SAN FRANCISCO AS A FIRE TOWN

BY CHIEF D. T. SULLIVAN

SAN FRANCISCO as a "fire town" is one of the worst in the United States. When I say one of the "worst," I mean worst in this light. Suppose you pick out any other city of the same size in the United States and could place it side by side with this city just as you would stack up two brush piles, then quietly take away the fire departments and touch a match simultaneously to both cities—it is safe to say that San Francisco would be a mass of ashes first.

In other words if given a fair chance without any interference this city would burn up at a world's-record pace.

Why? Why, for the simplest reason in the world—because 95 per cent of the buildings are of wood.

The climate helps us out to a certain extent with its heavy fogs to keep the exterior wood of our buildings damp; but then this is offset by the severe winds that are apt to rise at a moment's notice.

Another point—the topography of this city favors fire, for the flames will lick up houses on a hillside in much better time than if they were all on level ground.

Putting our present improved facilities for fighting fire out of the question we are in much the same position as was Chicago when, in 1871, with a population of 338,000, the great fire destroyed 17,000 buildings.

There is the theory of San Francisco as a "fire town" in a nutshell. Now for the practical part.

For a city of our size we have a smaller fire loss per annum than any other city in the Union. The reason for this is we know so well San Francisco would burn up with half a chance that we never give her that chance. It is like the Western sheriff who has caught a "bad man" in the act, the sheriff simply keeps him covered and never takes his eye off the sight of his gun. That is the principle that has kept our percentage of losses so low; the principle of adhering closely to the idea of the old saying, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and adding to this, "if a cure is necessary get the medicine to work in short order."

One of the preventions is a good equipment for the Fire Department. We now have thirty-seven first-class engines; a larger number in proportion to our population than has any other city in the United States. We have also improved machinery of the greatest value not at present in use in any other city; for example our systems of movable batteries, whereby the combined streams of six engines can be forced through one nozzle, giving sufficient momentum to the water to literally tear down a solid wall as well as to extinguish the flames by its flood of water. Our high percentage of efficient equipment is necessary, for San Francisco must depend solely upon its own apparatus. In the big Boston fire of 1889 that city's engine muster numbered forty-three, but finding an urgent need as the fire gained upon them, the firemen borrowed fifty-seven extra engines from the neighboring towns. You can imagine what would have become of the city had not this loan been available. San Francisco has no such bank account in reserve to draw from. On a pinch she might get an engine or two from Oakland, but that would be all. Nearly all of the other large cities of the Union have this extra reserve that they may draw upon in an extremity, but with us it is our own department or nothing.

One point in our favor is the high hydrant pressure. Our hose lines always precede their engines to a fire and if the conflagration is not a serious one the hose is at once attached to the hydrant and then it is that this pressure counts, for the stream of water is often powerful enough to at once quench flames that might become serious if the men were obliged to wait even those few extra seconds necessary to get the heavier engines on the spot.

Another item of advantage in the way of prevention is the splendid ordinance passed some time ago in this city regarding fire escapes and standpipes on all buildings of any height. This ordinance is the best of its kind in vogue in any city of the United States. Fire escapes may not add to the architectural beauty of a building, but their use as life-savers in time of need is too well known to require any further comment. As a convenience of practical value to the firemen they are indispensable. A fire escape on a building means from our standpoint that we already have a good, substantial ladder right up to the roof of that building and that we can have a stream of water up there in a jiffy; for at the side of every escape runs a standpipe, to which a hose can be connected at the bottom and water can be hosed in from an outlet on every floor or on the roof.

The electrical hazard now cuts quite a figure in fire liabilities, but owing to the careful inspection that is made by city authorities of all electrical work done on every building, this danger is greatly obviated, and, to come back to the old proposition of keeping your eye on the bad man, such work is watched so carefully that there is very seldom a fire leak through such causes.

