The Acton Free Press

THURSDAY, JULY 28, 1921

SING A SONG

If you sing a song as you go along,
In the face of the foul or fancied wrong,
In spite of the doubt if you'll fight it out;
And show a heart that is brave and stout;
If you'll laugh at the jeers and refuse the tears,
You'll force the ever-reluctant cheers
That the world denies when a coward cries,
To give to the man who bravely tries.
And you'll win success with a little song—

If you'll sing a song as you plod along,
You'll find that the busy, rushing throng
Will catch the strain of the glad refrain;
That the sun will follow the blinding rain;
That the clouds will fly from the blackened sky
That the stars will come out by and by,
And you'll make new friends, till hope descends
From where the placid rainbow bends,
And all because of a little song—
If you'll sing the song as you plod along!

If you'll sing a song as you trudge along,
You'll see that the singing will make you strong,
And the heavy load and the rugged road,
And the sting and the stripe of the tortuous goad
Will soar with the note that you set afloat;
That the beam will change to a trifling mote;
That the world is bad when you are sad,
And bright and beautiful when glad,
That all you need is a little song—
If you'll sing the song as you trudge along.

THE BIRTHDAY SURPRISE

By Lillian Grace Copp

"AND it'll have to be a cake!" Zara danced around her mother like a woodland elf in her excitement.

"Yes," cried Zora, every bit as excited as her twin, but trying hard to conceal it.

"And candles, and frosting," said their mother for at least the twentieth time, since promising the girls a specially prepared dinner on their twelfth birthday. "And there'll be sliced cold chicken and fruit salad."

"Oh, Mrs. Allen," interrupted a neighbor, unceremoniously opening the door, "someone wants to speak with long distance. They are holding the line. Hurry, please!"

Mrs. Allen untied her apron hastily and threw it aside. "I won't be gone more than a minute, girls. If you smell the chicken getting too hot, open the oven door." She gave helpful Zora a tap on the arm, and fled down the steps.

"That's just the way—always!" cried Zara, impatiently pushing a chair out of her way, as she ran to the window just in time to catch a glimpse of her mother disappearing within the house across the street. "That's just the way it always is. Whenever mother is planning something nice, someone is sure to want her. In just another minute I was going to ask her if I might have Betty Marden, she's such a dear—and it would make it seem so much more like a truly birthday."

"It wouldn't have done a bit of good if you had," returned practical Zora. "This dinner is going to be just among ourselves, and anyway, you couldn't have asked Betty, because it is a secret. Father doesn't know it yet. He'll forget all about its being our birthday. Men always forget things like that—mother says they do. And that's why it has been such fun for her to save, because we'll get the dinner and surprise father at the same time. When he comes in and sees the table all dressed up, he'll say, quick-like and kind-of-low: 'Company?' and we'll answer: 'Yes, daddy—you!' and—"

"And that's what makes it seem so awful funny," interrupted Zara, her tone holding an injured cadence. "It's our birthday, yet it's daddy who gets the surprise."

Zora's blithe acceptance of everything as being just exactly right, made her twin feel decidedly abused. It was altogther different when mother was talking over the dinner. Why, then it was as good as a fairy tale. Better, for there was the cake, all brown and crusty and fragrant, ready for its frosting, and candles; while in the oven slowly roasted the plump chicken. It was just as if mother were a beneficent fairy holding a magical golden key which unlocked the door to the twins' imagination, and made Zara as well as her sister, forget that their father's surprise was used merely as a substitute for the presents they could not afford.

Ever since the twins were six, their mother had tried to manage a special dinner for their birthday, but always at the eleventh hour something happened to upset her plans. Hoping to avert the catastrophe, this time, she had taken the girls into her confidence. The year before she was sure that the birthday dinner would be a reality, but two days before the date, grandma was taken ill, and the girls had been left to celebrate a motherless as well as a cakeless birthday. It all came back to Zara, as she threw resentful glances in the direction of her happy-faced sister, carefully opening the oven door, to see how the chicken was getting on.

"Our birthday always goes wrong. You know how it was last year! All we got was hair ribbons and we had to have hair ribbons anyway." She tossed her head defiantly.

"Yes, but we never would have got such pretty, pink ribbons, if they had not been a special present." Zora always was careful to estimate every blessing as its highest valuation.

