

Captain Brabazon

BY B. M. CROKER

A Military Romance of South Africa

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

"You were in too great a hurry, old man," said Teddy, reprovingly. "Why did you not take your time? You should look before you leap. Why did you not ask?"

"What was there to ask? Had I not seen for myself? And is not seeing believing? I never dreamed that she had another brother; never. In any case you, or any fellow, would have done just the same."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Teddy, slowly, speaking with his eyes meditatively fixed on the ground; "sorry for the money. It's a bad business about that!"

"Money! It's not the money I'm thinking of," returned Miles.

"Oh, if you are thinking of Esme, she'll be all right," rejoined her brother, cheerfully. "Once the mistake is known, and you make the amende honorable, you need not be a bit uneasy about her; it will be all right," which was Teddy's usual way of summing up most questions.

"All right! How very likely!" returned his cousin, sarcastically. "She will never speak to me again as long as she lives, never! Do you not understand that we were within one day and a half of being married, that the guests were bidden, the dresses and everything in the house, all there but the bridegroom? I was, as I always am when I'm in a rage, mad. I never stopped to breathe, much less to reflect or think; all I wanted to do was to put the seas between us."

"Have you had any letters?"

"Not one line since I came out. You are the first who has opened my eyes to the awful mistake I have made."

"I hope, Miles," said Teddy, humbly, "that you won't hate the very sight of me, for I was the cause—innocently enough, but still the cause—of the whole catastrophe."

"No, no. Why should I? It was not your fault, it was no one's fault, it was just sheer bad luck. What evil spirit induced me to go to Portsmouth that day of all others?" he demanded passionately.

"It is all chance," returned Teddy. "Do you know that once you were actually within a hair of finding it out? It all turned upon such a little thing as the striking of a match! It did indeed. I don't know if you remember the last night you were at Baronsford in August. Well, I was there, too, prowling about the bushes on chance of seeing Esme. She came running out about nine o'clock."

"I now remember it perfectly," interrupted Miles, hastily. "I suppose everyone within twenty miles of Baronsford thinks me the most finished and complete scoundrel, and, goodness knows, I cannot blame them. Appearances are frightful against me. I think the best thing you can do for me, Teddy," with a grim smile, "is to blow my brains out quite accidentally."

"Stuff and nonsense! If it is Esme you are so much afraid of, I can tell you that you need not be uneasy; she will marry you all the same."

"Even if she would—which I am sure she wouldn't—how could I marry with scarcely anything besides my pay?"

"Pooh! That's easily answered. Esme has never been brought up to luxuries. She'll make a grand poor man's wife. Why, she used to turn my ties and patch my coats."

"Yes, all very well for her to do those things for her brother, but I'm different. Why should I bring her to poverty? What right have I to ask her to share my pittance?" Mrs. Brabazon would never listen to it.

"Mrs. B. be bothered!" interpolated Teddy, rudely; "who cares for her?"

"And she will marry some rich swell. A pretty girl like her, a face like hers, will have dozens of suitors; and, of course, she will marry one of them, and I can't blame her."

"Not she!" returned Teddy, stoutly, "and I'll tell you the reason, old fellow," taking his cousin literally by the button of his red- serge coat. "She won't look at a duke, if she's the girl I take her to be, and I ought to know her pretty well, because—smiling and pausing for a moment."

"Yes," with feverish eagerness. "Because she likes you. Can't you grasp that?"

It was about the only pleasant fact that had been placed before him this morning, and he seized it with avidity. And he did grasp it most gratefully.

"Of course, the loss of the money is a bore," said Teddy; "but I think you and Esme would have fancied one another, anyhow, without that. Old George Brabazon was certainly touched in the top story, leaving the reversion after six months to this perfectly unnecessary native college in Calcutta. I think we all are a little queer—Uncle Sandy, Uncle George, Aunt Jane, myself—and you, with your rushing out here at three days' notice, have certainly qualified for being called 'eccentric.' Hello! there's the breakfast bugle, and I must be off. Cheer up, old man! it will be all right, you'll see."

"Captain Brabazon, sir," said a rich Milesian accent, breathlessly; "Mr. Mitchell's compliments, and would ye oblige him with the kind of a tin of cocoa?"

"Yes, yes, certainly!" impatiently; "go to White."

"Time for us to be moving, too, to our morning meal; there's not much to set before you, Teddy, but cold stew and black coffee, our rations being of the least luxurious description."

