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Pen and Picture Pointers

HOLIDAY shopping is over now, and the merchants can look about and reach some definite conclusion as to what it did for their year's business total. It is certain that in Omaha it did a great deal: The scene shown in the picture on the front page of this number is but a typical view down one of the streets on which the retail stores of the city are located. For weeks before Christmas this view was to be observed any afternoon, not only on this particular street, but on any one of the number along which the retail stores are found. Inside the shops were as busy as the streets were crowded outside. No record is kept of how much was bought, but all business men agree that the volume of business was fully up to their expectations, and most of them say they could not have taken care of any more customers if they had come in.

It is not alone in shopping that the holidays bring activity, but in the broader sense of the Christmas spirit there is an uplift. One manifestation of this is in the preparations to afford Christmas cheer to those who would otherwise have none. This work was undertaken during the late Christmas season by the Salvation Army, which organized its efforts to the end that a splendid feast was prepared for a great many poor families who would otherwise have had nothing beyond their scanty daily fare. A store room was secured by the officers of the local Army, where the contributions were gathered, and where provisions were made up into baskets, each containing articles sufficient for a bountiful dinner and there distributed to the needy, who were searched out in every quarter, so that all might be cared for.

Another feature of the season in Omaha was a distribution of candy at the city hall by the candy men of the city council. Aldermen O'Brien and Dyball made a little bluff one day about giving the girls employed in the city offices a treat on Christmas, and on the meeting night before the holiday the council passed a resolution directing this pair to make good on their talk, and furnish each girl employed at the city hall with a box of high grade candy. The terms of the resolution were duly carried out, the two aldermen appearing with their packages put up in the highest style of the confectioner's art. City Clerk Elbourn, by reason of his connection with the council, constituted himself an ex-officio master of ceremonies for the occasion, and saw to it that the distribution was fairly made, and that the party was properly grouped for the purpose of giving The Bee staff artist an opportunity of immortalizing the event by making a picture of it. It will be observed that Mr. O'Brien looks as if he liked it, while Mr. Dyball seems to take it far more seriously than any of the girls present.

One other thing the holidays bring to the front is the basket ball team. This game has become an established feature of school and amateur athletics all over the country, and especially in the public schools. It has the advantage that girls can play it as well as boys, and the teams that organize each year to carry on the game are as frequently made up of the one sex as of the other. One of the Nebraska schools that has a team it is proud of is the Central City High school, which has made a good record in its section of the country.

Little Side Lights

In the public eye—dust.
The comet is a famous tall-bearer.
The brassy milliner has to trim her sales.
Sir Lipton wouldn't refuse to "take a cup o' kindness yet."
Night falls and day rises, for day is the lighter.
It is easier to head a bill than it is to foot it.
Don't put too much faith in blood. It is a vain thing.
Don't judge a bathing suit until you see what's in it.
Poets are usually "short," but there was Longfellow.
There may be no trees on the beach, but there are lots of beech trees.
Throw shoes at a cat, but simply say "Shoo!" to a fly.
A fractious horse, unlike a bad egg, can sometimes be whipped into shape.
The dentist's apprentice is not always benefited by a talent for drawing.
The astronomer sometimes sits in the bald-headed row to do his star-gazing.—Philadelphia Bulletin.



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WAR was over. The Germans occupied France. The country was panting like a wrestler lying under the knee of his successful opponent.

The first trains from Paris, after the city's long agony of famine and despair, were making their way to the new frontiers, slowly passing through the ravaged districts and the villages. The passengers gazed through the windows at the ravaged fields and burned hamlets. Prussian soldiers, in their black helmets with brass spikes, were smoking their pipes on horseback or sitting on chairs in front of the houses which were still left standing. Others were working or talking just as if they were members of the families. As you passed through the different towns you saw entire regiments drilling in the squares, and, in spite of the rattle of the carriage wheels, you could every moment hear the hoarse words of command.

M. Dubuis, who during the entire siege had served as one of the National Guard in Paris, was going to join his wife and daughter, whom he had prudently sent away to Switzerland before the invasion.