"It went wrong, just the same," Zara continued. "It takes more than hair ribbons, even 'pink' ones, to keep a birthday from being spoiled. How do you suppose it is, Zora," she forgot her grievance long enough to question, "that nothing ever happens to spoil daddy's birthdays? I'd just love to swap days with daddy. It wouldn't do a speck of good to swap with mother, for her birthdays are exactly like every other day."

"Of course they are," cried Zora, suddenly understanding the reason, "because it comes just the day before ours, and she wants to save everything for us." Then she shut the oven door quietly, and whirled and faced her sister, with finger pointed accusingly. "Zara Allen, it's mother's birthday to-day, and we forgot all about it, and you stand there and fret over to-morrow when to-day you never remembered to give mother even a kiss—a special one, I mean."

"Well, you forgot too!" Zara's grievance was becoming unbearable. Mother's minute had lengthened perceptibly, and the addition of Zora's sudden accusation snapped the last thread of restraint. She would make her sister as uncomfortable as herself.

"We might let mother have our cake. Something'll happen to spoil to-morrow anyway. Mother wouldn't even talk over the birthday without being called to the phone. Oh, Zora, you don't suppose that grandma's gone and got sick again?" The girl's tone was vibrant with anguish and fear.

"No, I don't suppose anything of the kind. Someone's probably found out about our birthday, and is going to give us something over so nice," philosophized Zora. "There, you lay frosting, and the cake is ready to frost, and the chicken almost done, and mother's got everything to make the salad, and ordered the ice to-day to freeze the ice cream early to-morrow," and Zora's energetic little hand gave a sweep that took in the cake, the roasting chicken, and finished with a triumphant nod in the direction of the refrigerator. "Not a single thing will happen this time. Only just good things! Now, you wait and see!"

Simultaneously, with the uttering of the last word, the door swung open, and their mother breathless, her hair blown and fluffed into bewitching little curls, giving her a wonderfully sweet and girlish appearance, stood before them. For a minute she looked at the girls helplessly, then she spoke in a tone that was anxious, protecting, hopeful, all in one.

"I don't know how to tell it, girls, but that call was from Birdena Allston. She and four others are on an auto trip, and as their route takes them in, she called to tell me they would have luncheon with us, if they might. They'll be here in *two* hours. I have not seen Birdie since I left college." Her eyes were wistful, and that made her face all the more sweet and girlish. "I couldn't tell her not to come—but, five hungry people, girls, means that it will take every crumb of your to-morrow's birthday dinner. I am so sorry! But what else could I have done? Birdie and her friends don't know the meaning of the word 'economy' and what to us would have been so elaborate, will be to them just a simple little lunch." Mrs. Allen removed the chicken from the oven, turned it and basted it, and put it back, closing the oven door thoughtfully. "I'll make the ice cream. The freezer holds enough, so we'll all have plenty of that. Do say something, girls!"

"Well, it happened just as I said it would," Zara cried in a resigned tone of injury.

Zora sprang and laid her hand gently on her sister's lips. "Zara, you know you're glad at heart." Then she flew to her mother, and her eyes shone like diamonds.

"It's just splendid that it ever happened. It shall be your party—your surprise birthday party, with your dear friends with you. And your two daughters will wait on the table. And you must just forget that you've got a family and have the best time that ever you had in your life."

But Zara could not enter at first into the spirit of her sister's sacrifice.

"Zara and I will love it a whole lot more that way," Zora was saying. "Won't we, Zara?"

Thus appealed to, the better self came to the help of Zara.

"You are just two dear girls," said the mother. "It is no wonder you are disappointed, Zara."

The next two hours passed like magic, and at the end of that time every thing was in readiness. The ice cream was frozen and tucked away in the coolest corner of the cellar. The salad was in the ice box keeping crisp, and the table was brave with mother's finest silver and china—gifts from her old classmates. Mother quite forgot the pinching and planning that had filled the years. She was again with her dear, dear schoolmates, and every once in a while her lips took up a song she had sung in her girlhood. Fourteen years of married life now seemed just one long, golden way. She forgot her husband's unsuccessful 'ventures' as she viewed the dainty table, and the cool, scrupulously clean rooms. And then, there were the dear girls—Zora, so sweet and charming, and Zara with a beauty all her own. Poor Zara! Life was sometimes a bit hard for her to take along—but she was sweet at heart.

When at last looking out, they saw a mammoth car stop before the door, Zara had broken through all the clouds of the morning, and she smiled as did Zora. And when the mother brought the two girls forward to make them acquainted with her friends, she was a happy, proud mother.