Another method in vogue with the department here is our system of patrol. The city is divided into seven districts and at the head of each is a battalion chief. It is the duty of each chief to familiarize himself with every building in his district and to keep up as it were a continual patrol, so that if at any time any changes are made they are done only with the sanction of the Fire Department. This prevents people from, wittingly or unwittingly, making firetraps out of their stores or houses and also gives the department the key to the situation regarding possibilities in case of fire. For instance, supposing a fire starts in a certain building, it is the duty of that chief to be able to tell all about the contents, whether explosive or not, and also to be fully cognizant of the most advantageous positions from which the fire may be fought and controlled.

Thus, you see, we are constantly going over throughout the different districts every possibility that might arise from a fire starting anywhere and we have our plans all laid as to just what should be done and how we should marshal our forces to the best advantage.

Carrying this idea still further, we have a "covering in system," as it is called, that has probably been brought to a higher degree of perfection here than in any other city. As we cannot borrow any engines we are obliged to husband our resources to the utmost, consequently this "covering in" plan has been adopted to make all of our apparatus count for the highest percentage of efficiency possible.

The idea of this system in brief is this: Every engine house is provided with a book giving details covering all contingencies that might arise as a fire box is rung in. If, say, engine 1 has gone to a fire, that fact is known in every house of the department and should another fire in that same district occur while that particular engine is at work it is down there in black and white just what other engine shall take the place of engine 1 for the new fire. Moreover, this "covering in" system goes still further; for, supposing that engine 2 has been called out on duty that should have fallen on the absent engine 1, the district covered by engine 2 is covered in turn by some other engine. This third engine, the moment it notices the call of engine 2 to go to this second fire, has left its own house and moved to the house usually occupied by engine 2; thus it is that for the time being engine 3 becomes engine 2 and will perform any duties that might chance to arise for the engine whose house it now occupies.

By this system all the ground is covered and it also means that in case of a small fire suddenly turning into a bad one the engines not at that time in use are within easy reach, for they have thus all been drawing closer to the danger point during the successive alarms that may have been turned in.

Every engine house in the city is provided with a pegged board that enables the men, the instant an alarm is turned in, to keep close watch of the positions of other fire companies and to know just what is, or may be, expected of their own company. The men are drilled an hour every day on just this point, so they have all the possibilities that might arise in their district right at their fingers' ends.

And so it is, that although San Francisco is one of the "worst fire towns," yet her fire losses are the smallest—all because, like the sheriff and the "bad man," we keep our eyes pretty closely glued to the sight of the gun barrel and take no chances.

ADVICE TO YOUNG PEOPLE

BY GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH

IT is no rare thing for people to come to me and say: "General, what must I do to be saved?" I tell them, "You must go and pray." They answer me, "I pray, but the words go no higher than the walls of my room in which I am kneeling."

They may speak the truth, but if the prayer ascends no higher than the ceiling it is because they are not earnest. You must feel—you must feel it yourself. You are not ready to meet God. You say to yourself, "In the morning I will be better prepared, but I am not quite ready now. Oh, no; not just now." You must do as you think and when you think. Strike when the iron is hot!

Strike when the iron is hot! You must remember. Take the Bible. Take the great truth. Study about God the eternal. God will be merciful to you, and if I can bring any such to him I know he will aid me in the so doing.

Be careful, be careful, be careful of your actions. Remember Lot's wife. If you have a good memory you will recall what the thirty-second verse of the seventeenth chapter of St. Luke says. Remember Lot's wife. Remember Lot's wife. Now, I frequently see people who have never given her a thought. God will take everything into consideration on the last day. Everything, I say.

Remember Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities in the land of Judea. They forgot the words of God. They had nothing to do. There were plenty of the luxuries of life, and they spent the time in having a good time. But their sins cried to God, and cried for punishment. You all know the wages of sin is death. Their cries went up to heaven, for God will always hear a cry, and he came down to see. He came down to see if the people had done according to the cry of which had come to him. He said, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sins are very grievous."

