The Acton Free Press

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1920

THE GRIEVANCE

Elizabeth Murry's goin' to have her tonsilitis out
An' stay right in the hospital, with nurses all about.
An' have her mother come to see her every single day,
An' get ice cream to eat an' stay at home from school and play,
An' her father give her fifty cents for bein' good
An' actin' like a brave girl always really ought to should,
An' she is goin' to stay at home from school a long, long while,
An' have new dresses made for her just by the pile an' pile.

I asked my daddy could I have my tonsilitus out,
An' he just looked at me, an' then you ought to heard his shout!
An' I said every single girl that goes to school with me
Has got her tonsilitus out, and so I couldn't see
Why I should keep 'em in an' never have no fun,
Or do one single thing the way the other girls has done.
My mother an' my daddy makes me mad enough to cry,
I hope my tonsilitus makes me sick so I can die!
But no, I'll keep on bein well and never gettin' thin,
An' just grow up an' always keep my tonsilitus in!

Catherine E. Powers.

THE TORCH BEARERS AND THE DISAPPEARING MUSIC

By Mary M. Parks

IT began with the Graham twins, of course. In fact, the whole thing began with Lena's refusal to be separated from her brother. "We always have been together at school and Sunday School," she explained, breathlessly and shyly, but firmly. "We are not much alike. I'm good in some things and he in others, and we try not to let the others get ahead of us. Mother says it spurs us on."

The superintendent knit his brow. "The trouble is we have no mixed classes between the Bible and infant classes. You are rather young for the Bible Class."

Lena looked appealingly at her brother; but he was glancing thoughtfully around the room. Perhaps in his heart he would have preferred the young men's class, but it was not in his chivalrous soul to disappoint his sister. Presently his face lit and he looked at her meaningly. She, too, had taken note of the empty seats, and her face lit answeringly. Often they seemed to communicate by wireless.

"There are lots of new people coming to this town. A third of our class at high-school are strangers, like us. His and I got acquainted with most of them this week, and some of them are a fine sort. If you don't object to mixed classes, maybe we could get up one for you," Harley proposed.

The superintendent laughed. "Go ahead, young man. You have my full consent. Fill all the empty places if you can."

"I should think a good seatful, about eight or ten, would be right. I believe Miss Nelson, the new soprano in your choir, would take the class if we urged her to. She's our English teacher."

"Better and better," said the superintendent, heartily.

"We might sit in the back row of the Bible Class to-day, and just look on and listen," was Lena's modest suggestion.

As above intimated, all the recruits were strangers. Some were from the country; some did not even know where the church was, and all felt a little shy about going to a strange one; so the whole band, three girls and four boys, came to Graham's, which was near the church, and went over in a body just before time for the last bell. Peeping in from the vestibule, Harley saw Miss Nelson already in her place. She had chosen the best vacant location for her new class; so Harley led his flock down the aisle to their seat as if they always had belonged there.

A rustle and smile swept across the whole room as the newcomers marched in. Miss Nelson looked from the smiling faces around her to the beaming, blushing ones in front of her, leaned forward and spoke impulsively: "Until you find a name that suits you better, I'm going to call you my 'Torch Bearers.' A great writer once said: 'A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of good will; and their entrance into a room is as if another candle had been lighted.' You brought light into this room. Try to take it everywhere you go."

The young people nodded shyly, and Lena murmured, "We'll try."

"And remember he didn't mean gayety. Gayety is like a spring wind, blithe, but sometimes boisterous, nipping at times. He meant the content and cheerfulness that are as quiet and as warming as sunshine."

Later, when the question of some special work came up, she counselled them to wait. "We are strangers here and to each other. Let's trim and feed our own lamps and wait till some real opportunity offers itself. It always does if we are watching for it."

Then the next week Harley's uncle sent him a clarionet for a birthday present. The Grahams had no musical instrument except a stringless old guitar which had been unearthed in the attic of their new home the week before, and Harley did not have a singing voice. So it was not known to his family nor to himself that he was a born musician until the unexpected gift awoke the slumbering faculty. From the moment it first rested in his eager hands, he dispatched meals and other necessary tasks in the shortest possible time and then mercifully betook himself to the attic and his beloved clarionet.

