

A TEST FOR COWARDICE

By VERNON ARNOLD
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A number of army officers in a garden on the western frontier where they had nothing to do were discussing what constituted bravery.

The colonel looked at this speaker contemptuously and gave a grunt. Surgeon Bates observed the colonel's action, but went on smoking without expressing any opinion on the subject.

"What do you think about it, doctor?" asked the colonel. "I think you are a coward, colonel."

"If a bomb had come out of the doctor's mouth instead of words and exploded then and there it could not have produced more of a shock."

"Withdraw your charge, sir, at once or go to your quarters under arrest."

"I will only withdraw it after a full trial to prove its truth."

"I have proved its falsity on many a battlefield."

"I will not deny that under excitement you may temporarily throw off your guard, but I deny that you can maintain your bravery while perfectly cool."

"I will submit to a test I will prove what I say—that you are a coward."

"Proceed with your test. I have sat on my horse motionless while shells after shells burst over my head. There was no excitement in that. Members of my staff were so nervous that they moved at every shot. Does not that prove I am no coward?"

"You may have stood that test so far as appearances were concerned, but in your own mind you were not in control of your fear. The test I refer to will eliminate everything except fear and show you what you are—a coward."

"Bring on your test, sir," cried the colonel angrily, "and if you fail to prove your charge be prepared to answer yourself the charge of conduct prejudicial to military discipline in this, that you have called your commanding officer a coward in presence of his subordinate officers."

Surgeon Bates while in the wild west had gathered a number of his specimens of animals of different varieties, one of them a rattlesnake that he kept in a five gallon demijohn distended of the wickerwork on the outside. The glass was transparent, so that the snake could see and be seen, sir passed through wire gauze, used in place of a stopper. The doctor arose and going into his office, returned with the captive, placing the demijohn on a table.

"Colonel," he said, "I have called you a coward. But mind you, I have only applied the word to you in accordance with your own idea of what constitutes a coward. If you stand the test I am about to apply, I will willingly submit to be tried by court-martial for throwing discredit on my commanding officer. Step up to the table, colonel, and place your hand on the demijohn."

The colonel walked to the table and placed the palm of his hand on the glass. Quick as lightning the snake, vicious beyond measure, struck at the hand, and equally quick the colonel jerked his hand away. "Mortified beyond measure, he put it back on the demijohn, and when the snake struck again he drew it away again."

"That will do, colonel," said the doctor. "You are welcome to prefer charges against me, but to substantiate your case you must be prepared to keep your hand on that glass while the snake strikes at you. But you are not the only man here who, according to your idea, is not brave. Not one of you can stand the test. Gentlemen, step up and try it. The snake won't hurt you; the glass is a perfect protection."

One after another of those present placed a hand on the demijohn, and at the snake's strike each and every man recoiled. Then Dr. Bates said: "No man can keep his hand on that glass where the snake strikes at it for the simple reason that the nerves that direct motion act independently of the will. In this case before the will can be brought to bear the muscles have done the work."

"Then what is bravery?" asked the colonel. "A brave man is one whose bodily machine is so constructed and adjusted in its different parts as to enable him to be brave."

"But the will," asked the major. "What part does it play?" "In reply to this question I give you only my own idea on the will's part in bravery. It is strong enough and often faculties are not too weak to enable the man to stand up in face of danger till he gets back near enough to his brute nature, to fight. In other words, his fear becomes paralyzed, leaving him what we call brave."

The colonel soon after this, leading his men against the Indians, showed the white feather. The surgeon's test had destroyed his confidence in himself. The blue eyed lieutenant was presented for bravery.

The Fire Bag

Every whaler and sealer that sailed the seas in the days of wooden ships carried a fire bag. This was a tarpan bag about a foot long and six inches wide lined with waterproof material, with interlinings of oilcloth and thick flannel. Into this was placed the tin and under box for kindling fire, and the bag was then securely fastened with double flaps and tied to keep its contents dry. It was the special duty of the second mate to look after the fire bag and in case of shipwreck to at least get it to the person by means of stout straps provided for the purpose. Thus if officers and crew were cast away on some deserted shore in the desolate arctic circle the means of obtaining a fire to warm themselves by and to heat food and drink would not be wanting as long as the precious fire bag was safe.