God will allow people to go just so far, young man, young man, and no farther, and when he found out what these people had done his anger was aroused. He knows where there is a will there is a way.

Abraham drew near and said: "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked, O Lord? There may be fifty righteous souls, and shall not the judge of all do right? Oh, my God, my God, thou are merciful." And see his answer: "If I find fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the city for their sakes."

And Abraham said: "If I can find but forty-five righteous persons will thou not spare the place for them? And if not forty-five, but forty, and if there should be but thirty, or if there are only ten righteous men and women within the city, shall they be spared?" And God answered Abraham from heaven, "I will spare them."

I suppose it never occurred to Abraham that he couldn't find at least ten people. He probably thought of as many friends. Still, it has always been an opinion of mine that if he had kept on asking and reducing the number he would have been able to have saved the entire city.

Yet I can hear him say, "Well, there is Lot and his wife, besides his two daughters. Besides, the daughters are betrothed, and that makes two more, and certainly such a good man as Lot couldn't have lived in a city as long as he has and not made some people better. Ten will be an easy number to find. Why, I already have six. There are only four more to find." And so he left off trying.

But the ten were not to be found.

The time is coming, coming, coming when we will all be found wanting, and I want to help, help, help you on your way to Jesus Christ.

The two angels of the Lord came to Sodom in the evening and entered Lot's house. They told Lot, his wife and his daughters to take what little things they could carry and prepare to leave the city and to leave it forever. I can hear Lot's wife saying: "Leave our home? Certainly not. This is all rubbish."

But the old man thought of the two men, his sons-in-law. He walked in the middle of the night to the home of the first one and knocked heavily on the door. After a while the young man opened to him. When he saw who it was he said: "Why Father Lot, is it you? What has gone wrong in the house? Has anything befallen your daughter?" "Come with me, come with me," answered the old man. "The Lord is about to punish the city and I have been warned that we may be saved. Come with me."

I can see the scorn on the younger man's face as he heard the story. "No," he answered, "I'm sleepy and I'll not go." So poor old Lot turned his face toward the part of the city where his other son-in-law lived. Again he knocked and after a while the door was opened. Again the young man said: "What, Father Lot, here this time of night? What is the matter?" And the same story was retold. After looking at him with pity his son said: "Do you see any difference in the heavens to-night than from last night? Are not the stars as clear?" And Lot shook his head and answered: "Yes."

Can you think of the old man wearily trudging home again after such a fruitless journey? Poor old fellow, he knew how badly his daughters would feel and he quite fully realized how difficult it would be for them to leave the city and them behind.

But when the morning came the angels hastened Lot, saying: "Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Then Lot's wife gave them trouble. She wouldn't go and leave all her good clothes behind. Her home and her friends were there and she didn't want to be lonely. Finally she cried and said: "Am I forced to leave my home?" And the angels answered: "No; stay and be consumed if you so desire." But her family talked and pleaded and finally persuaded her and she started grumbling on her way.

Can't you see this little party as they left their home in the small hours of the early morning? The girls, bless their hearts, thinking of the two men they loved; the mother of her home and luxury and Lot of his bank, the costly mansion and the new row of houses which he was just putting up. Probably he thought what a fool he had been to work so hard and all for nothing.

For awhile they walked briskly, for the two angels led the way, but then they commenced to lag. See what they were leaving behind. Everything but salvation and in their own minds they were not certain of even that. Finally the mother thought to herself surely it won't do any harm to take just one last look. Just one look and then, when the family were thinking and absorbed with their own affairs, she turned around.

Now, what I want to get at is this. You all remember her fate, but you fail to think of your own. Still you need not laugh. Lot's wife did a great deal more than many of you. She at least started. She at least started. How many of you can say the same? I remember a case in London. A man said to me: "General, I'll give up drink, but I want one more spree. Surely there can't be any harm in just one more. And then I'll be good." He went on his spree and had a glorious time, but on the way home he ran into a cab and was killed. That is what his last spree cost him. That is what it might cost you. It is the same the world over. Lot's wife thought there was no harm in having a last look; the Englishman thought there was no harm in one final spree and you think there is no harm in delaying one day.

