The World

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ABOLISH THE KINDLING.

There seems to be no end to the secondary causes of the massacre at Chicago. A careless arrangement of lights, worthless fire extinguishers, lack of fire alarm connections, a cheap and flimsy "asbestos" curtain, improperly hung, an interfering wire which nobody had sense enough to detach, locked exit doors, stupid ushers and an insane floor plan, under which the aisles led against a blank wall, all helped to turn a trivial accident into a slaughter.

But all these things, as The Evening World has said from the very beginning, are only incidental. They must not be allowed to divert attention from the underlying cause—the thing that threatens every theatrical audience in America. That cause is the deliberate invitation to disaster through the accumulation of fuel on the stage.

Let a fire once gain headway, and the chances are 10 to 1 that it will find a weak point somewhere in the arrangements for fighting it. There may not be as many weak points as at the Iroquois, where nothing that could aggravate a calamity seems to have been omitted, but one will be enough. The only safety lies in preventing the fire from starting.

Almost every great theatrical disaster of the past century has been due to inflammable scenery. The despatches from Chicago might have served, with changes in names and dates, to describe the Richmond Theatre fire of nearly a hundred years ago. There was no asbestos curtain then to give a treacherous promise of security, but the murderous scenery and the carelessly handled stage light were ready to turn the Christmas festivities of 1811 into mourning, just as they were at Chicago in 1903.

If managers will not learn the obvious lesson of these repeated horrors they must be made to learn it. Against their dogged resistance they have been forced step by step to make their buildings fireproof, to provide exits that are at least supposed to be available for use, to equip their stages with curtains that look like asbestos and to install various devices for fighting fire. The one step that remains to be taken—and it is a far easier and less costly one than many that have already been enforced—is to prevent the beginning of trouble by fireproofing all the scenery and stage fittings, in which ninety-nine one-hundredths of all theatrical fires start.

The Iroquois Theatre building is practically uninjured, but 600 people are dead. The managers have accomplished their object—their property is safe. It is the business of the law to force them to pay as much attention to the protection of human life.

Reparing Conflagrations.—If a servant laid a fire in a stove with half the thoroughness with which theatrical managers pile up kindling on their stages, there never would be a failure to start a blaze at the first trial.

67,000 UNNECESSARY DEATHS.

That the death date in New York has decreased within the past year is cause for congratulation, but do we realize that even yet eighty-two out of every eighty-three deaths in this city are unnecessary? That is what the returns just published show.

There were 67,923 deaths in New York last year. Of these 813 were from old age, which may be considered unavoidable. Nearly one-third of the whole number—21,781 in all—were of children under five years old. All those represent lives prematurely cut off by bad conditions. There were 8,001 deaths from phthisis and 6,396 from pneumonia—nearly 15,000 from two diseases of the lungs that ought to be preventable if not curable.

Bronchitis and broncho-pneumonia, two other maladies of a similar class, carried off 1,836 and 3,296 persons respectively. There were no less than 4,071 deaths from violence, of which 801 were suicides and 135 homicides.

When medical science and human nature are both perfected old age will be the only cause of death, and even there the present limits will be greatly extended. Meanwhile the tables show us what a tremendous margin we have for improvement.

Rapid Transit at Last.—The opening of the subway yesterday with a train of three handcars may have lacked some of the pride of pomp, but most people would rather go to Harlem comfortably on a handcar than wedged in a rush-hour elevated jam.

MENELIK'S LIONS.

The gift of two lions from the Emperor Menelik to President Roosevelt is worth stretching the Constitution a little. Of course, the President is forbidden to accept "any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever from any king, prince or foreign state," but he is also forbidden to do a good many other things which Mr. Roosevelt has cheerfully done. And think how useful a pair of real lions would be about the White House! The President would have no need to go West in a fruitless hunt for the trivial mountain variety. He could get manly exercise by wrestling with his pets at home. And when he wanted to combine sport with a genuine public service he could turn them loose in the Post-Office Department, beginning with the office of the Postmaster-General.

They Can't Lose Him.—But the Platt came back, for he couldn't stay away.

OF INTEREST TO PASSENGERS.

Hereafter the Metropolitan surface cars will stop at the near side of every crossing. The language that will flow until the public becomes accustomed to the change will perceptibly moderate the winter temperature, but in the end the new system will probably prove rather more convenient than the old. In many cases the cars are stopped at the near side already by the flow of traffic on the cross streets, and if they can do their loading and unloading at the same time considerable delay will be avoided. The only point in which the new arrangement seems to be worse than the old is that passengers will have to walk the length of the car in a possibly muddy street between the rear platform and the crossing, unless they are allowed to enter and leave cars by the front platforms.