Harley had learned to read music half unawares from a daily blackboard lesson at school. There was an old song book in the attic, and in a week or so he was able to play several airs quite well. In the meantime, his sister determined not to be outdone by her twin, had taken the old guitar to a music store and had it restrung. She bought a book of simple instructions, and by the time the class held its first monthly social at the Grahams, she was able to play an accompaniment of easy chords to some of Harley's old-time tunes. Joe Harper's fingers twitched as he listened, and when the applause had died away, he said in a meek voice, "I can play the mandolin—a little."

Harley's eyes snapped. "Bring it over Saturday night."

"Is the guitar hard to learn? Aunt Jessie would lend me hers. She soon tired of it and never uses it," said Ruth Carter, timidly.

"Anybody can learn to play as well as I do in no time," Lena assured her. "You come Saturday, too."

"Ned picks on my mandolin a good deal. He'd soon play as well if he tried," said Joe, anxious to include his chum in the new game.

"I've been thinking about buying one," Ned admitted, cautiously.

"No time like the present," exclaimed Harley, enthusiastically. "Why we'll have a full orchestra. Maybe by and by we'll play well enough so that Miss Nelson will sing with us if our ditties aren't too simple for her," he added, ingratiatingly.

"I shall be delighted. I love the old songs. And by the way—I wonder—is there anyone here who sings alto?"

Nelly Peters, who had been feeling sadly out of it, started, blushed and nodded; so did Kitty Carson.

"I don't need to ask about Perry. I live next door to him. He has the makings of a fine tenor. Why, we'll have a trio to go with our orchestra."

Then with one accord they all looked at poor Dan—chunky, jolly Dan. He grinned ruefully. "I'm the Jonah. Throw me overboard," he said. "I don't know one tune from another except by the way they march."

He dragged Lena's guitar from her reluctant hands and beat a lively tattoo on the back. "Yankee Doodle!" cried Harley. Then the tune changed. "Dixie!" cried half a dozen. Once more the tune changed and they all sprang to their feet with a military salute; and then came in on the chorus:

"O long may the star spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave."

"Fine! You have a wonderful sense of rhythm, Dan," exclaimed Miss Nelson.

"So have many savage tribes. You told us so in class last week," answered Dan, lugubriously.

"See here!" exclaimed Harley, when the laughter had ceased. "You know those defunnies that make a noise like horses' hoofs and railroad trains and such. They are cheap, too."

At once, the two had their heads together over a catalogue.

"He can imitate all sorts of animals and throw his voice all kinds of ways," declared Ned, enthusiastically. "So Jonah was well provided for, and became a star performer.

"But it's all for ourselves," sighed Lena. "We never can help anyone else with it. It would be years before we could play well enough to give entertainments."

"We are to trim our own lamps awhile, you know. Everything we do to cultivate our own talents and hearts, to make ourselves better and wiser and happier, is sure to help the world in the long run if we are truly unselfish," replied Miss Nelson.

"Well, I'm glad it isn't wrong; it is such fun," answered Lena.

"It was fun! The greatest fun in the world is hard work that we really enjoy doing; and the class worked hard, as individuals and as an organization. They practiced every spare moment; then every Saturday night they met, usually at Graham's, for a thorough drill. Harley, Lena, Ned and Nelly began taking lessons, and passed on what they learned to the others.

"By spring their playing was more effective than they dreamed. They could render a number of simple pieces, many of the marrangements of old-time songs, correctly and feelingly.

"But we're not going anywhere as a class," grumbled Joe. "All the rest have some special work. Trouble is it all was planned and parceled out when we came in. The only new thing was that hospital job. I'd have liked that." He meant to be a doctor some day.

Miss Nelson shook her head. "The Bible Class was better for that."

