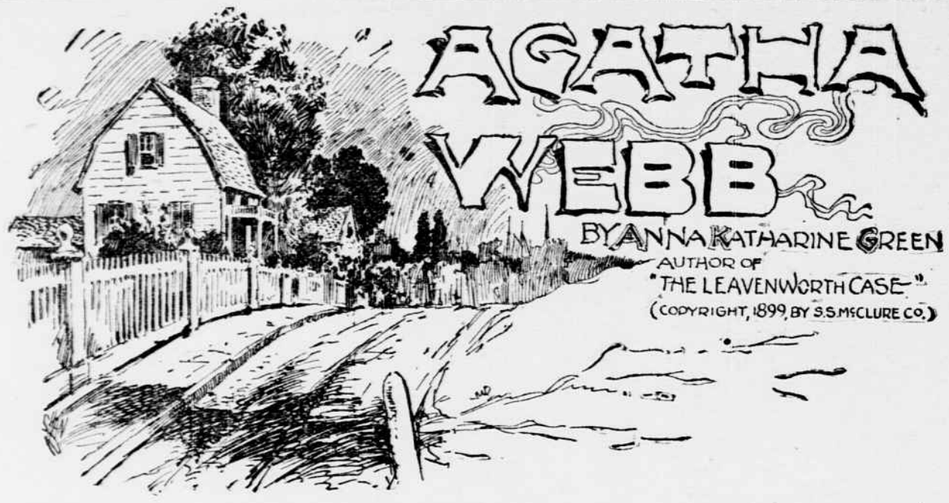



**Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.**

Just after a ball at the Sutherland mansion Agatha Webb and her servant are found dead, and Philemon Webb, Agatha's husband, who for years has been growing demented, is discovered asleep at the dinner table. A trace of blood on his sleeve indicates him as the murderer. Miss Page, the niece of the Sutherlands housekeeper, persists in remaining about the Webb premises, and discovers blood on the grass. The money drawer is found empty, and robbery is added to the mystery. Frederick Sutherland, a wayward youth, calls his father to witness his determination to be a better man, and promises not to marry Miss Page, by whom he has been fascinated. Miss Page tells Frederick that she followed him the night of the murder, and knew where he had secreted a thousand dollars. She gives him a week to decide whether to marry her or be proclaimed as the murderer of Agatha Webb. It is learned that the money was in new bills, and the keeper of a small store produces one that a strange man gave him late the night of the murder for a loaf of bread. A detective arrives from Boston and reports, "Simple case. Murdered for money. Find the man with the flowing beard." Suspicion falls upon one of the Zabel brothers. Frederick visits the hollow tree. The money is gone. Wattles, a Boston gambler, arrives and demands $950 of Frederick in payment of a gambling debt. Frederick secures a check for the amount from his father. The Zabel brothers are found dead of starvation, one of them clutching the loaf of bread, the other a blood-stained knife. The Boston detective declares the mystery solved, but young Sweetwater astonishes the company by a new chain of evidence pointing to another perpetrator of the terrible crime. This time Amabel Page is suspected. Sweetwater finds the money where he has seen Miss Page hide it. Miss Page is confronted by the detectives and officers, and tells what she saw the night of the murder. Frederick overhears the talking and joins the group, and Miss Page tells just enough so that a later confession will implicate Frederick if he refuses to marry her. On the following day occurs the funeral of Agatha Webb, and late that night Mr. Sutherland discovers Frederick weeping over her grave. On the way home he learns of the death of Philemon, Agatha's husband. Sweetwater suspects and follows Frederick and is thus discovered by Mr. Sutherland. Frederick places a package of old letters into Agnes Halliday's hands and his father seeks an explanation. Agatha Webb's will is opened, and by its terms Mr. Sutherland is made executor and Frederick sole heir of a $100,000 estate. Sweetwater reasons that Frederick is the murderer, but because Mr. Sutherland once saved his life Sweetwater is unwilling to give evidence. In order to keep his secret he plans to leave home, and, in suspicious haste, pretending to be in search of an important witness, boards an outgoing steamer bound for Brazil. He is thrown overboard that night and picked up at dawn by a fishing crew, which takes him to New Bedford. Food and clothing are given him and he earns $5 by delivering a suspicious box. An accidental chance takes him on a mission to Boston. The man he finds is Wattles, the gambler, who wishes Sweetwater to carry a message to none other than Frederick Sutherland, at Sutherlandtown. Sweetwater learns the message, refuses to take it and then makes his way home, arriving on the last day of the inquest. To the surprise of all, Frederick takes the stand, declares that he is the son of Agatha Webb and that she died by her own hand, and offers to produce the proof of his remarkable statement. The letters in Agnes Halliday's possession are brought to the court room and read. They disclose the courtship of Agatha Webb.

The letter that followed this was very short.

Dear James—The package of letters has been received. God help me to bear this shock to all my hopes and the death of all my girlish beliefs. I am not angry. Only those who have something left to hold to in life can be angry.

My father tells me he has received a packet, too. It contained $5,000 in ten $500 notes. James! James! was not my love enough that you should want my father's money, too!

I have begged my father and he has promised me to keep the cause of this rupture secret. No one shall know from either of us that James Zabel has any flaw in his nature.