Famine and hardship had not diminished the big paunch so characteristic of the rich, peace-loving merchant. He had gone through the terrible events of the last year with sorrowful resignation and bitter complaints at the savagery of men. Now that he was journeying to the frontier at the close of the war, he saw the Prussians for the first time, although he had done his duty at the ramparts and staunchly mounted guard on cold nights.

He stared with mingled fear and anger at those bearded, armed men installed all over French soil as if in their own homes, and he felt in his soul a kind of fever of impotent patriotism even while he yielded to that other instinct of discretion and self-preservation which never leaves us. In the same compartment two Englishmen who had come to the country as sight-seers were gazing around with looks of stolid curiosity. They were both stout also and kept chatting in their own language, sometimes referring to their guide book and reading in loud tones the names of the places indicated.

Suddenly the train stopped at a little village station and a Prussian officer jumped up with a great clatter of his saber on the double footboard of the railway carriage. He was tall, wore a tight-fitting uniform and his face had a very shaggy aspect. His red hair seemed to be on fire and his long mustache and beard, of a paler color, was stuck out on both sides of his face, which it seemed to cut in two.

The Englishmen at once began staring at him with smiles of newly awakened interest, while M. Dubuis made a show of reading a newspaper. He sat crouched in a corner, like a thief in the presence of a gendarme.

The train started again. The Englishmen went on chatting, and looking out for the exact scene of different battles; and, all of a sudden, as one of them stretched out his arm toward the horizon to indicate a village, the Prussian officer remarked in French, extending his long legs and loling backward:

"We killed a dozen Frenchmen in that village, and took more than a hundred prisoners."

The Englishmen, quite interested, immediately asked:

"Ha! and what is the name of this village?"

The Prussian replied:

"Pharsbourg."

He added: "We caught these French blackguards by the ears."

And he glanced toward M. Dubuis, laughing into his mustache in an insulting fashion.

The train rolled on, always passing through hamlets occupied by the victorious

The Duel

army. Germany soldiers could be seen along the roads, on the edges of fields, standing in front of gates or chatting outside cafes. They covered the soil like African locusts.

The officer said, with a wave of his hand:

"If I were in command I'd take Paris, burn everything and kill everybody. No more France!"

The Englishmen, through politeness, replied simply:

"Ah! yes."

He went on:

"In twenty years, all Europe, all of it, will belong to us. Prussia is more than a match for all of them."

The Englishmen, getting uneasy, said nothing in answer to this. Their faces, which had become impassive, seemed made of wax behind their long whiskers. Then the Prussian officer began to laugh. And then, lolling back, he began to sneer. He sneered at the downfall of France, insulted the prostrate enemy; he sneered at Austria, which had been recently conquered; he sneered at the furious but fruitless defense of the departments; he sneered at the Garde Mobile and at the useless artillery. He announced that Bismarck was going to build a city of iron with the captured cannons. And suddenly he pushed his boots against the thigh of M. Dubuis, who turned his eyes away, reddening to the roots of his hair.

The Englishmen seemed to have assumed an air of complete indifference, as if they had found themselves all at once shut up in their own island, far from the din of the world.

The officer took out his pipe and, looking fixedly at the Frenchman, said:

"You haven't got any tobacco—have you?"

M. Dubuis replied:

"No, monsieur."

The German said:

"You might go and buy some for me when the train stops next."

And he began laughing afresh, as he added:

"I'll let you have the price of a drink."

The train whistled and slackened its pace. They had reached a station which had been burned down and here there was a regular stop.

The German opened the carriage door, and, catching M. Dubuis by the arm, said:

"Go, and do what I told you—quick, quick!"

A Prussian detachment occupied the station. Other soldiers were looking on from behind wooden gratings. The engine was already getting up steam in order to start off again. Then M. Dubuis hurriedly jumped on the platform, and, in spite of the warnings of the station master, dashed into the adjoining compartment.

He was alone! He tore open his waistcoat, so rapidly did his heart beat, and, panting for breath, he wiped the perspiration off his forehead.

The train drew up at another station. And suddenly the officer appeared at the carriage door, and jumped in, followed close behind by the two Englishmen, who were impelled by curiosity. The German sat facing the Frenchman, and, laughing still, said:

"You did not want to do what I asked you."

