The Acton Free Press

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1921

LIFE'S COMMON THINGS

A common thing, you say?
Why, dear heart, life is made of common things;
The violet that blooms beside the way,
The wee nest's horn of love and summer-time,
The shadow, and the sunshine of each day.

I love God's common things,
Sunrise and sunset, moon and evening stars—
Oh, common stars, lighted so long ago—
The sunshine flashing back from soft, blown wings,
The full, strong sweep of tides that ebb and flow.

A common thing, dear heart?
The grandest song is made of common chords,
The fair, white statue formed of common clay
The noblest life is rounded out at last
By common deeds that make the common day.

—Florence Jones Hadley.

Visiting The Old Home

"HELLO, JIM! Where have you been lately?" shouted a broker the other evening to a portly, finely dressed man in the corridor of the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

The gentleman shook hands with his friend and replied: "I've been home to see my old father and mother for the first time in sixteen years, and I tell you, old man, I wouldn't have missed one day of that visit for all my fortune."

"Kind o' good to visit your boyhood's home, eh?"

"You're right it is. Don't go. I was just thinking about the old folks and feel talkative. If you have a few minutes to spare, sit down and listen to the story of a rich man who, in the chase for wealth, had almost forgotten his father and mother."

They sat down, and the man told his story:

"How I came to visit my home happened in a curious way. Six weeks ago I went down to Fire Island fishing. I had a lunch put up for me, and you can imagine my astonishment when I opened my hamper to find a package of crackers wrapped up in a piece of the patent inside of a country weekly published at my home. I read every word of it, advertisements and all. There was George Kellogg, a schoolmate of mine, advertising hams and salt pork, and another boy was postmaster. I tell you it made me homesick and I determined then and there to go home, and go home I did.

"In the first place I must tell you how I came to New York. I had a tiff with my father and left home. I finally turned up in New York with only one dollar in my pocket. I got a job running a freight elevator in the very house in which I am now a partner. My haste to get rich drove the thought of my parents from me; and when I recalled them, the hard words of my father last spoken to me rankled in my bosom. Well, I went home. I tell you, John, my train seemed to crawl. I was actually worse than a schoolboy going home on a vacation. At last we neared the town. Familiar sights filled my eyes, and upon my word they filled with tears. There was Billy Lyman's red barn, just the same; but—great Scott!—what were all the other houses? We rode for nearly a mile before coming to the station, passing many houses, of which only an occasional one was familiar. The town had grown to ten times its size when I knew it. The train stopped, and I jumped off. Not a face in sight that I knew, and I started down the platform to go home. In the office door stood the station agent. I walked up and said, 'Howdy, Mr. Collins?' He stared at me and replied, 'You've got the best of me, sir.' I told him who I was and what I had been doing in New York, and he didn't make any bones in talking to me. Said he: 'It's about time you came back! You in New York rich, and your father is scratching gravel to get a bare living!'

"I tell you, John, it knocked me all in a heap. I thought my father had enough to live upon comfortably. Then a notion struck me. Before going home I telegraphed to Chicago to one of our correspondents there to send me $1,000 by first mail. Then I went to Mr. Collins' back office, got my trunk in there, and put on an old hand-me-down suit that I used for fishing and hunting. My plug hat I replaced with a soft one, took my valise in my hand, and went home. Somehow the place didn't look right. The currant bushes had been dug up from the front yard, and the fence was gone. All the old locust trees had been cut down, and young maple trees planted. The house looked smaller, somehow, too. But I went up to the front door and rang the bell. My mother came to the door and said, 'We don't wish to buy anything today, sir.'

"It didn't take me a minute to survey her from head to foot. Neatly dressed, John, but a patch and darn here and there, her hair streaked with gray, her face thin, drawn, and wrinkled. Yet over her eyeglasses shone those good, honest, benevolent eyes. I stood staring at her, just then she began to stare at me. I saw the blood rush to her face, and with a great sob she threw herself upon me and nervously clasped me about the neck, hysterically crying: 'It's Jimmy! It's Jimmy!'

"Then I cried, John; I just broke down and cried like a baby. She got me into the house, hugging and kissing me, and then she went to the back door and shouted, 'George!'

"Father called from the depths of the kitchen, 'What do you want, Caroline?'

"Then he came in. He knew me in a moment. He stuck out his hand and grasped mine and said sternly: 'Well, young man, do you propose to behave yourself now?' He tried to put on a brave front, but he broke down. There we all three sat like whipped school children, all whimpering. At last supper time came, and mother went out to prepare it. I went to the kitchen with her.