The next letter was dated some months later. It was to Philemon:

Dear Philemon—The gloves are too small; besides, I never wear gloves. I hate their restraint and do not feel there is any good reason for hiding my hands in this little country town, where everybody knows me. Why not give them to Hattie Weller? She likes such things, while I have had my fill of finery. A girl whose one duty is to care for a dying father has not heart for vanities.

Dear Philemon—You will have my hand, though I have told you that my heart does not go with it. It is hard to understand such persistence, but if you are satisfied to take a woman of my strength against her will, then God have mercy upon you, for I will be your wife.

But do not ask me to go to Sutherlandtown. I shall live here. And do not expect to keep up your intimacy with the Zabels. There is no tie of affection remaining between James and myself, but if I am to shed that half light over your home, which is all I can promise and all that you can hope to receive, then keep me from all influence but your own. That this in time may grow sweet and dear to me is my earnest prayer today, for you are worthy of a true wife. AGATHA.

Dear John—I am going to be married. My father exacts it, and there is no good reason why I should not give him this final satisfaction. At least I do not think there is, but if you or your brother differ from me—

Say good-bye to James from me. I pray that his life may be peaceful. I know that it will be honest. AGATHA.

Dear Philemon—My father is worse. He fears that if we wait till Tuesday he will not be able to see us married. Decide, then, what our duty is; I am ready to abide by your pleasure. AGATHA.

The following is from John Zabel to his brother James, and is dated one day after the above:

Dear James—When you read this I will be far away, never to look in your face again unless you bid me. Brother, brother, I meant it for the best, but God was not with me, and I have made four hearts miserable without giving help to any one.

When I read Agatha's letter—the last, for more reasons than one, that I shall ever receive from her—I seemed to feel as never before what I had done to blast your two lives. For the first time I realized to the full that but for me she might have been happy and you the respected husband of the one grand woman to be found in Portchester. That I had loved her so fiercely myself came back to me in reproach, and the thought that she perhaps suspected that the blame had fallen where it was not deserved aroused me to such a pitch that I took the sudden and desperate resolution of telling her the truth before she gave her hand to Philemon, and never paused till I reached Mr. Gilchrist's house and was ushered into his presence.

He was lying on the sitting room lounge, looking very weak and exhausted, while on one side of him stood Agatha and on the other Philemon, both contemplating him with ill-concealed anxiety. I had not expected to find Philemon there, and for a moment I suffered the extreme agony of a man who has not measured the depth of the plunge he is about to take, but the sight of Agatha trembling under the shock of my unexpected presence restored me to myself and gave me firmness to proceed. Advancing with a bow, I spoke quickly the one word I had come there to say. "Agatha, I have done you a great wrong, and I am here to undo it. For months I have felt driven to confession, but not till today have I possessed the necessary courage. Now nothing shall hinder me." I said this, because I saw in both Mr. Gilchrist and Philemon a disposition to stop me where I was. Indeed, Mr. Gilchrist had risen on his elbow, and Philemon was making that pleading gesture of his, which we know so well. Agatha alone looked eager. "What is it?" she cried. "I have a right to know." I went to the door, shut it and stood with my back against it, a figure of shame and despair. Suddenly the confession burst from me. "Agatha," said I, "why did you break with my brother James? Because you thought him guilty of theft; because you believed he took the $5,000 out of the sum intrusted to him by Mr. Orr for your father? Agatha, it was not James who did this, it was I, and James knew it and bore the blame of my misdoings because he was always a loyal soul and took account of my weakness and knew, alas, too well, that open shame would kill me."

It was a weak plea and merited no reply, but the silence was so dreadful and lasted so long that I felt first crushed and then terrified. Raising my head, for I had not dared to look any of them in the face, I cast one glance at the group before me and dropped my head again, startled. Only one of the three was looking at me, and that was Agatha. The others had their heads turned aside, and I thought, or rather the passing fancy took me, that they shrank from meeting her gaze with something of the same shame and dread I was myself suffering from. But she! Can I ever hope to make you realize her look or comprehend the pang of utter self-abasement with which I succumbed before it. It was so terrible that I seemed to hear her utter words, though I am sure she did not speak; and with some wild idea of stemming the torrent of her reproaches, I made an effort at explanation and impetuously cried: "It was not for my own good, Agatha, not altogether for self I did this. I loved you also madly, despairingly, and good brother as I seemed, I was jealous of James and hoped to take his place in your regard if I could show a greater prosperity and obtain for you those things his limited prospects denied him. You enjoy money, beauty, ease; I could see that by your letters, and if James could not give them to you and I could— Oh, do not look at me like that! I see now that millions could not have bought you."

"Despicable!" was all that came from her lips; at which I shuddered and groped about for the handle of the door. But she would not let me go. Subduing with grand self-restraint the emotions which had hitherto swelled too high in her breast for either speech or action, she thrust out one arm to stay me and said in short, commanding tones: "How was this thing done? You say you took the money, yet it was James who was sent to collect it; or so my father says." Here she tore her looks from me and cast one glance at her father. What she saw I cannot say, but her manner changed and henceforth she glanced his way as much as mine and with nearly as much emotion. "I am waiting to hear what you have to say," she exclaimed, laying her hand on the door so as to leave me no opportunity for escape. I bowed and attempted an explanation. "Agatha," said I, "the commission was given to James and he rode to Sutherlandtown to perform it, but it was on the day when he was accustomed to write to you and he was not easy in his mind, for he feared he would miss sending you his usual letter."