"I'm not particular about quality as long as I have quantity, and I fancy you are even better off for grub than we are. You're sure you don't hate the sight of me, Miles?" he added diffidently, as they once more came near the tents.

as they were yesterday. I might get on the staff. I might have some luck out here; and, if Esme will only forgive me, if I thought there was any chance of that, I would be all right."

It would not be necessary to describe the condition of Miles Brabazon's mind at this period, unless the term "changeable" from fair to stormy might be applied to it. At one time he was buoyed up with hopes that rested on Teddy's assurance that Esme was a girl to stick to a fellow through thick and thin, and that of course it would be "all right;" but these gleams of sunshine were but rare—generally he was plunged into an abyss of despair. To find that he had thrown away a wife and fortune entirely through a case of mistaken identity, from ignorance of a somewhat transparent family secret, was a maddening reflection. He hated to speculate on "what might have been." He wrote to Esme, of course, and also to Mrs. Brabazon, and he counted the very days until the answers would come. He thought with a sinking heart of the meager balance at his banker's. Two hundred and fifty pounds a year, besides his pay, was the very most he could scrape together. Ample hitherto for himself and his modest wants, but for Esme it would be beggary. And now his mind sometimes dwelt for a very long time with the most poignant, bitter regret, on the lost forty thousand pounds.

CHAPTER XVI.

"What has happened now? whence this beaming face and these seraphic smiles?" inquired Gussie, raising her eyes lazily from her book, as her sister entered the room.

"I've just had a letter from Miles," replied Esme, hastily advancing with an air of bashful elation; "such a nice letter!"

"Oh, is that it?" rejoined Miss Brabazon, in a very wintry tone of voice. "And pray what has he got to say for himself?"

"Oh, of course he is in dreadful state of mind. I believe it is really worse for him now than it ever was for me," leniently.

"I should hope so," with a little, angry sniff. "I should humbly trust that he was pretty thoroughly ashamed of himself and his insane and idiotic behavior. You got out of the business better than could have been expected, thanks to Mrs. B.'s presence of mind and talent for invention; assuring everyone that at the very last minute Miles had been compelled to go on foreign service!"

"That only passed with outsiders," said Esme, shaking her head; "of course all the servants and the villagers and the Bells knew; and the way people used to stop on the road and look after me, or whisper together and point, was too dreadful!"

"The little trip you took with Aunt Jane smoothed over matters; that and Mrs. B.'s courageous fabrications; so don't be ungrateful."

"Yes," dubiously; "in a kind of way; but still I am always fancying that people are staring at me and talking about me."

"Nonsense, my dear. Your affair is forgotten long ago; you are not of such importance as you imagine; it was only a nine days' wonder."

"Yes, I dare say you are right, Gussie; people have had heaps of other things to think about. Ah!" now drawing a long sigh of relief, "of course it does not matter, as it's all right."

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Augusta, sharply, turning half round in her chair, and surveying her sister critically.

"I mean that the wedding dress, locked away upstairs, will be worn, after all, when he comes home," said Esme shyly. "To this remark there was no answer for at least a minute, and then Gussie said very decidedly:

"Esme, you must be mad; you would not think of marrying him now?" speaking as it were in capital letters.

"And pray, why not?" regarding her sister with angry blushes.

"He did not say anything about it in his letter, did he?" apprehensively.

"There was no occasion; we are as much engaged as before; there is no change."

"No change! Oh, dear, no—certainly not, by no means!" sarcastically. "What are you going to live upon, you goose? Your money is being turned into bricks and mortar at the other side of the globe, and Miles is a genteel pauper, who will find quite enough to do to keep himself, much less you, and your excellent appetite," with homely candor.

"But—hesitatingly—"but, Gussie, I have some money."

"Not a penny unless you marry to please Mrs. B., and she hates Miles like poison."

"I think you are very unkind to say all these horrid things," returned Esme indignantly and with a suspicion of tears in her voice. "This is not the way I take your good news, when you have any; and you always pretended to like Miles so much."

"So I do, my sweet, silly sister, as a cousin, but not as a brother-in-law. Just sit down here," giving a chair a little push, "and listen, for a few minutes, to sound common sense. When Miles was an eligible parti, you would not marry him; your accepting him at all was simply because you saw him do a plucky thing at Sandborough, and carried off your feet by the emotion of the moment, you said yes; and then the wedding was hurried on, and the dresses and presents were such delicious novelties you had not the heart to go back! But you were never one bit in love with him; you would rather have Teddy's little finger than fifty Mileses."

ple," expressively, "you imagine that we—that I—don't care for him. I do—very much."