But remember, remember. This is the time and right now. Say, My God, my God, I am coming. Make up your mind if it is not already made up. When you have struggled to your feet half the battle is won and there are any number of our people who will help you on. Backslider, backslider, listen to me. Come to Jesus while there is yet time.

IMPORTANCE OF EACH ONE BEING TAUGHT A TRADE.

BY BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

MY belief is that each one, no matter what his race or station in life happens to be, should learn some special trade or industry. It is helpful from several points of view. In the first place it will help him to earn a living, and, secondly, will strengthen his moral character.

I believe, further, that all the common trades and industries should be taught in our public schools. At the Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama, we not only teach our students some industry by which they are sure of earning a living, but we also impress upon them an idea of the beauty and dignity of labor.

I find that in many parts of the country there is great difficulty in securing persons to cook and perform other household duties. This comes about by reason of the fact that there is a social distinction drawn between the woman who cooks and the one who works in a store or works in a factory. At Tuskegee our young men are taught to respect a girl who cooks or launders just as highly as the one who teaches school.

When such industries as cooking, laundering and other household branches are taught in the public schools people will cease to look upon them as trades fit only for the poor and ignorant, but will learn to respect them as distinct callings. Then, and only then, the social distinction between the cook and the girl will disappear.

As a rule, people have escaped agricultural life and have gone to the cities because agriculture has not been taught in our schools, and people have learned to look upon it as something fit only for the unskilled and ignorant.

I believe that the time has come when agriculture should be taught in the schools of the rural districts. Children should be taught to love the soil, to love the grass, corn, trees, birds and animals. At Tuskegee we impress upon our students the importance of owning the soil and returning to the country districts after having received their education rather than going to the cities, where they come into contact with competition and temptations, which in many cases prove too severe for them.

This is what made me resolve to spend my life as best I could to improve the industrial, moral and religious condition of my own people. Not only that, but to try to make them of such high value as citizens to the white people among whom they live that the white man would respect the negro for his intrinsic worth.

At Tuskegee, an institution which I started in 1881, we have twenty-nine different departments, and each one is an industry in which each student can find employment as soon as he leaves our school. The main industry emphasized is the teaching of agriculture, and our reason for making so much of this is that fully 80 per cent of our people make their living that way. I have found that my race, as a rule, is at its best when owning and cultivating the soil. And that is why I urge them not to visit the cities, where, as I said before, the trials and temptations frequently prove their undoing.

It is my firm belief that my race will get upon its feet just in proportion as it is taught to put brains, skill and dignity into all the common occupations that are about our doors in the South. They must be taught to do common things in an uncommon manner—to do a thing so well that no one can improve upon what has been done. Where any man, black or white, is taught to do a thing better than any one else that individual's problem is solved.

Our graduates are not only in demand in large numbers by our race, but we cannot begin to supply the demands that are constantly pouring in upon us by white people for our students to take charge of farms, dairies, orchards and the like. Already we have sent out over 200 people and they are all doing excellent work in various parts of the South.

I know it is not the negro who has been thoroughly educated in head, hand and heart who commits the crimes; it is the shiftless, uneducated one who is guilty of crime.

My race does not ask nor does it need to have charity extended to it. If you will think you will remember that it is but seldom that you see a black hand reaching out for charity. The race does not ask for this. But it does ask of you your interest and generosity to have leaders and teachers sent among them to teach them how to take the same amount of money which they now scatter to the four winds buying cheap jewelry, gaudy finery and the like and put it into homes, farms and the building of school houses.

I am striving to teach my people to be patient and forbearing. I am trying to teach them that the greatest protection any negro can possibly have is absolute usefulness. We must learn to begin at the bottom and not commence with a great flourish at the top and fall down good and hard.