And then I told the story you know so well, how I took the money and how after Mr. Gilchrist had accused you of the theft you found out my guilty secret and told me that you had taken my crime on yourself, and how afterward my virtue was not equal to assuming the responsibility for my crime.

"John," she said—she was under violent restraint—"why do you come now?"

I cast my eyes at Philemon. He was standing just as before, with his eyes turned away. There was discouragement in his attitude, mingled with a certain grand patience. Seeing that he was better able to bear her loss than either James or myself, I said to her very low: "I thought you ought to know the truth before you gave your final word. I am late, but I would have been too late a week from now."

Her hand fell from the door, but her eyes remained fixed on my face.

"It is too late now," she murmured, "the clergyman has just gone who united me to Philemon."

The next minute she had faced her father and her new-made husband.

"Father, you knew this thing!" Keen, sharp, incisive the words rang out. "I saw it in your face when he began to speak."

Mr. Gilchrist drooped slightly; he was a very sick man, and the scene had been a trying one.

"If I did," was his low response, "it was but lately. You were engaged then to Philemon. Why break up this second match?"

She eyed him as if she found it difficult to credit her ears. Such indifference to the claims of innocence was incredible to her. I saw her grand profile quiver, then the slow ebbing from her cheek of every drop of blood indignation had summoned there.

"And you, Philemon?" she suggested, with a somewhat softened aspect, "you committed this wrong ignorantly, never having heard of this crime; you could not know on what false grounds I had been separated from James."

I had started to escape, but stopped just beyond the threshold of the door as she uttered these words: Philemon was not as ignorant as she supposed. This was evident from his attitude and expression.

"Agatha," he began, but at his first word, and before he could clasp the hands held helplessly out before her, she gave a great cry, and, staggering back, eyed both her father and himself in a frenzy of indignation that was all the more uncontrollable from the superhuman effort which she hitherto made to suppress it. "You, too!" she shrieked. "You, too! and I have just sworn to love, honor and obey you! Love you! Honor you! the unconscionable wretch who—"

But here Mr. Gilchrist rose, weak, tottering, quivering with something more than anger, he approached his daughter and laid his finger on her lips.

"Be quiet!" he said. "Philemon is not to blame. A month ago he came to see me and prayed that, as a relief to his mind, I would tell him why you had separated yourself from James. He had always thought the match had fallen through on account of some foolish quarrel or incompatibility, but lately he had feared there was something more than he suspected in this break, something that he should know. So I told him why you had dismissed James, and whether he knew James better than we did, or whether he had seen something in his long acquaintance with these brothers which influenced his judgment, he said at once, 'This cannot be true of James. It is not in his nature to defraud any man, but John—I might believe it of John. Isn't there some complication here?' I had never thought of John, and did not see how John could be mixed up with an affair I had supposed to be a secret between James and myself, but when Philemon laid the matter before James he did not deny that John was guilty, but asked that you be not told before your marriage. He knew that you were engaged to a good man, a man that your father approved, a man that could and would make you happy. He did not want to be the means of a second break, and besides, and this, I think, was at the bottom of the stand he took, for James Zabel was always the proudest man I ever knew, he never could bear, he said, to give to one like Agatha a name which was not entirely free from reproach. It would stand in the way of his happiness and ultimately of hers; his brother's dishonor was his. So while he loved you still, his only prayer was that after you were safely married and Philemon was sure of your affection, he should tell you that the man you once regarded so favorably was not unworthy of that regard. To obey him Philemon has kept silent, while I—Agatha, what are you doing? Are you mad, my child?"

She looked so for the moment. Tearing off the ring she had worn but an hour, she flung it on the floor. Then she threw her arms high up over her head and burst out in an awful voice:

"Curses on the father! curses on the husband who have combined to make me rue the day I was born. The father I cannot disown, but the husband—"

"Hush!"

It was Mr. Gilchrist who dared her fiery anger, Philemon said nothing.

"Hush! He may be the father of your children. Don't curse—"

But she only towered the higher, and her beauty from being simply majestic became appalling. "Children!" she cried: "If ever I bear children to this man, may the blight of heaven strike them as it has struck me this day. May they die as my hopes have died, or if they live, may they bruise his heart as mine is bruised and curse their father as—"

Here I fled the house. I was shaking as if this awful denunciation had fallen on my own head. But before the door closed behind me, a different cry called me back. Mr. Gilchrist was lying lifeless on the floor, and Philemon, the patient, tender Philemon, had taken Agatha to his breast and was soothing her there as if the words she had showered upon him, had been blessings instead of the most fearful curses which had ever left the lips of mortal woman.

The next letter was in Agatha's handwriting. It was dated some months later and was stained and crumpled more than any others in the whole packet. Could Philemon once have told why? Were these blotted lines the result of his tears falling fast upon them, tears of forty years ago, when he and she were young and love had been doubtful? Was the sheet so yellowed and so seamed because it had been worn on his breast and folded and unfolded so often? Philemon, thou art in thy grave, sleeping sweetly at last by the side of the one idolized, but these marks of feeling still remain indissolubly connected with the words that gave them birth.