"Fiddle-de-dee, fiddle-de-dee. I was not talking of love, I was talking of sense—my strong point, you will please to remember! This time next year, my beautiful, impulsive sister, I shall have you up to London, and marry you to some very nice, rich and, if you are very good, titled young man! Think of that!"

"Marry anyone you like yourself, my dear Gussie; but, as far as I am concerned, I shall never marry anyone but Miles—never!"

"And yet, in this very room, and not so very long ago, you raved and stamped and all but tore your hair out, and declared that, dragged to the foot of the altar you might be, but become his bride—never! And—ah! I see you remember the episode—I have just one little question to ask, and only one. Supposing now, for the sake of argument, that he won't marry you—what then?"

Ah! this was a phase of the matter that Esme had never contemplated; but, although she made prompt and cheerful answer to herself to her sister's query, she vouchsafed no reply, beyond what might be called a superior smile, and loud and triumphant poking of a most offensive fire.

Gussie's allusion to Mrs. Brabazon was timely, Esme well knew. That lady had always been antagonistic to her nephew when he was a moneyed man, and was not likely to be any fonder of a church mouse, that he was as poor as a church mouse. Quite lately she had weakened to a due appreciation of the unusual personal gifts of her younger step-daughter, and thorough understanding of her marketable value—a coronet! Esme's visit to Brighton, her appearance at all the winter country balls, had given her quite a reputation, and a certain young honorable, the eldest son of Lord Mangel-Wurzie, was constantly finding his way over to Baronsford. He was received by Gussie with open arms, by Esme with smiles, for he had been one of what Mrs. Brabazon would have called Teddy's "boon" companions. He was a pleasant, ruddy faced young gentleman, with a cheery voice, frank, unaffected manners, and was really very much enamored of the beautiful Miss Brabazon. Of course he heard that she had been engaged to her cousin, but it was all broken off months ago, and "the dear girl had never really cared about him; it was a family business," so Mrs. Brabazon had whispered confidentially to Lady Mangel-Wurzie, and she looked forward to a double wedding before long, for Gussie had accepted her long-suffering Freddy, who had come in for another fortune, and already, as she remarked complacently, "the presents had been both numerous and costly." Now here was this odious, tiresome Miles Brabazon coming to the surface again, and writing Mrs. Brabazon a long letter from some outlandish camp in South Africa. What was to be done with him? What a worry and affliction he had been from first to last. "What a good thing it would be if the Boers were to kill him," thought his amiable lady. Should she answer his letter, or not? After some very grave reflection she decided that she would reply, and by the next mail, in a friendly spirit, giving him largely of her forgiveness and sympathy; but appealing to him, forcibly, to release Esme from her present ridiculous engagement. The epistle took some time to put together, and as she was sitting biting the end of her pen in the throes of composition, Esme came into the room with her hat on, and said she was going to the village with the post-boy.

"I am not quite ready yet; but in ten minutes' time I shall have finished. I am writing a rather difficult letter to Miles."

"Yes," returned Esme, coloring, and looking at her interrogatively.

"Of course I forgive him freely; but the engagement must not be talked of just at present; as matters are it would be too imprudent. You see, my dear, although he is very nice himself, he has nothing to marry on now."

"But we can wait, Mrs. Brabazon."

"Ah, yes, you are only twenty; you have written to him, too?"

"Yes," holding up a letter.

"Oh, dear me! you might have inclosed mine and saved me sixpence; it is not stamped, though, I see."

"Not yet; I'm taking it to the post."

"Then give it to me, it can go in mine; there is plenty of room in my envelope, and I have a stamp."

Esme handed it over with a little reluctance. She would have liked to have posted it herself; but she did not one moment doubt her stepmother's honesty of purpose, and was firmly convinced, ten minutes later, as she walked down to the village with elastic, springing steps, that she was carrying it over the first stage of its long, long journey, and that in five weeks it would be in Miles' own hands.

Deluded young damsel! The instant she had left the room Mrs. Brabazon had taken up her epistle, had turned it over meditatively, and said to herself: "This billet doux will encourage him, and that would be fatal to all our hopes; probably she is telling him she will wait for him for years;" smiling contemptuously. "No, no, we cannot have any of that kind of nonsense;" so this right-minded, honorable lady deliberately walked over to the fire, poked an open place among the coals, into which she carefully dropped the missive; for a second it lay, seemingly staring at her like some living thing, with its clear address confronting her thus:

"Captain Brabazon,
"2d Battalion, Royal Marchers,
"With the army in the field,
"South Africa."