After the war, by reason of two things, ignorance and lack of experience, we made a great mistake. We were haughty and proud; we wouldn't work and we wouldn't do this and that and the other thing. We were free. As such we wanted to ride in buggies instead of wagons, but after several light traps had broken down with the weight put in them we learned to be more sensible and to buy that which was best adapted for our purpose.

We have many difficulties with which to contend, but at the same time the field of business in the South is open to the negro and he has about as good an opportunity to succeed as the white man.

My people are making great strides and our teachings are not being wasted. This reminds me of an old man I met last year while I was traveling through the South.

As I jogged through the country I met a camp wagon drawn by two fine mules. On the front seat was an old man and a little girl, while immediately behind him sat his wife and another daughter.

"Why, Uncle Abe, where are you going?" I asked as he drew rein and exchanged the greetings of the morning.

"Goin' to Kansas," he answered, shifting about on the seat and getting ready for a chat.

"Kansas?" I queried.

"Yes, Kansas. Goin' to camp meetin'. Reckon it's about time I got religion."

"But, Uncle, do you honestly think you can afford to take this trip? Don't you think you ought to stay home and work?"

"No," answered the old man. "I reckon I've got a right to go. I knows your learnin' and all about ownin' land to live on. Yas, I recollect it. But just you see ahere. I own fifty acres and the last dollar's all paid on it. I reckon I've got a right to go to camp meetin'. See this wagon? It's all paid for and I reckon it's got a right to go to camp meetin'. See them mules? They're mine, so I reckon they've got a right to go to camp meetin'. See them gals? Their mammy bought that goods an' I paid fo' it. Every stitch they've got on she's made and it's all paid fo'. I reckon they've got a right to go to camp meetin'. Reckon so?"

MEOWS OF A KITTY

BY KATE THYSON MARR

SOME people go through life like a pocket edition of the Salvation Army.

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If we realized the opinions entertained of us by our friends many of us would wish to lead hermit lives.

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A pious crank winds up all my antagonism.

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When people entertain you by telling you what their fathers were, listen and ask, "Now, my friend; what are you?" It is a curtain-ringer every time.

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When a woman is in love she wants to be on a hot trail for misery, or in a balloon ascension of glory.

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If we could wind some people up and let them go or run down at our pleasure we should feel real happy over it.

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A man who is touchy about his honesty is a candidate for State's prison.

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I am not particularly superstitious, and don't care anything about walking under a ladder, but I would not drink out of a cracked glass or cup on Monday morning and risk being hoodooed for the week for a farm or a string of race horses.

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A blue ribbon friendship is better than an honorable mention love.

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The rooster does the crowing, but the hen attends to business.

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Some women could not be happy unless they were just bunched up in trouble.

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Poverty, and not money, is more often the root of evil.

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The people who "told you so" for your own good and keep a supply of "sense of duty" always on tap need a shotgun to put them out of business.

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A woman cries when she gets mad, and a man swears and wants to kick something.

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Don't give advice; the other fellow would rather have a "smile" and the glad hand.

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If you will fall in love look before you leap.

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A trifling argument may end in a record-smashing quarrel.

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There are lots of people who learn by experience why Cupid runs about unchained with a bandage over his eyes.

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The fellow who gushes over his relatives seldom gives his relatives cause to gush over him.

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A chafing dish fiend expert is very different from a good old-fashioned cook. Callow youths contemplating matrimony will please take warning.

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I always feel sorry for little G. Washington. He had to tell the truth about that old cherry tree because he was the only boy on the farm.

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Experience teaches some men to appreciate the ineffable peace of mind that must reign where a deaf and dumb wife reigns.

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Men are moral triangles, with a business side, a club side and a domestic side.

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Some women like a case of malaria—a chill and then a fever.

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Should children be spanked? For heaven's sake, not until after the mothers get what is coming to them. (After you, my dear Alphonse.)

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You can't help being a "has been" or a "never was," but you've yet your chance at the "get theres" and comin' gos."