Dear Philemon—You are gone for a day and a night only, but it seems a lengthened absence to me, meriting a little letter. You have been so good to me, Philemon, ever since that dreadful hour following our marriage. I feel that I am beginning to love you and that God did not deal with me so harshly when he cast me into your arms. Yesterday I tried to tell you this when you almost kissed me at parting, but I was afraid it was a momentary sentimentality and so kept still. But today such a warm well-spring of joy rises in my heart when I think that tomorrow the house will be bright again, and that in place of the empty wall opposite me at table I shall see your kindly and forbearing face. I know that the heart I had thought impregnable has begun to yield, and that daily gentleness and a boundless consideration from one who had excuse for bitter thoughts and recrimination, is doing what all of us thought impossible a few short months ago.

O, I am so happy, Philemon, so happy to love where it is now my duty to love, and if it were not for that dreadful memory of a father dying with harsh words in his ears, and the knowledge that you, my husband, yet not my husband, are bearing ever about with you echoes of words that in another nature would have turned tenderness into gall. I could be merry also, and sing as I go about the house making it pleasant and comfortable against your speedy return. As it is, I can but lay my hand softly on my heart as its beatings grow too impetuous and say, God bless my absent Philemon, and help him to forgive me! I forgive him and love him as I never thought I could.

That you may see that these are not the weak outpourings of a lonely woman, I will here write that I heard today that John and James Zabel have gone into partnership in the shipbuilding business, John's uncle having left him a legacy of several thousand dollars. I hope they will do well. James, they say, is to all appearance, perfectly cheerful, and full of business, and this relieves me from too much worry in his regard. God certainly knew what kind of a husband I needed. May you find yourself equally blessed in your wife.

Another letter to Philemon a year later:

Dear Philemon—Hasten home, Philemon; I do not like these absences. I am just now too weak and fearful. Since we knew the great hope before us I have looked often in your face for a sign that you remembered what this hope cannot but recall to my shuddering memory. Philemon, Philemon, was I mad? When I think what I said in my rage and then feel the little life stirring about my heart, I wonder that God did not strike me dead rather than bestow upon me the greatest blessing that can come to woman. Philemon, Philemon, if anything should happen the child! I think of it by day; I think of it by night. I know you think of it, too, though you show me such a cheerful countenance and make such great plans for the future. Will God remember my words, or will he forget? It seems as if my reason hung upon this question.

A note this time in answer to one from John Zabel.

Dear John—Thank you for words which could have come from nobody else. My child is dead. Could I expect anything different? If I did, God has rebuked me.

Philemon thinks only of me. We understand each other perfectly, now that our greatest suffering comes in seeing each other's pain. My load I can bear, but his—Come and see me, John; and tell James our house is open to him. We have all done wrong, and are caught in one web of misfortune. Let it make us friends again.

Below this, in Philemon's hand:

"My wife is superstitious, strong and capable as she is. She has felt that this sudden taking off of our first-born is a sign that certain words uttered by her on her marriage day, unhappily known to you, and, as I take it, to James also, have been remembered by the righteous God above us. This is a weakness which I cannot combat. Can you, who alone of all the world beside know both it and its cause, help me by a renewed friendship, whose cheerful and natural character may gradually make her forget? If so, come, like old neighbors, and dine with us on our wedding day. If God sees that we have buried the past, and are ready to forgive each other the faults of our youth, perhaps he will further spare this good woman. I think she will be able to bear it. She has great strength, except where a little child is concerned. That alone can henceforth stir the deepest recesses of her heart.

After this a gap of years. One, two, three, four, five children were laid away to rest in Porchester churchyard, then Philemon and she came to Sutherlandtown, but not till after a certain event had occurred, best made known by this last letter to Philemon.

Dearest Husband—Our babe is born, our sixth and our dearest, and the reproach of its first look had to be met by me alone. Oh, why did I leave you and come to this great Boston, where I have no friends but Mrs. Sutherland. Did I think I could break the spell of fate or Providence by giving birth to my last darling among strangers?

I shall have to do something more than that, if I would save this child to our old age. It is borne in upon me like fate that never will a child prosper at my breast or survive the clasp of my arms. If it is to live it must be reared by others. Some woman who has not brought down the curse of heaven upon her by her own blasphemies must nourish the tender frame and receive the blessing of its growing love. Neither I nor you can hope to see recognition in our babe's eye. Before it can turn upon us with love, it will close in its last sleep and we will be left desolate. What shall we do, then, with this little son? To whose guardianship can we entrust it? Do you know a man good enough or a woman sufficiently tender? I do not, but if God wills that our little Frederick should live, he will raise up some one by the pang of possible separation already tearing my heart; I believe that he will raise up some one.

Meanwhile I do not dare to kiss the child lest I should blight it. He is so sturdy, Philemon, so different from all the other five.

I open this to add that Mrs. Sutherland has just been in with her five weeks' old infant. His father is away too, and has not yet seen his boy; and this is their first after ten years of marriage.

The next letter opens with a cry:

Philemon! Come to me, Philemon! I have done what I threatened; I have made the sacrifice. Our child is no longer ours and now perhaps he may live. But, oh, my breaking heart, my empty arms. Help me to bear my desolation, for it is for life. We will never have another child. And where is it? Ah, that is the wonder of it. Near you Philemon, yet not too near. Mrs. Sutherland has it and you may have seen its little face through the car window if you were in the station last night when the express passed through to Sutherlandtown. Ah! but she has her burden to bear, too. An awful, secret burden like my own, only she will have the child—for Philemon, she has taken it in lieu of her own, which died last night in my sight. And Mr. Sutherland does not know what she has done and never will, if you keep the secret as I shall, for the sake of the life our little innocent has thus won.