Birdena Allston's clear tones cried, "You rich, rich woman!" as she hugged first one girl and then the other, laying a soft kiss on the brow of each.

Upstairs, laying aside their motor wraps, Birdena stood tossing her hat a little further from the edge of the bed, where she had placed it, and said, "Now, just for a little while, you folks do as you like, and let the twinnies here, and me, have it as we like downstairs."

"But everything is ready," said Mrs. Allen, with a little wondering look—and then she laughed. "Oh, go ahead, Birdie. You are just as you always were—wanting your own way. But you will find that the girls have everything fixed."

"All right!" cried Birdena, as with an arm over the shoulder of each of the girls, the three went laughing down the stairs.

"Oh, how lovely you are!" said Zara, turning to get a glimpse of the one whose arm encircled her so closely. "Mother said you were lovely!"

"Your mother thinks everyone is lovely," said Birdena, laughing. And then she drew her arms away from the girls, as they reached the hallway, and said, "Now for a cut to the automobile!"

There was a merry laugh from the two girls, and a laugh too from Birdena, when the three returned to the house. The mother and the friends heard the rippling laughter, and, when a little later, Birdena, appeared with the announcement, "Luncheon is served," the mother drew a long breath. What a lovely day it was proving! But when the doorway of the dining-room was reached, she stopped short. The room had been transformed by masses of greenery and hothouse roses, and on the table was an immense candle-trimmed cake—not the cake she had provided for the girls. Mrs. Allen lifted her hand to her head in a bewildered manner. Then light broke over her face as she looked at Birdena.

"Your birthday, madam!" cried Birdena. The twins hugged each other and laughed until tears ran down their faces. "Many happy returns of the day!" continued Birdena. "You thought we had forgotten this was your birthday, and the one and only reason we planned the trip was to make this visit to you on our way, and give you a surprise. But I am a little afraid we have broken into another birthday party, from what the girls said."

"No you haven't—no you haven't!" cried Zara. "It is lo-ve-lee. It is our birthday to-morrow and we will join with mother to-day in her birthday."

"You shall have a birthday, too," said Birdena, looking at the twins. "We are going to stay over until to-morrow. A friend has invited us to spend the night with her, so we'll help make your birthday as perfect as we hope your mother's will be."

"Oh, how lovely!" said Zora, the tears running down her face. "And you thought, Zara—"

A hand was clapped over Zora's lips. "Don't Zora—don't ever say what I thought!"

"It is simply lovely!" cried Zora.

THE RIDERS OF THE PLAINS

(1) A Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman rides well.
(2) A Fully Equipped Mounted Policeman.
(3) A Mounted Policeman in winter uniform.

The noble traditions and fascinating uniform of the Royal North-west Mounted Police are exclusively our own in Canada and it is fitting, in its re-organization, that it should be named the "Royal Canadian Mounted Police." The existence of tribes of wild Indians, the quarrels of the traders and the vast body of settlers coming in, led the late Sir John A. Macdonald to take possession of the great land by establishing the police in 1873. The aim was to have detachments of well armed and disciplined men, judiciously posted throughout central posts.

The first force consisted of 16 officers, 201 men and 244 horses. The troops travelled by way of Chicago to Fargo and marched across the plains. In 1874, three hundred police set out from Fort Garry for the junction of the Bow and Belly River and a portion was detached to Edmonton. An old trading centre, Fort Whoopup, near the present city of Lethbridge, was first reached. The second centre was on Old Man's River and Fort McLeod was established. The police found plenty of work with the whiskey traders and soon gained the respect of the settlers and even the Indians, for their fair treatment.

In 1874, a fort was established at Calgary. Colonel Jarvis with 40 men had charge of Fort Edmonton, where a Hudson Bay fort had been established since 1795. In 1876, Fort Saskatchewan was built, twenty-six miles from Edmonton. There were 13 forts established by 1881. In 1882, a fort was built at "Pile of Bones," now Regina. The government buildings were soon created and in 1883, it was made the headquarters of the force for Canada with Commissioner Perry in charge.

From 1874 until 1879, there was not a man molested or killed until Constable Graybourne was murdered by one of the Blood Indians. With the disappearance of the buffalo, there was almost famine among the Indians and the police had a great work in feeding many thousands. The Indians killed the settlers' cattle and so great did the evil became that many of the settlers moved across the boundary.