"'Where do you live, Jimmy?' she asked.

"'In New York,' I said.

"'What are you working at now, Jimmy?'

"'I'm working in a dry goods store.'

"'Then I suppose you don't live very high, for I hear of city clerks who don't get enough money to hold body and soul together. So I'll just tell you Jimmy, we've nothing but roast spareribs for supper. We haven't any money now, Jimmy. We're poorer nor Job's turkey.'

"I told her I would be delighted with the spareribs; and to tell the truth, John, I haven't eaten a meal in New York that tasted as good as those crisp roasted spareribs did. I spent the evening playing checkers with father, while mother sat by telling me all about their fortunes, from old white Mooley getting drowned in the pond, to father's signing a note for a friend and having to mortgage the place to pay it. The mortgage was due inside of a week, and not a cent to meet it with—just $800. She supposed they would be turned out of house and home, but in my mind I supposed they wouldn't. At last nine o'clock came, and father said: 'Jim go out to the barn and see if Kit is all right. Bring in an armful of old shingles that are just inside the door, and fill up the water pail. Then we'll go to bed and get up early and go a-fishing.'

"I didn't say a word, but went out to the barn, bedded down the horse, broke up an armful of shingles, pumped up a pail of water, filled the woodbox, and then we all went to bed.

"Father called me at half-past four in the morning; and while he was getting a cup of coffee I skipped over to the depot and got my best brass rod. Father took nothing but a trolling line and a spoon hook. He rowed the boat with the trolling line in his mouth, while I stood in the stern with a silver shiner rigged on. Now, John, I never saw a man catch fish as he did. To make a long story short, he caught four bass and five pickerel, and I never got a bite.

"At noon we went ashore, and father went home, and I went to the post office. I got a letter from Chicago with a check for $1,000 in it. With some trouble I got it cashed, getting paid in $5 and $10 bills, making quite a roll. I then got a roast joint of beef and a lot of delicacies and had them sent home. After that I went visiting among my old schoolmates for two hours and went home. The joint was in the oven. Mother had put on her only silk dress, and father had donned his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes, none too good, either. This was where I played the joke on the old folks. Mother was in the kitchen watching the roast, father was out in the barn, and I had a clear coast. I dumped the sugar out of the old blue bowl, put the $1,000 in it, and placed the cover on it again. At last supper was ready. Father asked a blessing over it, and he actually trembled when he stuck his knife in the roast. 'We haven't had a piece of meat like this in five years, Jim,' he said; and mother put in with 'and we haven't had any coffee in a year excepting the times when we went a-visitin'.' Then she poured out the coffee and lifted the cover of the sugar bowl, asking as she did so, 'How many spoonfuls, Jimmy?'

"Then she struck something that wasn't sugar. She picked up the bowl and peered into it. 'Aha, Master Jimmy! playing your old tricks on your mammy, eh? Well, boys will be boys.'

"Then she gasped for breath. She saw it was money. She looked at me, then at father, and then with trembling fingers she drew the great roll of bills out.

"I can see father now as he stood there on tiptoe, with his knife in one hand, fork in the other, and his eyes fairly bulging out of his head. But it was too much for mother. She raised her eyes to heaven and said slowly, 'Put your trust in the Lord, and he will provide.'

"Then she fainted away. Well, John, there's not much more to tell. We threw water in her face and brought her to, and then we demolished that dinner, mother all the time saying: 'My boy, Jimmy! My boy, Jimmy!'

"I stayed home a month. I fixed up the place, paid off all the debts, had a good time, and came back to New York. I am going to send $50 home every week. I tell you, John, it's mighty nice to have a home."

John was looking steadily at the head of his cane. When he spoke, he took Jim by the hand and said: "Jim, old friend, what you have told me has affected me greatly. I haven't heard from my home way up in Maine, for ten years. I'm going home to-morrow."—St. Paul Pioneer Press.

BOYS WILL BE BOYS

The saying boys will be boys is commendable if it is taken as explaining youthful high spirits, or even thoughtfulness. But when it is perverted into an excuse for coarseness or cruelty, for profanity or viciousness it is a slander on youth.