The steam whalers and sealers of the present day still carry a fire bag stowed in the lifeboat with the bread and swan. But now it is of rubber and contains half a dozen tin boxes of matches.

New York Press

Hanged the Clever Forger

Of curious petitions against the death penalty being enforced one recalls the eighteenth century case of William Lyland, who was sentenced for forging a bill for £7,114 on the East India House. The forgery was a work of art. No less than thirty signatures were imitated and at the trial not one of the victims could swear that the signature was not his own. However, with the help of the paper manufacturer Lyland's guilt was brought home. Then came the petition of his friends. So clever a man ought never to be hanged, they pleaded. His craftmanship should save him. It gained him a reprieve. He was allowed to finish a fine engraving he had begun but nothing more. Though the engraver was a favorite of George III, that king quite failed to see how a forgery could be executed on the ground that it was a clever forgery. Pall Mall Gazette

The Soap and Water Cure

The traveler in the Himalayas must be prepared for surprises. Two days after the Hon. C. G. Bruce had reached Mann he received a message from a young lady saying that ever since she had seen him on the day of his arrival she had been ill. "I was very much hurt, I allow," says Major Bruce in "Twenty Years in the Himalayas." During the course of a short but interesting career no such snub had ever been administered to my self respect. I said, "But can't I do anything? Sit down, wash your face and let me have the water." So we got hot water and soap, and she sat on a rock to see that there was no deception. The water, or rather, the decoction, was then put into a long tumbler, and she then and there drank it all! What is more, the next day she sent word that she was quite cured.

Four Hundred Years Before Peary

The north pole is the place of greatest dignity in the world, and the people who dwell near it "have a wonderful excellency and an exceeding prerogative above all nations of the earth." How blessed we may think this nation to be, for they are in perpetual light and never know what darkness meaneth, by the benefit of twilight and full moons, as the learned in astronomy do very well know, which people if they have the notice of their sterility, by the comfortable light of the gospel, then are they blessed and all of nations most blessed. Why then do we neglect the search of this excellent discovery, against which there can be nothing said to hinder the same? From Hakluyt's Voyage (Sixteenth Century).

An Ill Fated City

The ill fated Sicilian city of Messina was almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake in 1083 and greatly damaged by another in 1783. In 1743 the plague carried off nearly half of the inhabitants. In 1784 the city was visited by a terrible quake and tidal waves, which shaped its destruction. In fact, it would be difficult to find any other city with a more mournful history than Messina, which has been practically destroyed twenty-one times during the past 3,000 years.

Below the Average

Apropos of loss of friends somebody was saying one day before Morgan, the great calculator of lives, that they had lost so many friends, mentioning the number. In a certain space of time upon which Morgan, coolly taking down a book from his office shelf and looking into it, said, "So you ought, sir and three more."—Thomas Moore.

Willing to Risk It

Uncle—My dear boy, it's a fact that the bacillon paper money have caused many a death before now. Nephew—Well, uncle, you might let me have a few notes. I'm very tired of life.—Fleegende Blatter.

A Thousand Refusals

Kate—That fragon girl claims to have made a thousand refusals of marriage. Ethel—That's true. When Gu asked her to be his wife she replied "No, a thousand times, no!"—Boston Transcript.

Exaggerated Ego

One of the hardest things in this world for the sixteen candle kind of man to do is to keep from mistaking himself for a lighthouse.—Galveston News.

Passion For Music

Mrs. Raven—Did you say your husband has a passion for music? Mrs. Rabbit—Yes. Every time I sing he flies into one.—Yonkers Statesman.

A MODERN CONVENIENCE

By EDITH V. ROSS
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"I'll call you up and let you know," said Joslin. "You can do that, because I haven't a telephone in the house."