Early last year, the police force had fallen to about 500 men as the result of drafts for the various theatres of war. Enlistments since have brought it up and included in Dominion Police Force. Operations were extended to include British Columbia and various Eastern provinces. The latest post to be established is Barnard Harbor on Coronation Gulf. This copper mine district is important because of large developments. Herschel Island, guarding the Arctic board, is the most northerly patrol.

The airship and the airplane may be used in the long patrol of Canada's Northern Hinterland. The furthest patrol could be covered in 15 hours and it took the Klondyke gold seekers eighteen months.

His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, is now honorary commandant of the force which will be brought up to a strength of 3,500 men. The men of the force are usually men of superior education. They have always been of great physique, Parthian riders, unequalled scouts, accustomed to hardships and rough fare and schooled in all the arts of diplomacy. It has been truly said that "there is one thing on this plant longer than the equator and that is the arm of British Justice, and the mounted police are the men who enforce it."—C. C.

HAVING WHAT OTHERS HAVE

We all know that the desire to have what others have causes more ruin than almost any other social instinct. We must go where others go, we must do what others do, we must dress like others, we must eat like others, we must travel like others. How often we do things quite indifferent to our own tastes and wishes simply because others do them!

This tyranny of the notion of others is especially marked in a democratic society, where everyone is striving to get up in the world, and to have his wife get up in the world, and to have her show it by dressing and entertaining as others do, or a little better.

Most of all are we anxious not to have our children in any way outdone by the children of others. If Maude takes violin lessons at five dollars a lesson, our Gladys must pay five or six. If Maude's brother, Jim, has a motor cycle, our Tom also must have one. The process too often lands Gladys and Tom in the poorhouse, where, to be sure, they will find a good many others—only they are not the others we wish to imitate. Therefore, prudent and thrifty parents never tire of counselling their children, "Do not consider what others have. Govern your outlay by your income and have only those things that you can decently afford. By far the most precious and least-imitable thing that others—a few others—have, is "complete independence." Parents of that type often deny their children what they could afford simply to root out the overlasting disposition to copy the tastes and the expenditure of others.

The principle may be carried too far and cause huge unhappiness, that unhappiness of a child which is huge in its desolation, however trivial it may appear to those who are older and wiser. Do not let your child be servilely imitative of others, but do not let him out of touch with his little world in those minor things that count more for success in life than many persons realize. Watch children's fashions and follow them. When you buy a new toy or a new implement or object, buy one that will be right, not one that perhaps costs a few cents less and that will be mocked at with the bitter mockery that children practice and feel. You were young once yourself. Go right back there and try to save your children some of the unnecessary misery that you felt. There will be enough necessary misery that you cannot save them.

As the main rule of life, having what others have, is pitiful. As a correction for individual oddities and little tactless awkwardnesses, it is a most useful guide and not to be neglected.

REAL THINKING HARD WORK

A car that is loaded is much less likely to jump the track than one which is empty, and the reason for our attention is so easily distracted is that our thought is not intense enough. Superficial, careless thinking is the prey of innumerable distraction.

Real thinking is hard work. It often starts the sweat like physical effort. It leaves one tired. And for this reason many people are content to skim the surface, or let others do their thinking for them.

If you find yourself unable to think of any subject for five minutes at a time, without the thoughts darting off in this direction or that, then you have something to learn along the line of hard thinking. And until you can think intensely and persistently, you have not mastered the use of the tool more essential than any other in fashioning success.

KEEPING THE HIRED MAN

Last summer a farmer living east of town had much difficulty in getting a hired man to stay on the job. Man after man would start but after working just a few days would quit. Finally he got up a notice and tacked it up at his front gate, with the result that he got a man who stayed with him until freeze-up. The notice read as follows: "Hired Man Wanted—Hired girl is a good looker; piano music every evening, pie three times a day, three spoons of sugar with every cup of coffee, hammock, feather beds, or leather couches at your option for sleeping, free use of the automobile, lining hour at 9 a. m., three hours rest at noon, quit work at 5. The boss tends to the horses, milks the cows and feeds the hogs.—Exchange.