What do I mean and how was it all? Philemon, it was God's work, all but the deception, and that is for the good of all, and to save four broken hearts. Listen: Yesterday, only yesterday—it seems a month ago—Mrs. Sutherland came again to see me with her baby in her arms. The baby was looking well, and she was the happiest of women, for the one wish of here heart had been fulfilled, and she was soon going to have the bliss of showing the child to his father. My own babe was on the bed asleep, and I, who am feeling wonderfully strong, was sitting up in a little chair as far away from him as possible, not out of hatred or indifference; oh no, but because he seemed to rest better when left entirely by himself and not under the hungry look of my eyes. Mrs. Sutherland went over to look at it. "Oh, he is fair, like my baby," she said, "and almost as sturdy, though mine is a month older." And she stooped down and kissed him. Philemon, he smiled for her, though he never had for me. I saw it with a greedy longing that almost made me cry out. Then I turned to her, and we talked. Of what? I cannot remember now. At home we had never been intimate friends. She is from Sutherlandtown, and I am from Portchester, and the distance of nine miles is enough to estrange people. But here, each with a husband absent and a darling infant sleeping under eyes, interests we have never thought identical drew us to each other, and we chatted with ever increasing pleasure. Suddenly Mrs. Sutherland jumped up in terrible fright. The infant she had been rocking on her breast was blue, the next minute it shuddered, the next it lay in her arms dead.

I hear the shriek yet with which she fell with it still in her arms to the floor. Fortunately, no other ears were open to her cry. I alone saw her misery. I alone heard her tale. The child had been poisoned. Philemon, poisoned by her. She had mistaken a cup of medicine for a cup of water and had given the child a few drops in a spoon just before setting out from her hotel. She had not known at the time what she had done, but now she remembered that the fatal cup was just like the other and that the two stood very near together. Oh, her innocent child, and, oh, her husband! It seemed as if the latter thought would drive her wild. "He has so wished for a child," she moaned. "We have been married ten years and this baby seemed to have been sent from heaven. He will curse me, he will hate me, he will never be able after this to bear me in his sight." This was not true of Mr. Sutherland, but it was useless to argue with her. Instead of attempting it, I took another way to stop her ravings. Lifting the child out of her hands, I first listened at its heart, and then, finding it was really dead—I have seen too many lifeless children not to know, I began slowly to undress it. "What are you doing?" she cried, "Mrs. Webb! Mrs. Webb! What are you doing?" For reply I pointed to the bed, where two little arms could be seen feebly fluttering.

"You shall have my child," I whispered. "I have carried too many babies to the tomb to dare risk bringing up another." And catching her poor wandering spirit with my eye, I held her while I told her my story. Philemon, I saved that woman. Before I had finished speaking I saw the reason return to her eye, and the dawning of a pitiful hope in her passion-drawn face. She looked at the child in my arms, and then she looked at the one in the bed, and the long-drawn sigh with which she finally bent down and wept over our darling told me that my cause was won. The rest was easy. When the clothes of the two children had been exchanged she took our baby in her arms and prepared to leave. Then I stopped her. "Swear," I cried, holding her by the arm and lifting my other hand to heaven, "swear you will be a mother to this child! Swear you will love it as your own and rear it in the path of truth and righteousness!" The convulsive clasp with which she drew the baby to her breast told me more plainly than her shuddering "I swear!" that her heart had already opened to it. I dropped her arm and covered my face with my hands. I could not see my darling go; it was worse than death. "Oh, God, save him," I groaned. "God make him an honor——" But here she caught me by the arm; her clutch was frenzied, her teeth were chattering. "Swear in your turn," she gasped, "swear that if I do a mother's duty by this boy, you will keep my secret, and never, never, reveal to my husband, to the boy or to the world that you have any claims upon him." It was like tearing the heart from my breast with my own hand, but I swore, Philemon, and she in turn drew back. But suddenly she faced me again, terror and doubt in all her looks. "Your husband!" she whispered, "Can you keep such a secret from him? You will breathe it in your dreams." "I shall tell him," I answered. "Tell him!" The hair seemed to rise on her head, and she shook so that I feared she would drop the babe. "Be careful!" I cried. "See, you frighten the babe. My husband has but one heart with me. What I do he will subscribe to. Do not fear, Philemon. So I promised in your name. Gradually she grew calmer.

When I saw she was steady again I motioned her to go; even my more than mortal strength was failing, and the baby—Philemon—I have never kissed it and I did not kiss it then. I heard her feet draw slowly toward the door, I heard her hand fall on the knob, heard it turn—uttered one cry—and then—. They found me an hour after lying along the floor clasping the dead infant in my arms. I was in a swoon, and they all think I fell with the child, as perhaps I did, and that its little life went out during my insensibility. Of its little features, like and yet unlike our boy's, no one seems to take heed. The nurse who cared for it is gone, and who else would know that little face but me? They are very good to me, and are full of self-reproaches for leaving me so long in my part of the building alone. But though they watch me now, I have contrived to write this letter, which you will get with the one telling of the baby's death and my own dangerous condition.