Boys will be boys, and we would not want them to be anything else. For the right sort of boy is badly needed. What a sunny creature the average boy is. When a troop train passed through our city, and the boys came crowding to the windows, you remember that all the faces were laughing. Some of you remember how they sang "Where do we go from here, boys?" The answer was to the submarine-haunted Atlantic; to the trenches of the French front, to Chateau Thierry and the Argonne forest, yet these boys went singing, laughing. This weary old world would fare ill if it were not for youth's inexhaustible cheeriness. Hardship and danger cannot cloud the sunny spirit of boyhood. Boys will be boys, thank God!

The activity of the boy is something marvellous. It begins when he is a little fellow. The day is never too hot for the boy to play ball. If a fishing trip is in the air, he will get up before sunrise, without a sigh for his lost sleep, and continue untiringly busy until bedtime. A lazy boy is a sick boy, though the term is sometimes applied to a boy who prefers working in his own way to following a line of activity marked out by some one else. Constantly the ranks of the world's weary workers are re-enforced from the ranks of these tireless youths, eager to use their powers. Boys will be boys, and fortunate it is for us that they will be.

It is a mistake to think that because boys are boys, they are not also men. The right sort of boy is as much a man as he will ever be. Not long ago a street car stopped to admit a vigorous-looking woman and a rather slender, ten-year-old boy. A bulging suit case stood between them, and as the car stopped, the boy called out, "I'll bring the suit case, Mother. It's too heavy for you." The passengers smiled, of course, but there was tenderness back of that smile. A five-year-old boy was telling what he would do if he should meet a bear, an emergency which seemed quite possible to his vivid imagination, and though he was presently to describe startling deeds of prowess with knife and gun, he began by saying, "I'd put little sister behind me." Five years old, but a man all through.

The right sort of boy is just about the finest thing this earth has to offer, except the right sort of girl. And it is a ground for thanksgiving that boys will be boys, and girls will be girls.

THE FARM WOMAN

Much sympathy has been spent on the over-worked farmer, but recent figures compiled by the Home Economics Division of the U. S. Department of Agriculture indicate clearly that the farm woman shoulders the real drudgery of farm life.

Over 9,000 farm women average 16.3 hours per day, winter and summer, and 87 per cent. of 3,773 replying to the questionaire, report no regular vacation during the year except an occasional day off in the family automobile.

The coming of the farm electric plant to furnish power for churning, pumping water, house cleaning, ironing and other household labor is freeing women from the drudgery of farm life, giving her more time for her home and family, and for self culture and recreation.

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THE "UNHAPPY" LADY

I have the honor of knowing a lady who owns a limousine. I put it that way because a limousine describes her. Her poise is limousine. She is about thirty-five, if one dare guess a woman's age, and has been a widow two years. She has many friends, or acquaintances, a thousand invitations to go out. This is all agreeable to her because freedom is her point of view. Yet when you praise life to her, she shrugs her shoulders.

I bowed to her on the street the other day while she was taking a toy of another lady. This lady was tall and slender, with the sunlight caught in her hair, and something brooding and lovely in her face. I had only a glimpse of her, however, for my friend left her and I paused to pay my respects. "I want you to come and see a picture I bought," she said. "It is something new in oil. I would like to have your opinion."

"Oh, very well," I agreed. In the limousine she began to tell me about Mrs. X—, the woman to whom she had been speaking. "Poor Helen," she said, "she married unfortunately. A newspaper man—and she was so pretty! She is extremely pretty now. He is a good fellow, of course, thinks the world of her, but he has nothing except his salary. And they have a child—just think of it. Wherever they go they have to cadge the child with them. Helen, the poor thing, is simply done for, I never speak to her about it because she does not seem to look at it that way, or, perhaps, won't let herself. But one never sees her out anywhere, now; I mean, in places that count. She is buried—unless she gets a divorce and finds someone who can really spend money on her and make her happy."

"Yet she does not appear dowdy," I suggested.

"No, she dresses exquisitely—always did; makes most of her own clothes, I imagine."

A week later I happened to call on an artist friend, somewhat celebrated. It was my first visit to his studio, though we had long been friends. I looked at his pictures and then from his window out on a lawn bordered with nodding roses where a young woman and a little boy made happy throatings playing with a ball. The little boy was possibly not yet four. He was handsome, rosy-cheeked and laughing. Even his pink legs seemed to laugh. Every now and then the woman drew him to her and kissed him, rolled him, and kissed him again. It was a pretty sight. The sun, itself joyed in it, made a thousand glowing tints in the woman's brown hair, brought out the wonderful tenderness of her eyes, the soft beauty of her mouth, the indescernable charm about her which reminded one of the nodding, brooding roses and was simply motherhood.