"Haven't a telephone? How do you get on without one?" "Couldn't get on with one."

"Explain I can't see any reason in what you say."

"Well, last summer, when my wife went to our summer cottage, she thought it would be a nice thing to have a telephone in the house that she might have one handy to tell what was going on. We have three little children, and there's usually something the matter with one of them. My wife is timid, one of those women who look under the bed every night before they get into it, and as I only went down for Sundays she was alone five nights or six in the week. So we had a telephone put in beside her bed and one beside my bed in our town house."

"Then we thought that for the first time in our lives I would not be worried if letters were delayed and she would have me to rely on. In case the children were sick or she found a man under the bed though I admit that I couldn't sink the fellow out over a telephone."

"Well, the first night it was very pleasant. When I came in before going to bed I called my wife up. 'All right, sweetie dear.' 'Newly dear, the children are all asleep. Is your cold better?' 'A little better. This wet weather isn't good for it.' 'Well, don't go out without your rubbers. You'll find them in the hall closet.' 'All right, dear good night.' 'Good night. Be sure about the rubbers.'"

"Two days later my wife called me up while I was making a deal of great importance to say that Tommy had cut his foot on a tin can and from the way the blood was flowing she was sure the injury had been severe. If I had been there to see I would have known whether the matter was serious or not. As I was not there I couldn't feel sure that the boy was not bleeding to death. I was so upset that I broke off the negotiation I had on hand and lost \$1,000 by doing so. Later a telephone message came to say that the cut was only skin deep after all."

"But the worst came in the finding of the man under the bed for whom women has been looking since the days of their first Mother Eve. He was found one night when my wife was going to bed. He came not when she was looking for him, but when she looked into the room where two of the children were sleeping to see that they were all right. I was called to the phone while playing a rubber of whist at the club. I heard my wife's voice speaking faintly and consequently I unintelligibly, 'Speak louder.' 'I don't dare, there's a man in the other room, and I'm afraid he'll hear me call you and kill us all!'"

"I heard enough of this to get the meaning. From what she told me further I made out that when she looked into the children's room she had seen the leg of a man sticking out from under the bed. At least I thought she said 'leg,' but she told me afterward she said 'foot.'"

"Well, there she was, and there I was too. She had shut the man in with the children in order to send me word of the situation over the phone without his hearing her. I rushed back to the card table, reported the facts to my friends, and we resolved ourselves into a committee to consider the case. Our excited talk attracted the attention of the others in the room, who gathered around, and presently nearly every member was offering suggestions as to the best way for me to proceed. It was suggested that I telephone the police of the town where my country place was located, reporting the facts and asking them to surround the house and capture the burglar, if possible, before he could do any harm."

"This was quickly done, and I phoned my wife to keep up her courage, give no indication of her knowledge of the burglar's presence and within a few minutes all would come out right. I would wait at the telephone, holding the wire for news."

"Pretty soon I heard her say, 'I hear voices outside.' 'Then they are forcing a window to get in. Oh, dear, I hope he won't fight them! If he does I know I shall faint. They are coming up the stairs, the back stairs and the front stairs.' Then there was a pause, during which I heard confusion of sounds over the wire, then a great voice saying: 'The lady fainted, sir, but she has come to herself. It's all right.' 'Did you get her?' 'Oh, it was a mistake of the lady's, sir. The little boy is sitting in your shoes out of the closet pulled out one of your boots, and it laid just under the edge of the bed. The lady took it for a burglar's foot.'"

"I breathed a 'Thank heaven' hurrying up the receiver and went back into the card room to see a crowd of anxious faces looking at me for news."

"'Whiter,' I called, 'bring champagne.'"

"Then I told the story."

"The next morning I had the telephone taken out. I'd rather not hear of anything going on in my family that I can't see. And news travels fast enough without sending it by electricity, and haste makes waste."

Tamed Him

"Sit on a brace of cackles," ordered the chisty looking young man with a bored air as he perched on the first stool in the room. "A what?" asked the waitress as she placed a glass of water before him.