Under it these words: "Though bidden to destroy this, I have never dared to do so. Some day it may be of inestimable value to us or to our boy. PHILEMON WEBB."

This was the last letter found in the packet. As it was laid down sobs were heard all over the room, and Frederick, who for some time now had been sitting with his head in his hands, ventured to look up and say:

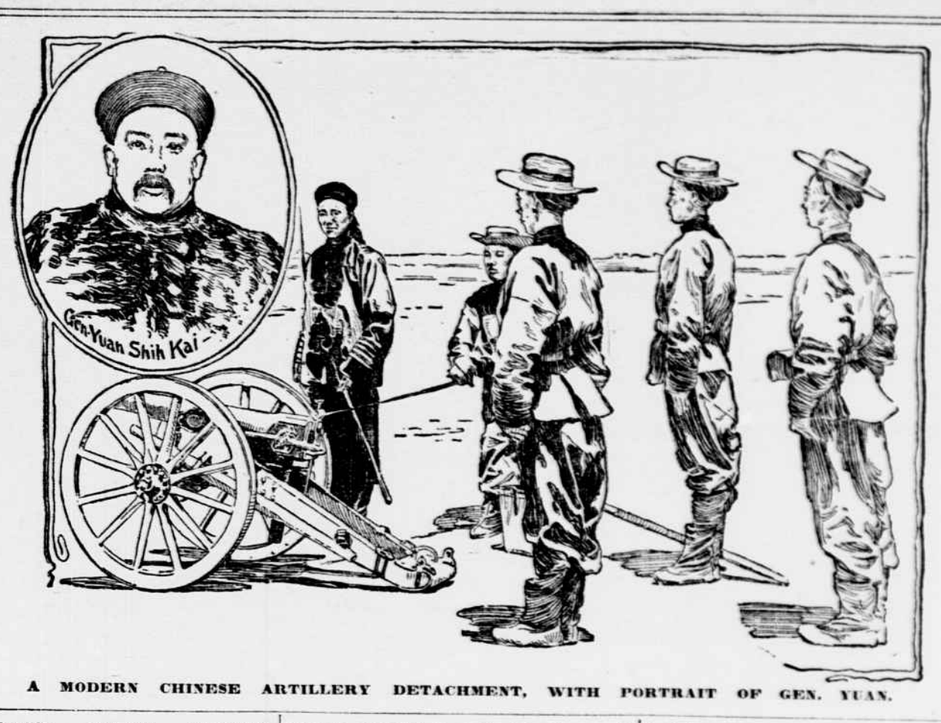
"Do you wonder that I endeavored to keep this secret, bought at such a price and sealed by the death of her I thought my mother and of her who really was? Gentlemen, Mr. Sutherland really loved his wife and honored her memory. To tell him, as I shall have to within the hour, that the child she placed in his arms twenty-five years ago was an alien, and that all his love, his care, his disappointment and his sufferings have been lavished on the son of a neighbor, requires greater courage than to face doubt on the faces of my fellow-townsmen, or anything, in short, but absolute arraignment on the charge of murder. Hence my silence, hence my indecision, till this woman here"—he pointed a scornful finger at Amabel, now shrinking in her chair—"drove me to it by secretly threatening me with a testimony which would have made me the murderer of my mother and the lasting disgrace of a good man who alone has been without blame from the beginning to the end of this desperate affair. She was about to speak when I forestalled her."

That afternoon before the inquest broke up the jury brought in their verdict. It was:

"Death by means of a wound inflicted upon herself in a moment of terror and misapprehension."

It was all his fellow-townsmen could do for Frederick.

(To be continued.)

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Special Correspondence of The Evening Star.

TIENTSIN, China, April 20, 1899.

Prime Minister Jung Lu has recently reviewed the Chinese imperial army at Hsiao Chan—a fact of the most profound significance in the affairs of China. It marks the awakening of the empire to the need of a great modern army with which to repel the crowding of the nations of Europe. The review of Jung Lu was the first attention that the government at Peking has given this new army.

Could the people of the great foreign nations have seen the splendid showing of these Chinese troops on this grand review it must have transformed their general idea that the Chinese are unable to do orderly and thoroughly the things that belong to modern civilization. Could they have viewed for a single hour 5,000 men moving so exactly in unison to the calls of the trumpet or to the rapidly given orders of a single voice, and that the voice of a Chinese, that their every step on the hard, smooth clay was like a single mighty drum beat and every noise of arms like a single mighty crash, it alone would have been object lesson enough to give the world a new idea of the possibilities of the Chinese race.

**Where the Army Was Born.**

This army, officially named "the new imperial army," has its camp at Hsiao Chan, about twenty miles east of Tientsin, midway between it and the sea, and a few miles south of the Pei Ho. This point has been for many years a military post, and for miles about are the ruins of the mud walls of barracks of long ago, looking like so many prehistoric ruins.

The plain from the sea to Tientsin is almost a perfect level, and the grand parade ground at Hsiao Chan, about a mile long and a half mile wide, is most of the year as smooth and hard as a table.