Kitty Carson cleared her throat nervously. "I want to tell you something, but you must not laugh—not at her anyway. She is the dearest old lady. You may laugh at us all you like; you will want to, but not at her. It is Judge Patterson's mother. You know they live across the street from us. She is an invalid. She hasn't been outside her own room for five years.

"Last Wednesday mother and I were over there; and she was greatly excited about some music she had heard one evening. They didn't hear anything; and they thought she had imagined it. Mother and I thought so, too. 'Heavenly music,' she called it.

Kitty looked around with a twinkle, but every face was blank. "She could not talk about anything else; about what it played, and how exquisite it was. 'Angel music', she called it once. There was a big voice she said that sounded away up above the rest, and she said she knew no angel's voice could be sweeter. We were all worried. We wondered if she could be beginning to hear things from the other side. She said it didn't last long, and wondered wistfully if it ever would come again. She says she listens for it every night.

"After we reached home, and mother and I were talking it over, I remembered that last Saturday was the first real summery day we have had. It was the first time we ever had the windows open. You remember that about nine o'clock the wind turned north and we soon had to close everything. They live three blocks south of here. They go to bed early and all but her sleep on the other side—"

A burst of laughter drowned her voice—burst after burst of laughter. "I'm laughing at us! I'm laughing at us!. 'Angel music!' shouted Dan, between bursts of laughter.

Miss Nelson turned very red, but she did not laugh. Her eyes were a little moist. "The dear!" she said. "That's the nicest compliment I ever had. Listen, my children! There is a small piece of woods back of the Patterson grounds. What is to hinder us going there—not to-night; she is weak and easily excited and it is late—but early some evening next week, and giving her our whole repertoire."

"Oh, Miss Nelson! You know Mrs. Latimer—the one that sews for us," cried Ruth. "She had company from the city, and is worried about entertaining them. They are better off than she is. She is going to have a party for them Tuesday evening. Couldn't we go on there after we play for Mrs. Patterson? There is a plump of evergreens in Mrs. Lester's yard, next door, and she'll let us hide there. I'll ask her."

Miss Nelson sprang to her feet, her eyes shining. "We can and we will. I know her well, and she is worthy of every consideration. It will be a delightful surprise for her and her guests. You play better than you know. And, my Torch Bearers, I think we have found our special work."

"Yes; I suppose we can even go and play for the hospital if we keep our distance," cried Joe, sticking out a defiant chin. "I judge the Bible Class hasn't any mortgage on outside work."

"No; they are not troubadours," laughed Miss Nelson.

Mrs. Latimer sews for us, too. Her name is Nelly, and she calls me her name child," said Nelly Peters.

For some weeks thereafter, the disappearing music was a mystery in that part of town. The young musicians all wore tennis shoes or rubbers, and whenever venturesome and curious people tried to trace the sweet sounds to their source, the music vanished and so did the source. Not one time were the troubadours caught in the act.

By and by, of course, the truth leaked out, but that did not spoil their increasing joy in their chosen work; and the Torch Bearers carried light and gladness to many a one deprived of most earthly pleasures by illness or poverty.

TOO SUGGESTIVE

"Why do dentists call their offices 'dental parlors?'"

"I suppose they think it would make their patients feel too bad if they called them drawing rooms."

A Series of Talks on Music

By Prof. C. C. Laugher, J. Mus. Bac., Sarnia

NO. IV.—MUSICAL PECULARITIES

A musician on being introduced to a stranger said, "I hear you are a music writer." "I am sir," replied the stranger. The first musician then added—"I am glad to make your acquaintance as I am afflicted in the same way."

One of America's most noted song writers was Stephen Foster, whose chief title to fame is "The Old Folks at Home," and "My Old Kentucky Home." Stephen Foster would often side up and down Broadway on a So hus seeking inspiration for a song.