M. Dubuis replied: "No, monsieur."

The train had just left the station, when the officer said:

"I'll cut off your mustache to fill my pipe with." And he put out his hand toward the Frenchman's face.

The Englishmen kept staring in the same impassive fashion with fixed glances. Already the German had caught hold of the mustache and was tugging at it, when M. Dubuis with a back stroke of his hand threw back the officer's arm, and, seizing him by the collar, flung him down on the seat.

Then, excited to a pitch of fury, with his temples swollen and his eyes glaring, he kept throttling the officer with one hand while, with the other clenched, he began to strike him violent blows in the face. The Prussian struggled, tried to draw his saber, and to get a grip, while lying back, of his adversary. But M. Dubuis crushed him with the enormous weight of his stomach, and kept hitting

him without taking breath or knowing where his blows fell. Blood flowed down the face of the German, who, choking and with a rattling in his throat, spat forth his broken teeth, and vainly strove to shake off this infuriated man who was killing him.

The Englishmen had got on their feet and came closer in order to see better. They remained standing, full of mirth and curiosity, ready to bet for or against each of the combatants.

And suddenly M. Dubuis, exhausted by his violent efforts, went and resumed his seat without uttering a word.

The Prussian did not attack him, for the savage assault had scared and terrified the officer. When he was able to breathe freely, he said:

"Unless you give me satisfaction with pistols, I will kill you."

M. Dubuis replied:

"Whenever you like. I'm quite ready."

The German said:

"Here is the town of Strasbourg. I'll get two officers to be my seconds, and there will be time before the train leaves the station."

M. Dubuis, who was puffing as much as the engine, said to the Englishmen:

"Will you be my seconds?" They both answered together:

"Oh! yes."

And the train stopped.

In a minute the Prussian had found two comrades who carried pistols and they made their way toward the ramparts.

The Englishmen were continually looking at their watches, shuffling their feet and hurrying on with the preparations, uneasy lest they should be too late for the train.

M. Dubuis had never fired a pistol in his life. They made him stand twenty paces away from his enemy. He was asked:

"Are you ready?"

While he was answering "Yes, monsieur," he noticed that one of the Englishmen had opened his umbrella in order to keep off the rays of the sun.

A voice gave the word of command.

"Fire!"

M. Dubuis fired at random without minding what he was doing, and he was amazed to see the Prussian staggering in front of him, lifting up his arms and immediately afterward falling straight on his face. He had killed the officer.

One of the Englishmen ejaculated "Ah!" quivering with delight, satisfied curiosity and joyous impatience. The other, who still kept his watch in his hand, seized M. Dubuis' arm and hurried him in double-quick time toward the station, his fellow countryman counting their steps, with his arms pressed close to his sides: "One! two! one! two!"

And all three marching abreast they rapidly made their way to the station like three grotesque figures in a comic newspaper.

The train was on the point of starting. They sprang into their carriage. Then the Englishmen, taking off their traveling caps, waved them three times over their heads, exclaiming:

"Hip! hip! hip! hurrah!"

Then gravely, one after the other, they stretched out their right hands to M. Dubuis, and then went back and sat in their own corner.—Selected from the First Edition in English of the works of Guy de Maupassant, published by M. Walter Dunne, New York.

Magnetized Steel

Chemists, hydrographers and electricians used to think that stories of water that magnetized steel objects dipped in it were fanciful, but it is found out that they are wrong. There are three fountains in Indiana that magnetize needles, scissors, knife blades and other steel objects immersed in their waters. The first is a spring at Cartersburg, the second a driven well at Lebanon and the third a driven well at Fort Wayne. The waters contain a large proportion of carbonic acid, which is disengaged on exposure to the air. As this gas escapes a heavy precipitate of oxide of iron forms, and when all the gas has disappeared no more magnetism manifests itself. The waters deviate the compass needle, and that of one of the wells used in locomotive boilers has been found to be corrosive and rapidly injurious to those receptacles. When allowed to remain in a reservoir for some time, however, this property of it disappears and it is non-corrosive, as other waters.—New York Tribune.