Three years ago, in December, 1895, about a year after the war with Japan, a few thousand raw recruits quartered at Hsiao Chan were put under command of Yuan Shih Kai, commonly called Gen. Yuan, whose rank is, however, civil and not military. Previous to the war with Japan Yuan was for nine years minister to Corea, having been promoted to that position on account of exceptional bravery and ability shown in 1884, when at the head of a company of Chinese soldiers he entered the Corean capital, drove out the Japanese, and saved the Corean king's life. At that time he had been for three years a civil officer connected with a Chinese military guard stationed at the Corean capital. At present he holds the same high rank that must be held by the viceroy of a province, and he was, in fact, acting viceroy of this province of Chilli for ten days at the time of the late change of government at Peking. To this man is directly due the high character of this army and the fine showing that it is able to make. Among all her officials China has no better man.

A Modern Chinese Soldier.

**The Best Man in China.**

Timothy Richard, one of the best known men in China, said to the writer a few months ago: "Yuan is the best man in China; he is a man who is bound to rise." Lord Charles Beresford, one of England's military authorities, who has lately made an extended tour of observation in China, and before whom there was given just such a review and sham battle as has since been seen by Jung Lu, said in private conversation:

"I have met one man in China, and that man is Yuan."

Two things mark this man—great executive ability and strict integrity. The former is probably as common in China as elsewhere, but nothing has been more rare in high places than the latter. All the world knows that from the viceroy of a province down to the cook in your kitchen every man is expected to make his "squeeze." The custom is so recognized as to be almost lifted out of its legally dishonorable place and to be a part of the unwritten law of the country. Military commanders who receive from the central government appropriations according to the number of soldiers supposed to be in their commands and the amount supposed to be paid them have had exceptional opportunities for "squeeze," and the past general condition of the forces of China would indicate that this has too often been their chief care. But Yuan stands out a noble exception, a fit representative of the fast coming new China, and of that company, who are not a few, of like character who are beginning to rise throughout the empire. For all of the great opportunities of his position combined with a large salary, Yuan is yet a poor man, and it is because the money appropriated for the uses of this army has all been used, and wisely used, upon it, that there is here an army of 9,000 men, well equipped with modern guns, well housed, well fed and always promptly and fully paid; and more than this, except 2,000 late recruits, so well drilled as to have drawn forth the highest praise from Lord Charles Beresford, who, both in private conversation with his own countrymen and in a personal letter to Yuan, spoke with unstinted admiration of the army and of the fine showing it had made on review.

**How the Army is Armed.**

The army consists of 7,000 infantry, armed with one of the best modern rifles; 500 cavalry, armed with light rifles, revolvers and swords; 1,000 artillery, serving forty field guns, twelve mountain guns and eighteen rapid-fire guns, and 500 men connected with the engineering department. Of the infantry, 2,000 were recruited late in 1898. It is understood that, after being thoroughly drilled, they are to be sent to Peking as a royal guard.

There are also 3,000 camp followers, every ten soldiers being allowed a cook and two other servants, officers having a still larger number.

It is not the least surprising thing about this army that so few and unimportant positions are held in it by foreigners. There are connected with it a Portuguese bandmaster, a Belgian tactician, a German pontoon bridge builder, a German artillery instructor for certain German guns, a Norwegian cavalry drill master, and a Chinese-speaking German, whose duties are somewhat general. The infantry and most of the artillery drill is entirely under Chinese officers, trained either abroad or in Chinese military schools, of which there is at present but one in north China, this being at Tientsin. Yuan has, however, at Hsiao Chan, a large class of young men under instruction, showing good foresight, for the school at Tientsin cannot possibly supply the demand that must soon be made upon it.

**Red Cross in China.**

Something entirely new in China is that the Red Cross floats over a fully equipped hospital, where from fifty to 100 or more patients are treated daily. The hospital is in charge of four native physicians who would be a credit to any army or country. The senior, who was trained under the late Dr. MacKenzie of the London mission in Tientsin, is a rare man, wise, gentle and genial and of purest character. The three juniors are graduates of the imperial medical college at Tientsin, and it is interesting to note that they are all young men of decided Christian belief. All four speak English fluently.

One of the revelations of the possibilities of the Chinese race that this camp affords is the band of musicians, of whom it is not too much to say that except by bands composed of professional musicians their playing could scarcely be excelled.

Nothing is more noticeable than the uniform good behavior of these soldiers. A more quiet, orderly, respectful lot of men could not be found anywhere. Although they have many holidays, when they ramble about the town and camp at will there it almost never a brawl or trouble of any kind, though usually the Chinese soldier is an out-and-out rowdy and ruffian.

Possibly in the way of discipline foreign nations may be able to learn something from Yuan, who in this matter has absolute authority. First, and, of course, of greatest importance, there is absolute prohibition of liquor drinking, gambling and opium smoking. For the first two named offenses the punishment is severe whipping; for the last, the death penalty by decapitation. These three regulations alone make most other rules of discipline needless.

**Details of the Review.**

The all-day review of the army by Jung Lu was marked by the fine appearance of the soldiers, rapidity and precision of movement on drill and lack of all confusion during either the drill or the sham battle. The observer forgot entirely that he was viewing a Chinese army in his constant admiration of the fine training shown.