"Adam and Eve sat on their backs. A pair of sunny sides," said the young man in an exasperated tone.

"You got me, kid," returned the waitress. "Watch what?" "Eggs up," said the young man. "Eggs up, the kind that come before the hen or after, I never knew which."

"Why didn't you say so in the first place?" asked the waitress. "You'd 'a had 'em by this time."

"Well, of all things!" said the young man. "I knew what he was drivin' at all the time," began the waitress as the young man departed. "But he's one of them fellers that thinks they can get by with anything. He don't know that they're callin' plain English now in restaurants."—Kansas City Times.

Knew Just How

Many years ago in Paris at the first presentation of a play that had for its closing scene the murder of a Swedish king which had taken place nearly half a century earlier all went well till the murder scene came on, when a very dignified old gentleman in the stage box showed signs of strong disapproval and at length called out angrily:

"A beard! They've got it all wrong!" The manager himself heard this plain spoken comment, and, being naturally disturbed by so sweeping a condemnation, he sought out the critic and politely begged to know what fault he had to find with it.

"Why, my good sir," cried the old man, with an air of authority, "the whole grouping of the scene is incorrect! You have made them kill the king to the right of the door, whereas he murdered him on the left!"

The Tea Chewers

"Chewing tea comes from Siam," said a traveler. "They call it mung it in a plug like chewing tobacco, and it has a villainous smell. This smell is due to the fermentation it has undergone. The tea that the Siamese employ for chewing purposes is a very coarse, rank plant. It is gathered like ordinary tea, but the leaves after being compressed into plugs are buried for fifteen days. They ferment during burial. On their resurrection they are very, very fragrant indeed. The Siamese boil them in water. The rich men chew it. The literateurs chew it. They say it makes them work better. This is probably the truth, for I chewed a plug myself in Annam, and it exhilarated me strangely. But the aftermath was bad—a headache, smarting eyes and nervous depression."—Washington Post.

When Tolstoy Tried to Fly

From earliest childhood Tolstoy was remarkably obedient of the things that were going on in the world around him. Thus, while still in his teens he had his father's interest in the art of flying that was too practical to suit his devoted mother. With characteristic thoroughness he invented a design of his own and with equal characteristic courage proceeded to put it to an immediate test from a second story window. But the boy who was afterward to find food for thought for the whole civilized world was not destined to make his mark as an infant aeronautist. He fell instantly to the ground, and though by great good fortune no bones were actually broken, the concussion was so great that young Tolstoy afterward slept for sixteen hours on end.

Joy For Johnny

Johnny's mother was telling Johnny stories from Bible history. And Johnny for a long time was very silent. At last he sighed and looked up questioningly into his mother's face.

"When I get to heaven shall I know every one?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed," answered his mother. "Napoleon, and Samuel, and George Washington, and Solomon, and—David?" persisted Johnny.

"Certainly, dear."

"Well, then, mother, if I'm very good—if I'm ever so good and ask him ever so nicely, do you think that David will let me touch his slingshot—just touch it—once?"—Philadelphia Times.

Death

Death, the dry pedant, spares neither the rose nor the thistle, nor does he forget the solitary blade of grass in the distant waste. He destroys thoroughly and unmercifully. Everywhere we may see how he crushes to dust plants and beasts, men and their works. Even the Egyptian pyramids, that would seem to defy him, are trophies of his power, monuments of the day, grave of primeval kings.—Hain rich Elets.

Pa's Idea

"What was the trouble at the building of the tower of Babel, pa?" "I'm not certain, but I think it was between the union and the non-union workmen."—New York Press.

Serious Intentions

Nettie—Haven't Mr. Peleweley proposed yet? Nora—No, but he has got as far as to ask what time we have breakfast and whether mother is a good cook.—Exchange.

Contention

Mrs. Gamerry—My husband is anxious to go rid of me. Mrs. Park—Don't try dear. In that case he won't haggle over the alimony.—Smart Set.

Contention

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