SASSY SUE—By the Creator of "Sunny Jim" — She Has Had Too Much New Year's

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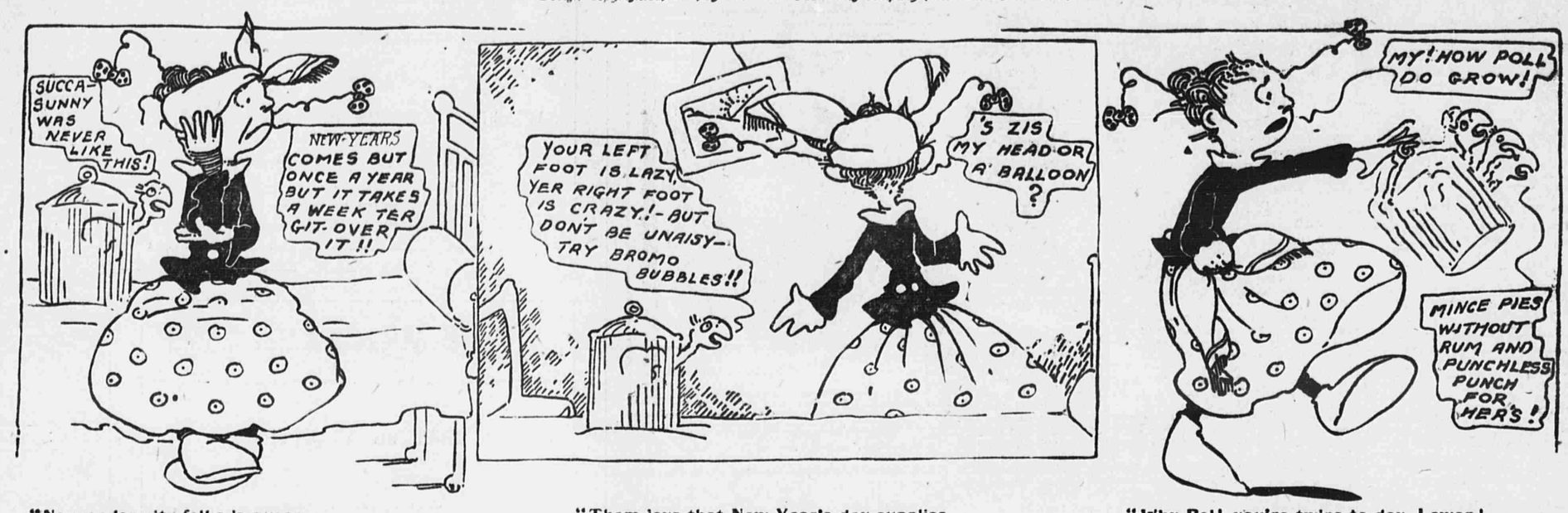

"No wonder city folks is queer
If they got heads like I got here!

"Them joys that New Year's day supplies
Has made me batty round the eyes.

"Why Pol! you're twins to-day, I swan!
Dod Gast this house! the floor's clean gone!"

MINNY MAUD HANFF.

The Important Mr. Pewee, the Great Little Man.

Little Miss Sawed-Off Tries to Capture His Affections, but He Remains True to Miss Sixfoot.

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$100—For Headlines for Mr. Peewee's "Evening Fudge." SEE Monday's EVENING WORLD—$100

The Young Man Who Is "Fresh."

By Nixola Greeley-Smith.

A VERY disconsolate young man has written to The Evening World asking for a definition of "freshness."

"What is freshness?" he inquires, plaintively. "Why am I fresh? When I ask the girls to tell me they say I know perfectly well what they mean. And if I persist in the question they add, 'Well, you're fresh now.' What am I to do?"

It is a platitude to remark that people who ask for advice are seldom prepared to take what is coming to them.

But if the young man really wants to know the best thing that can happen to him he will take the shortest out to the East River and disappear.

For the man who is fresh, with a full consciousness of his iniquity, may occasionally be tolerated, the degree of toleration depending largely on such apparently unconnected qualities as the breadth of his shoulders or the color and expression of his eyes, but he who is fresh without knowing it has committed the unpardonable sin.

However, this is not giving the anxious young victim of his own freshness the definition he asks for, which, after all, is a most difficult if not impossible thing to do. For what constitutes freshness in one man's conduct may pass altogether unnoticed, or if noticed, may please in the attitude of another. So much depending on the degree of friendship or admiration the young woman feels for him.

One man may tell her that she has the most beautiful eyes in the world, and if he refers to it casually as if indeed it were something scarcely worth mentioning because so much to be taken for granted she is altogether pleased and makes up her mind that she has at last come upon a man of fine taste and infinite discrimination.