Then it became a delicate biscuit color, then it curled at the edges and suddenly shot up in a bright flame, and in another moment a few black fragments, lazily sailing up the chimney, were all that remained of Miss Esme Brabazon's foreign letter.

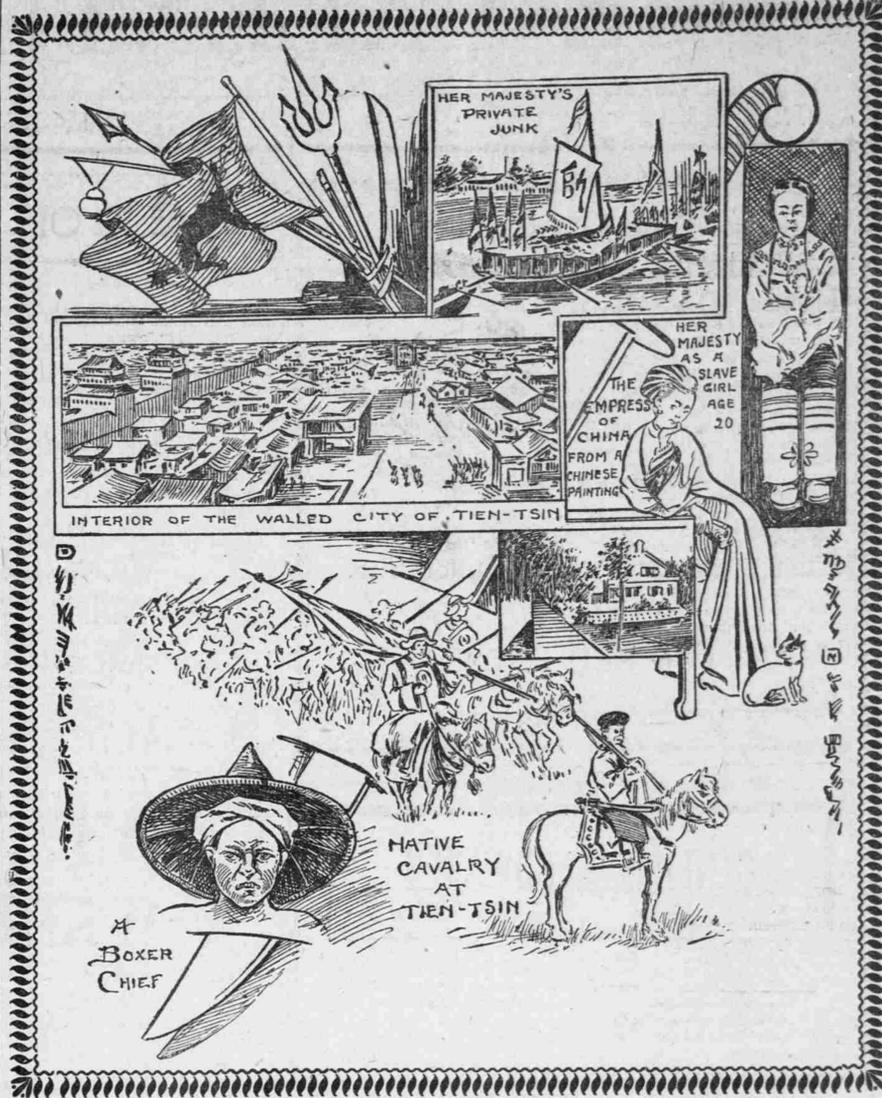
(To be continued.)

Mascagni, as director of the conservatory at Pesaro, the heir of Rossini wants the Italian Parliament to pass a law exempting the "Barber of Seville," the copyright of which has expired, from the operation of the copyright law.

Hearing that the little son of one of her tradesmen was suffering from a needle imbedded in one of his arms, Queen Victoria sent her sympathy and a book of anatomy.

Near the Caspian Sea there are several "eternal fires," so called by the natives, where natural gas issues from the ground, and has been on fire for ages.

SCENES AND CHARACTERS IN CHINESE WAR.



LISCUM AND DAVIS KILLED.

Colonel of Ninth Infantry and Captain of Marines Fall at Tien-tsin.