Theodore Thomas, the pioneer conductor, who did more to educate the American public than any other musician, was wise in his day. He was always on the lookout for dainty titbits of music, and would take infinite pains to make them effective. He arranged Schumann's Traumerei to end with muted strings to decrescendo in the extreme and instructed the strings to continue drawing the bow across the strings without making a sound. The audience imagined it still heard the sounds floating off to an immeasurable distance, till Thomas broke the spell by quietly laying down his baton.

Regarding singing classes, I read a most interesting account of one of the first singing classes and how it was conducted: Mr. Cheny says, I was one of the class in 1790 in New Hampshire, the session being held at the home of one of the members and sometimes in the school house, boards being placed across the kitchen chairs to answer for seats, in form of a circle, with the singing master in the centre. The master commenced by saying now follow me up and down, he would then sound a note and we would sound the note after him. At the close of the session the singing master agreed to give instruction for one shilling and six pence per night and take his pay in Indian corn. The men members paid for the tuition while the girls supplied the candles for lighting purposes.

It has been said that musical inspiration does not attack all musicians in the same way. Here is one that I think is the strangest origin of any composition that I can recall. It is that of Scarlatti in his "Cat Fugue." The composer often had his favorite cat on his shoulder as he sat at the spinet. One day the cat became scared at something and springing from his shoulder and across the keyboard and away, but in his flight she struck several notes on the keyboard which Scarlatti afterward made into a fugue in her honor.

Brahms, the great music master, hated listening but he certainly possessed a high sense of humor. Once when being entertained by some of his friends in a Vienna restaurant the landlord brought on his best wine with this remark, "Here is a wine that surpasses all others, just as the music of Brahms does all other composers." "Well," said Brahms, "take it away and bring me a bottle of Hach."

In a recent article in the Musical Quarterly, the writer tells of some strange methods for inspirations such as: Haydn took refuge in prayer and rosary; Beethoven in the open air and nature; Mozart in paper and ink; Wagner depended on costly robes of silk and velvet saturated in rich colors; Dumas declared that a fine quality of paper was a real source of inspiration to him; Tschaikowsky needed air and trees; Halevy the noise of the tea kettle; Strauss wine and cigars, or a game of tarok; Suppe a good dose of snuffing tobacco; Donizetti was at his best when fixing his eyes at a distant point; Thomas when lying in bed; Balzac when clothed in a monk's cossock; and Gluck when at his piano placed in the midst of an open field in the sunshine.

IS PROHIBITION PRODUCING CRIMINALS?

Dear Sir:

One of the foremost pleas of opponents of prohibition in some of our provinces is that it produces criminals. Mention is made of the lawlessness which ensues or is revealed when enforcement is insisted on. A very cleverly conducted campaign is being waged throughout Canada at present to divert public sympathy from the representatives of law to the law-breakers.

There are indications of a hope that the public morals will be so weakened that people will despair of their faith in law and its enforcement. This hope would be ridiculous were it not for the unscrupulous but persistent infiltration of the popular mind with unfounded rumors of increased drug addiction and increased drinking under prohibition. The featuring of persons conspicuous in certain social circles in open hostility to the laws of the land, when these laws conflict with their social conventions, is also an essential part of the propaganda.

It is time for good citizens to withstand the deadly propaganda which tampered with the sources of press information by stating that the Rev. J. O. L. Sprackjin would have to resign his church and that no church would allow any person to remain in the ministry who under any circumstances had taken life. This is cleverly designed to debase the law upholders in comparison with the law breakers.

The terrible and murderous character of the persons now engaged in the defiance of law on the Western Ontario frontier is but a by-product of the liquor trade. Would the nation tolerate any other institution which commercialized vice and crime and produced such a high percentage of lawless characters among its devotees?

Public opinion must be nerved to virile protest against the effort to divert indignation from the law-breaker to the heroic servants of the law.

ERNEST THOMAS,
Department of Social Service.

It is a matter of great convenience to Acton people that Templeton's Rheumatic Capsules and RAZ-MAH for Asthma, can now be secured at Hassard's Drug Store.