The day of the review was bright and still, the army was in position early and at 8:30 the review began by the passing of infantry, artillery and cavalry before the reviewing stand, the 5,000 infantry reforming in ten battalions about 130 yards to the front and the artillery and cavalry taking up positions some distance in the rear. Just a few yards to the right of the stand rode out a single native horseman, who with uplifted sword and clear, ringing voice began giving orders, calling for all manner of evolutions, to which, though often given as rapidly as from five to eight a minute, this great body of men responded for twenty minutes as one man. Following this came another similar twenty-minute drill at the sound of the bugle, and last, most beautiful and unique, led by the voice of another horseman, came a fifteen-minute gymnastic exercise, rifles being used as wands. With their bayonets flashing and their bodies swaying in perfect unison and their feet striking the ground with the sound as of a single mighty footfall, there was in this hour presented at least proof of the capacity of the Chinese soldier for the finest of drill.

Artillery and cavalry both gave evidence of the same careful training. The heavy artillery especially made a fine appearance. Handling thirty guns, six horses to a gun and six guns abreast, dashing across the parade ground on the dead run, wheeling, planting batteries at one point and then at another, they kept almost as perfect form as when at attention, and to locate a battery and be ready to open fire was but the work of moments.

**A Sham Battle.**

The sham battle in the afternoon over a broken field three miles in extent, where half the force made an attack on the position held by Yuan with the other half, he being in entire ignorance of the enemy's plans, was full of dash and heavy firing, and at the close of the same wild cheering that has so often been heard on the real battlefield when the victors, sweeping over every barrier, have poured into the enemy's works. Certainly the Chinese soldier is fully capable of all that goes to make up a soldier off of the real battlefield. What skill commanders would show in meeting an enemy has yet to be proven, but as to the conduct of Chinese troops under fire when they have a fighting chance, the historic bravery of the soldiers under Chinese Gordon long ago, the well-known desperate, unflinching bravery of the Chinese in the naval battle of Yalu, and the later widely heralded bravery of the Chinese under the American flag at Manila, are among the things that go to prove that there are no braver soldiers than the Chinese may be.

Whatever may be the ability of this army to meet foreign troops, in its capacity as a home guard and as a pattern for all the military force of China, nothing could be more valuable. HERBERT E. HOUSE,
English Secretary to Gen. Yuan.

## PORTUGAL'S POSITION.

### A Washingtonian Takes Up the Cudgels for the Little Kingdom.

Portugal is not greatly considered today by world observers. Few tourists go there, few events of wide importance occur there, few words are uttered in international hearing concerning the country. Some interesting facts concerning Portugal nationally and the Portuguese in this country have developed in a controversy over the true status of Portugal among the states, in which Mr. S. G. W. Benjamin of this city has been participating. The affair started with an article in the November number of "Self Culture," a monthly magazine, on "Holland Place in Europe," in the course of which the author expressed the opinion that the small states of Europe should be maintained in their integrity, with the single exception of Portugal, which he urged should be absorbed by Spain.

Mr. Benjamin, who has traveled extensively, and, as a former member of the American diplomatic corps has had occasion to study European conditions, took issue with this exception, and in "Self Culture" for February proclaimed his views about Portugal in an illuminative and instructive manner. He pointed out how marked is the antagonism between the Spanish and the Portuguese, and how impossible is an affiliation between the nations. He sketched the factors of Portuguese national character and presented these people in a far more favorable light than is usually thrown around them by inconsiderate or uninformed writers and speakers. In pleading for a higher place in the international regard for the Portuguese, Mr. Benjamin pointed to their exceptional achievements as mariners, and noted that some of the world's most famous exploits at sea may be traced in a way to Portuguese influences.

These he mentions as the voyages of Columbus, who, though an Italian and aided by Spain, nevertheless imbibed his early inspiration for his immortal expeditions from the Portuguese navigators at Lisbon, among whom he lived for some years; the "appalling voyage across the Pacific by Magellan," who was a Portuguese, who left Lisbon because of affronts he had received there; the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope by Bartholomew Diaz, and the passage to India by Vasco da Gama, these two being Portuguese captains, sailing fleets of their own country. After thus laying the foundation of the claim of the Portuguese to a large share of the credit for the history-making nautical exploits, Mr. Benjamin proceeds as follows to show the participation of these people in the world of maritime enterprise of today:

"Our fishing and whaling fleets are manned largely by Portuguese, and it is safe to say that they are little inferior to our own native Yankees, whether in the forecastle or on the quarter deck. They have all the qualities of the born sailor, such as one looks for among the northern races, but rarely finds among the Latin peoples to the same degree. I have sailed with Portuguese many a time, and must admit that I have a high respect for their maritime talents. One of my liveliest experiences was a cruise in a sailing ship engaged in smuggling Portuguese out of the Azore Islands, who were seeking to avoid the conscription. We had many adventures, and the daring and skill of the Portuguese sailor were brilliantly displayed."

One result of this article is as surprising in its way as the revelations within it. Mr. Benjamin the other day received a formidable-appearing document through the mails from San Francisco. It bore a red seal with ribbons, and, upon translation, proved to be a series of resolutions adopted by the Portuguese Protective and Benevolent Association of San Francisco expressive of the thanks of that organization to Mr. Benjamin for the impartial and creditable manner in which he had, in the article described, upheld the Portuguese national character, and commending him to the entire Portuguese colony in this country as an unprejudiced and able writer, familiar with the history, manners and customs of the Portuguese people.

Accompanying this token of esteem came a newspaper published in San Francisco by representatives of the Portuguese colony in the native tongue. It contained an account of the "Self Culture" article and an appreciation of Mr. Benjamin's services. The paper, the organization and