WALKING VS. RUNNING

The Boston Nutrition Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution has lately completed an elaborate study of the physiological aspects of walking, which the Journal of the American Medical Association summarizes. According to the authors of the report, very few persons get through the day without walking one or two miles, and the average office worker usually walks about seven miles. In walking a person expends energy not only in external, muscular exercise, but also in producing the heat necessary to maintain such bodily activities as circulation, breathing and balancing the body in an upright position. The energy that the body expends in walking is thus a complex made up of various contributions for special purposes. Walking even at a moderate rate sets up certain muscular movements that are not directly connected with the business of going ahead, such as swinging the arms and raising the weight of the body with every step. The experiments of the Boston laboratory show that when the arms are swung vigorously, as they are in a brisk walk, the digestion and assimilation of food may be increased more than one hundred and twenty-five per cent. Furthermore, it was found that as much as one-fifth of the energy that an average-sized man expends in walking he spends merely in raising his body at every step. Running calls for a greater outlay of energy, and gets a smaller proportionate return for it; for running lifts the body nearly twice as high as walking does, and the most economical kind of locomotion is that which wastes the least energy in lifting the body. It follows that the most efficient walker or runner is he who swings his arms the least and raises his body the least in proportion to the amount of ground that he covers.

WORK IS A PRIVILEGE

"My final appeal to you, my people, is this," spoke the great Clemenceau, "go back to your tasks. Do the best that is within you. Labor and the love of labor is our greatest need."

"The solution of all our problems lies in honest toil," said Lloyd George.

"Work and save!" says Herbert Hoover.

Truly, work and the desire to work, must be the urgent need of the world just now. But this call to the workers was sounded long ago. Back over the centuries in the days when the Romans were exalting themselves in their own vain splendor, a philosopher said: "There is more joy in work than in the painstaking avoidance of it."

There was a time when work was considered a curse. Anyhow, it was so considered by those who could avoid it. And to avoid work, so those foolish ones believed, was to manifest a shrewdness of a high order. Others believed that work was a necessary evil, and belonged only to the illiterate and the vulgar.

Now we know, and we are happy in knowing, that work is a supreme privilege. Work, of the kind that proves our ability, that gives employment to our hands and brain, is something to be sought rather than passed by. Colleges and schools are teaching the blessed gospel of work. Honors are given these days to the creators, the builders, the producers—whether the thing created or built or produced be a statue, a painting, a book, an ear of corn or a super-hen.

Idleness produces nothing. It consumes, but gives nothing in return. Work alone can replace. The individual who is happy at his work, or with his work, has no complaint against the world.

VIRTUE OF HOUSEWIFE AND SOLDIER

—"Wanted—strong, tidy general, well recommended."

The Americans whom this advertisement in a British newspaper moved to hilarity had yet to learn that the person wanted was not a commander of troops, but merely a servant for general housework. "General" is in England such a common accepted abbreviation for maid of all work as to have lost when so employed, any incongruously military suggestion. Nevertheless, there are generals in the army who would by no means repudiate with disdain the adjective "tidy." They would consider it a virtue distinctly becoming to an officer and a gentleman, and exceedingly important in the private soldier.

Some twenty-five years ago a distinguished military writer declared that tidiness, because especially the virtue of housekeepers, was often counted by the unthinking a trivial and purely domestic virtue, but that in reality it is distinctly connected with very great results. The Chinese, for instance, are naturally an untidy race; the Japanese are a tidy people. During the war between the two countries an observer behind the lines reported one of many instances in which the untidiness of the Chinese cost them dear.

The troops were armed with European weapons, but of varied makes—as many as twenty, he was certain; and the cartridges for all these were served out together, helter-skelter, tossed out of their boxes, and mixed in heaps on the ground.

To their hopeless pile the soldiers came with their guns, each man trying and throwing recklessly away whatever did not suit his own particular weapon. The waste of ammunition was amazing; the waste of time, temper, energy and schedule was appalling. Of course they lost the battle. Of course they lost the war.

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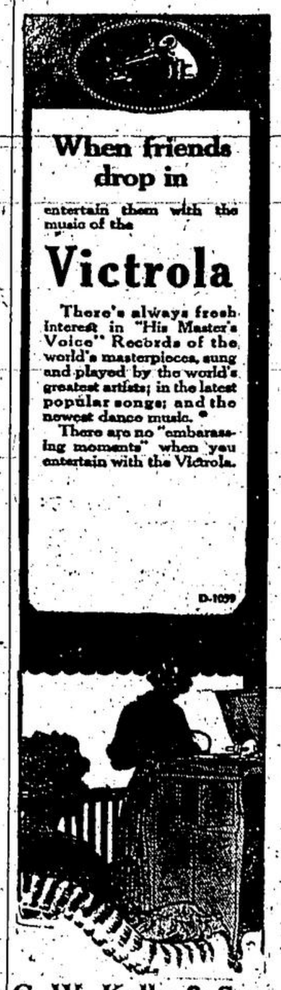

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