Another man pays similar tribute to their midnight splendor, but does it with such an exasperating air of discovery as though indeed he were the Christopher Columbus of their charm as to make his assumption of a lack of previous appreciation seem far more emphatic than his admiration. As a result one of these men is thought charming by the young woman he wishes to please, while the unfortunate blunderer is merely "fresh."

Of all "fresh" persons on earth the man who asks a woman if he may kiss her is the very worst.

Which does not mean that the man who kisses her without asking is any better, but merely that the question, from its cold-blooded deliberation, is often a greater impertinence than the less premeditated act would be. Equally fresh is the man who asks a girl if she has ever been kissed, and if so, how often; if she has ever been in love, if she does not even in her most independent moments feel the desire to be loved and shielded from the cold world.

The Man Higher Up

The New Mayor Takes Hold and Nothing Happens.

"I DIDN'T see any sulphurous smoke obscuring the sky when they took the lid off yesterday," remarked the Cigar Store Man.

"No," said the Man Higher Up, "the fact that Dr. Parkhurst had prophesied that hell was due the first of the year didn't seem to agitate the people to such an extent that they shook their clothes off. New York seemed to take the fulfilment of Dr. Parkhurst's prophecy like the bad man who thought he had died in a hospital. When he woke up a trained nurse was holding his head on her arm and another was chafing his hands.

"'If this is hell,' he said, 'give me an annual pass.'

"It is a fireproof cinch that young Mr. McClellan is not going to please everybody during his term as Mayor. The affairs of the city will run along all right. Improvements will be made and there will be backward steps and side steps, which will be natural. The problem that is staring the Mayor in the face is whether he can steer things along so as to keep the Government machine in the middle of the road.

"There are three elements in New York. The element that makes the most noise is that with aspirations toward the ideal. This element is composed of men and women who are constitutionally good. Nature built them along cold storage warehouse lines, and any frivolous emotion that penetrates them is immediately chilled. They are so framed up mentally that they cannot make allowances for persons addicted to enjoying themselves on broad lines. Everything that does not parallel their ideas of right is a sin.

"Another element is that composed of men and women who are constitutionally bad. This element is more numerous than the good element and has a stronger pull. Its members would like to see everything wide open. Familiarity with sin and crime and crookedness generally has made them calloused. Attempts to regulate them appear in their minds to savor of persecution.

"The third element is composed of the hundreds of thousands of plain, everyday, hardworking citizens who mind their own business, work hard, pay their debts and are proud to be New Yorkers. They believe in allowing the bad element some leeway, because the bad element cannot be wiped off the map, and they believe in allowing the good element to have a hand in saying what the bad element must not do. But when either the good element or the bad element tries to dictate to the great common sense element the source of civic power comes out and does business. This is all the Mayor has to keep in mind."

"It ought to be easy enough for a Mayor to keep on the main line to popularity and satisfaction," said the Cigar Store Man.

"Sure," answered the Man Higher Up, "but there are so many men trying to throw the switches on him."

A Sherlock Holmes Romance of Love and Mystery—The Sign of the Four.

By A. Conan Doyle.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Mary Morstan, whose father, Capt. Morstan, died some years before, learns through Thaddeus Sholto that the latter's father and Capt. Morstan once owned an East Indian treasure which the former had hidden. The treasure is stolen and Thaddeus's brother, Bartholomew, who had guarded it, is murdered. Sherlock Holmes is put on the case.

Holmes learns that a one-legged man named Jonathan Small, assisted by an undersized savage from the Andaman Islands, has committed the crime.

The savage is killed and Small is captured.

Small confesses that he threw the treasure into the river when capture seemed imminent. He goes on to tell how he first won the treasure by killing its Hindoo guardian, and how he was sentenced to prison for life for the crime.

In hopes of escape he told Morstan and Sholto the whereabouts of the treasure. Sholto stole it. Small swore revenge, enlisting the services of the little Andaman Islander.

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CHAPTER VI.

Escape and Revenge.

"THIS native was the hideous creature we killed to-night, I suppose?" said Holmes.

"Yes," replied Small. "Tonga—for that was his name—was a fine boatman, and owned a big, roomy canoe of his own. When I found that he was devoted to me and would do anything to serve me, I saw my chance of escape. I talked it over with him. He was to bring his boat round on a certain night to an old wharf which was never guarded, and there he was to pick me up. I gave him directions to have several gourds of water and a lot of yams, cocoanuts and sweet potatoes.