THEY DON'T FEEL IT

Now that the cold weather is approaching the usual influx of visitors may be expected from the Western provinces and Northern Ontario. No doubt they will tell the same old story, that we don't feel the cold up there." Westerners as a rule are exceedingly loyal to their home provinces, consequently the statement is generally received with a grain of salt. A married lady writing to a Toronto daily last Saturday explains why the cold is not felt. She says: "I have known my husband to wear in the very cold weather rabbit fur in his moccasins, with seven pairs of heavy stockings, pyjamas over his underwear; a flannelette shirt, a heavy woollen shirt, a waistcoat and jacket, mackinaw pants and a mackinaw coat—or perhaps a sheep skin. Then they wear wool visor caps frequently, which pull down over the face when the wind is high. And that is the real reason." One would think that carrying around all this truck would keep anyone "het up" some.

THE OLD WAY AND THE NEW

It is a far cry from "dancing for salmon" to hunting sardines with a seaplane. One would have to look a long way to find a more striking illustration of the difference between the old ways and the new than is furnished by a few facts connected with the Pacific Coast fisheries.

The catching and canning of salmon is easily the most important, and is carried on with every convenience, but years ago it was responsible for a queer custom among the Indian tribes who were the pioneers in it. Every spring they would gather at the mouth of the nearest river, and, with many rites and ceremonies, solemnly dance for the big, silvery fish which they intended to dry and smoke. If the salmon were slow in making their appearance, they sought out a "wise man" and had him make an image of a swimming fish. This was placed in the water with the expectation of attracting live fish to the bait.

If the coast tribes are of Japanese origin, as many scholars think, they may have brought this custom along with them, for the Japanese fishermen have others just as curious. Among the Ainu, the most primitive race of the Islands, the first fish is never brought in by the door, but through a window, that the other fish "may not see." They also have the quaint notion that silence must be kept. Even the women left at home are not permitted to speak, lest the fish should hear and be offended.

So much for the old ways. Now for the new.

The sardine fisheries of California are comparatively young and undeveloped, but they bid fair to be the greatest in the world, thanks to the use of seaplanes. Since the first of the year naval seaplanes have been flying out from the sea coast, sighting schools of these tiny fish and sending a wireless back to the naval station giving the exact location. The naval station then telephones the news to the San Diego office of the State Fish and Game Commission. The fishing fleet is then told where to seek the game, and big catches are invariably the result.

Possibly some quaint and beautiful customs of the olden days have been lost in the hurry and bustle of the twentieth century, but the trend of the times is away from ignorance and superstition, toward an intelligent and scientific method of doing things. The next time we are tempted to sigh for "the good old days" let us ask ourselves which is likely to be more effective, dancing for salmon or hunting sardines with a seaplane.

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HOW SHE KNEW

Little Nelly told little Anita what she terms "only a little rib."

Anita: "A rib is the same as a story, and a story is the same as a lie."

Nelly: "No, it's not."

Anita: "Yes, it is, because my father said so, and my father is a professor at the university."

Nelly: "I don't care if he is. My father is an editor, and he knows more about lying than your father."

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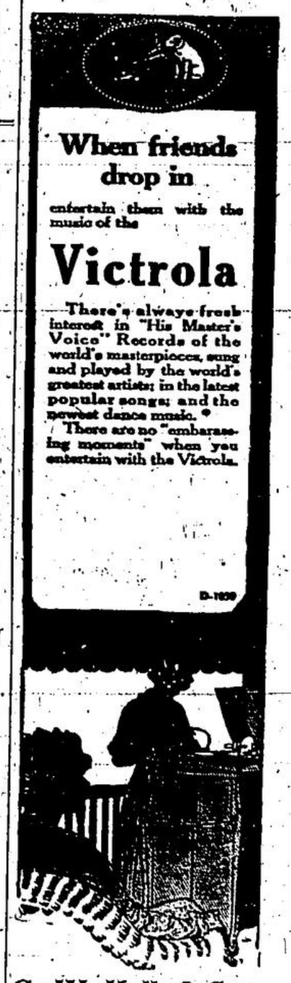

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