

## The Action Free Press

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### OLD JIM'S OPINION

What's that, stranger? An aspersion I hadn't heard about? It yet?

Well, he'd better not be tickled.

Never mind who you call names.

What's that? They want my opinion?

Came before when they were down,

I didn't like your coat, and rolled my sleeves.

And we kept salutes in town.

He thought that I can help them

In this second tempestuous night.

And I said, "I'm not here."

Well, I am to do what's right.

Hit down, stranger, and I'll tell you

What I intend and why.

You are not to get to the other.

"Leetcooperin' wat' or dry."

When a boy my daddy kept it.

Round the house and used it, too.

Always had to have a brace.

And the house was built there.

Everyone those day drunk whiskey.

Didn't think it any wrong.

Didn't have a man's mind.

"I'm to help you."

If I grow up drinking—moderate.

Just a grain or two a day.

Had no craving for the poison.

Drunk to pass the time away.

Then I'll just go to bed and rest it;

Only wrinkles ever fall.

Methinks, foolish and such, that's all.

I was twenty when I married.

And the woman—she has name—

Headstrong, haughty, friend and sweethearth.

Her life was but the dust.

In the meantime we were married.

As the second spring came oh'

atty sickened—slowly sinking.

Died—and left me baby, John,

Stranger, I almost went crazy.

And my only consolation.

Was this darling little lad.

Little laughing and—eyes wide.

Now he is little, but he's still.

Twined his fingers in my heartstrings.

Brought a smile where tears were

rife.

Well, I watched him through his

infant days.

Loved him, potted, spoilt him, too.

Yet he never caused me trouble.

He was true and loyal, too.

Upright, honest, manly, bright.

He was never an aggressor,

Just a good boy with the right.

Phunny he was, a coming boy.

Where he won his cup and gown.

Then I followed him to town.

He was a good boy, though.

In the courts both near and far,

And he made a reputation.

And a man without a fear.

Then he married Little Turner,

brought her home and me to her.

What a kiss—she's married.

I was happy as could be.

All my love was filled with sunshine,

She's a girl, and she's a beauty.

And they named him for his granddad.

But we called him "Little Jim."

Well just then the Legislature

Made the Liquor License high,

And the price of beer going up.

An election was on.

We had numerous blind tigers

And I thought we'd better get more.

He'd planned and voted yes.

Well, sir, we won that election.

With a hundred votes to spare,

And we got saloons a plenty—

John was dry. It was the first time

in our lives we can't agree.

But we won that quarrel nor argue,

He'd not mention it to me.

Then one night I saw a difference

When the boy came from town.

He was ugly, cross and moody,

He was down in his room long after midnight—

An uneven, restless pace;

And he was worried.

Over some hard legal work.

But next morning he was surer,

Even worse than night before,

When I asked him, "What's the matter?"

Strangely, I was shocked: "He's aware,

You, sir, were right at his father."

And I thought that I would choke.

And he did. I sat by him,

"Why the poor child's heart was

broken."

But he had not been drinking.

Not a sign of restlessness,

Not a sign of uneasiness,

And I wondered, wondered why?

So I followed to his office,

And I peeped outside the door.

Two men were talking there.

Pacing up and down the floor.

On his desk a whiskey bottle.

"Honest uncocked," I saw him say;

Saw him hold it 'neath his nostril.

And he was dry.

In the room long after midnight—

An uneven, restless pace;

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