"He was stanch and true, was little Tonga. No man ever had a more faithful mate. At the night named he had his boat at the wharf. As it chanced, however, there was one of the convict guard down there, a vile Pathan who had never missed a chance of insulting and injuring me. I had always vowed vengeance, and now I had my chance. It was as if fate had placed him in my way, that I might pay my debt before I left the island. He stood on the bank with his back to me, and his carbine on his shoulder. I looked about for a stone to beat out his brains with, but none could I see. Then a queer thought came into my head and showed me where I could lay my hand on a weapon. I sat down in the darkness and unstrapped my wooden leg. With three long hops I was on him. He put his carbine to his shoulder, but I struck him full and knocked the whole front of his skull in. You can see the split in the wood now where I hit him. We both went down together, for I could not keep my balance, but when I got up I found him still lying quiet enough. I made for the boat, and in an hour we were well out at sea. Tonga had brought all his earthly possessions with him, his arms and his gods. Among other things, he had a long bamboo spear and some Andaman cocoanut matting, with which I made a sort of a sail. For ten days we were beating about, trusting to luck, and on the eleventh we were picked up by a trader which was going from Singapore to Jiddah with a cargo of Maley pilgrims. They were a rum crowd, and Tonga and I soon managed to settle down among them. They had one very good quality—they let you alone and asked no questions.

"Well, if I were to tell you all the adventures that my little chum and I went through, you would not thank me, for I would have you here until the sun was shining. Here and there we dotted about the world, something always turning up to keep us from London. All the time, however, I never lost sight of my purpose. I would dream of Sholto at night. A hundred times I have killed him in my sleep. At last, however, some three or four years ago, we found ourselves in England. I had no great difficulty in finding where Sholto lived, and I set to work to discover whether he had realized the treasure or if he still had it. I made friends with some one who could help me—I name no names, for I don't want to get any one else in a hole—and I soon found that he still had the jewels. Then I tried to get at him in many ways; but he was pretty sly, and had always two prize-fighters, besides his sons and his khit-mutgar, on guard over him.

"One day, however, I got word that he was dying. I hurried a once to the garden, and that he should slip out of my clutches like that, and looking through the window, I saw him lying in his bed, with his sons on each side of him.

"At last, however, came news we had waited for so long. The treasure had been found. It was up at the top of the house, in Mr. Bartholomew Sholto's chemical laboratory. I came at once and had a look at the place, but I could not see how, with my wooden leg, I was to make my way up to it. I learned, however, aout a trap door in the roof, and also about Mr. Sholto's supper hour. It seemed to me that I could manage the thing easily through Tonga. I brought him out with me with a long rope wound rouud his waist. He could climb like a cat, and he soon made his way through the roof, but, as ill-luck would have it, Bartholomew Sholto was still in the room, to his cost. Tonga thought he had done something very clever in killing him, for when I came up by the rope I found him strutting about as proud as a peacock. Very much surprised was he when I made at him with the rope's end and cursed him for a little bloodthirsty imp. I took the treasure box and let it down, and then slid down myself, having first left the sign of the four upon the table to show that the jewels had come back at last to those who had most right to them. Tonga then pulled up the rope, closed the window and made off the way that he had come.

"I don't know that I have anything else to tell you. I had heard a waterman speak of the speed of Smith's launch, the Aurora, so I thought she would be a handy craft for our escape. I engaged with old Smith, and was to give him a big sum if he got us safe to our ship."

"A very remarkable account," said Sherlock Holmes. "A fitting wind-up to an extremely interesting case. There is nothing at all new to me in the latter part of your narrative, except that you brought your own rope. That I did not know. By the way, I had hoped that Tonga had lost all his darts; yet he managed to shoot one at us in the boat."

"He had lost them all, sir; except the one which was in his blow-pipe at the time."

"Ah, of course," said Holmes, "I had not thought of that."

"Good-night, gentlemen both," said Jonathan Small.

"You first, Small," remarked the wary Jones as they left the room. "I'll take particular care that you don't club me with your wooden leg, whatever you may have done to the gentleman at the Andaman Isles."

"Well, and there is the end of our little drama," I remarked after we had sat some time smoking in silence. "I fear that it may be the last investigation in which I shall have the chance of studying your methods. Miss Morstan has done me the honor to accept me as a husband in prospective."

He gave a most dismal groan. "I feared as much," said he; "I really cannot congratulate you."

I was a little hurt. "Have you any reason to be dissatisfied with my choice?" I asked.

"Not at all. I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met, and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She has a decided genius that way; witness the way in which she preserved that Agra plan from all the other papers of her father. But love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things. I myself shall never marry, lest I bias my judgment."

"The division seems rather unfair," I remarked. "You have done all the work in this business. I get a wife out of it, Jones gets the credit; pray, what remains for you?"

"For me," said Sherlock Holmes, "there still remains the cocaine bottle." And he stretched his long white hand up for the drug wherewith he was wont to stimulate his brain after a period of hard work.

(The End.)

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