The Navy Department Monday morning received official confirmation from Admiral Remey of the reverse of the allied forces at Tien-tsin on the morning of the 13th. The dispatch is dated Chefoo, and says:

"Reported that allied forces attacked native city the morning of the 13th. Russians were on the right, with Ninth Infantry and marines on the left. Losses allied forces large. Russian 100, including artillery colonel, Americans fifty-eight, including colonel, French twenty-five. Col. Liscum, Ninth Infantry, killed; also Capt. Davis, marine corps; Capt. Vemley, Lieuts. Butler and Leonard

wounded. At 7 evening allied attack on native city was repulsed, with great loss. Returns yet incomplete. Details not yet confirmed. REMEY."



COLONEL E. H. LISCUM.

Colonel of Ninth Infantry and Captain of Marines Fall at Tien-tsin.



UNITED STATES MINISTER CONGER, WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

REVENGE IS THE CRY OF EUROPE.

Fate of Foreigners in Peking Stirs War Spirit in England.

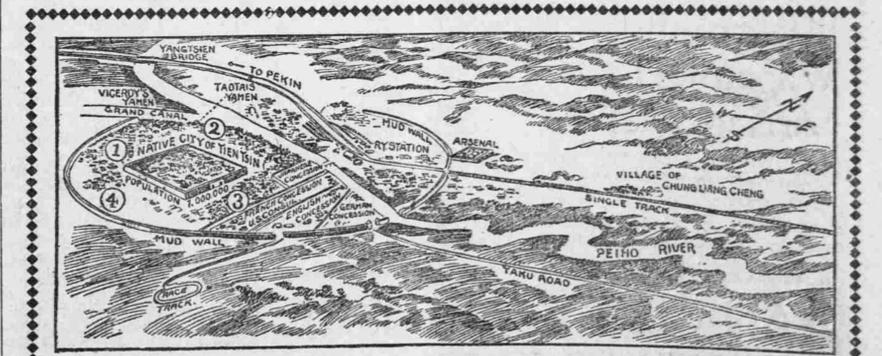
"Revenge to-day, mourning to-morrow," is practically the universal cry of Europe, but it is sorrowfully admitted that there can be no revenge to-day, nor, perhaps, for many to-morrows, for the incredible barbarities that are reported to have marked the last scenes within the legations at Peking. Nothing is clearer, a London dispatch says, than that the anti-foreign conflagration is rapidly permeating even hitherto quiescent provinces, and the fate of the capital appears to threaten other towns like Tien-tsin, Chefoo and even Shanghai. The defeat of the allied forces at Tien-tsin seems to place that town in desperate straits, and if retreat to Taku is necessitated observers consider that it will be likely to decide the policy of wavering viceroys.

SPREAD OF THE REBELLION.

Boxer Uprising Has Taken Hold of Points in Southern China.

A dispatch from Chefoo says: "Prince Tuan has mobilized 950,000 men, divided into different corps. The northern corps has been ordered to expel foreigners from Amur. The Peking army is divided into four corps, the first of which is to operate against Mukden and occupy the roads between Peking and Shan-Hai-Kuan; the second is to concentrate at Tien-tsin and the third at Peking, whence a column numbering 40,000 will be sent to Wei-Hai-Wei and Tsin-Tau, while the fourth corps will concentrate at Nankin. There are now 23,000 Japanese troops in China.

The rebellion has taken hold of southern China. The foreigners at Chu-Chau and In-Chau have been attacked and are fleeing panic-stricken.



MAP SHOWING THE PLAN OF BATTLE AT TIEN-TSIN.

(1) Direction of attack by American, British, Japanese and French troops. (2) Point to which Americans retired. (3) Direction of Russian attack. (4) Chinese position reported captured July 9 by the allies.

WAR AGAINST RUSSIA.

China's Hostile Acts Considered Tantalizing to a Declaration.

China's acts of hostility in Manchuria are considered tantamount to a declaration of war against Russia. The Chinese seized a Russian transport boat laden with munitions near Aigun, on the River Amur, killed almost the entire Russian escort and next made a sudden attack upon Biagoveschensk, bombarding the town. The garrison held out bravely, but were overwhelmed.

A dispatch from Nankin announces that Prince Tuan has ordered a great military movement, owing to the appearance of the Japanese in China. The viceroy of Nankin has informed the foreign consuls there that he cannot be answerable for events in Chao-Sin, Ning-Po and Chu-Chau. The foreigners are fleeing to Shanghai. The position is alarming. Sixteen foreigners have arrived at Nankin from Ning-Po, where the houses of foreigners have been burned and missionaries horribly maltreated.