.

B.—Oh, I'm accustomed to it, as you will learn from my forthcoming book, entitled "Four Years of Utterance."

D.—What! Have you been at it so long? What were you talking about?

B.—My friend, you seem imperfectly to know the political history of our country. Where under the sun have you been all the time?

D.—Sir, did you ever hear of Manila Bay?

B.—Sir, did you ever hear of Sixteen-to-one? [Enter McKinley, reciting a weird incantation, emphasizing each word by a movement of the forefinger directed at his own breast.]

M'Kinley—

Eeny, meeny, miny mo

Cracky, feeny, finy, fo  
Amadoogy, popadoogy,  
Ick, bick, ban, do!

Good! I'm "it"

B.—What in thunder are you doing?

McK.—Solving the problem of the next presidency a la Homer Davenport. The result is gratifying to all true patriots.

B.—Suppose you let me in and try again. The result may be less gratifying to the class you mention—I mean, it may be different.

D.—Well, now that we three statesmen have met—

McK.—Why not say we three Admirals?

B.—Or we three Presidents?

D. [dubiously]—I don't seem to catch on. Well, then, since we three candidates—

B.—Wrong again! You are not a candidate; you are an aspirant.

D.—Is that a higher title?

McK.—Higher than Gilderoy's kite.

B.—Out of sight!

D.—Since we three aspirants—what the Davy Jones was I going to say? May the devil fly away with politics, anyhow. Politics will tangle up the oldest man in the world.

B. [soothingly]—Or the best one: I sometimes get into an awful state myself.

McK.—Yes, in Nebraska.

The Sultan—Your Majesty, would you be so good as to loan a poor fellow the price of a few American missionaries?

The Czar—God forbid! You must be more economical. Do you think I'm made of money?

The S.—But really—

The C.—Yes, yes, I know. Your creditors are pressing you, and all that. And you'll promptly repay the loan—in a Golden Horn. I've heard it before.

The S.—By the toe-nails of the Prophet! if I get not the money, that dog of darkness, the American president, will be after me with a sharp stick; and he'll do, and he'll do, and he'll do! He has already delivered his ultimatum.

The C.—What! Is it so serious as that? My poor friend, I am sorry for you. You are in for it, sure!

The S.—Alla Akbar: ma'sh'allah!

The C.—In American diplomacy the ultimatum is a prophecy doom; you will be talked to death.

The S.—Then lend me the money.

The C.—It is decreed otherwise. Kismet.

The S.—But what am I to do? Talked to death – that is disagreeable.

The C.—Build a mosque in which to pray that Heaven may put it into his heart to send a fleet to Constantinople and commute your punishment to bombardment.

The S.—May jackals whelp in his grandfather's tomb!—that is what he says he will do.

The C.—Build two mosques.