My friend, who is more than forty, came to my elbow. "Some day," he said, "when I am a better artist than I am, I may be able to paint that picture. I shall call it 'Happiness.' I have watched them here day after day. Sometimes the young husband joins the party. They are wonderfully in love with each other, or merely in love with each other, as you choose to put it. The child is a little god Pan. They live in the flat below. About a month ago I had dinner with them. Such happiness! One rarely sees it these days. People don't go after it right." His Paris-trained hand swept the city and its tinsel cravings back into the glowing opal of the Bay and his paint-stained fingers fingered pointing the scene below. "That is the real joy of living and the woman knows it."

"What are their names?" I asked, something familiar in her appearance growing on me.

He told me. It was the woman of whom the lady of the limousine had spoken.—Billie Glynn.

CLEARING OUT TUBERCULOSIS IN CATTLE

The accredited herd system put in operation two years ago by the Health of Animals Branch of the Department of Agriculture at Ottawa has been well received by the stockmen of the country. It is confined to pure-bred cattle and is intended to rid as rapidly as possible the disease of tuberculosis from Canadian herds. Figures given out by the Veterinary Director General show that thirty-six herds had up to October 1, been fully accredited. The breeds represented are the Ayrshire, Holstein, Jersey, Shorthorn and Aberdeen Angus, the dairy breeds predominating. The accredited herds are widely distributed. Nova Scotia has 1; Quebec 9; Ontario 10; Manitoba 3; Saskatchewan 4, and British Columbia 10.

Besides the herds which have been fully accredited there are at present 558 herds which have been tested once or more in process of accreditation, and 54 herds awaiting the first test, making a total of 648 herds. As the herds in this lot fulfil the necessary conditions, they become fully accredited. The inspectors of the Health of Animals Branch are making as rapid progress as is possible under the circumstances, taking into consideration the limited number of men engaged in the work and the great importance of doing the testing carefully and accurately rather than rapidly.

The reactors are always removed from the herd at once and usually are immediately slaughtered under veterinary supervision. Applications for tests have been coming in faster than they could be dealt with. A waiting list has therefore been formed and as soon as circumstances permit the herds in this list will be tested, taking them as far as possible in the order in which application have been received.

Issued by the Director of Publicity, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa, October 17, 1921.

HER WAY OF DOING IT

Gladys mother was entertaining visitors, when suddenly the door was flung open and in burst Gladys like a proverbial whirlwind.

"My dear child," said the mother rebukingly, "I never heard such a noise as you made coming downstairs. Now go right back and come downstairs properly."

Gladys retired and a few moments later re-entered the room.

"Did you hear me come down that time, mamma?" she asked.

"No, dear," replied the mother. "Now why can't you always behave like that? You have downstairs like a lady then."

"Yes, mamma," said Gladys dutifully. "I slid down the banisters."—Guelph Mercury.

BOYS FOILED THE ROBBERS

If you had invested 29 cents and within 24 hours secured returns of more than $10,000 wouldn't you call yourself lucky? The story of how it was accomplished is worth reading.

Down in New York, where anything is possible of the strange and extravagant variety is where the adventure occurred. Harry Hommers, 16, and Jack Stein, 16, "accepted a position" several months ago as messengers for the National Butchers & Drovers' Bank.

Harry had been reading stories about payroll holdups until the thing got on his nerves. A few days ago he invested 29 cents in a police whistle, and then things happened. The two boys were given a package containing payroll money for several firms, the total being $10,940 which even in these degenerate days, is a tidy sum. The cash was in a leather handbag, carried by Stein, while Hommers trudged alongside fingering the 29-cent whistle in his pocket.

A walk of ten minutes brought the boys to a six-story building, only a block from Fifth Avenue, where they were to make their first delivery to some clothing manufacturers on the top floor. When going into the building the two observed a touring car with a man at the wheel, standing on the curb, and another man lounging in the doorway. This man followed them into the lovator. After the elevator operator started his car to take the trip to the top floor, the stranger "begged their pardon" as he pushed his way to the front, near the door.

As the operator stopped the car at the sixth floor and opened the door a hand appeared in the doorway as if by magic, and in the hand was a pistol pointed straight at Stein. The messenger's fellow-passenger slip drew a pistol, pointing it at Hommers.

"Hands up!" the robbers cried, "and give us that money!"

Disregarding the pistol, Stein threw the money bag behind him on the floor and punched the man squarely on the jaw. Hommers, who was behind put his foot on the bag.

One of the robbers who slugged the elevator with the butt of his gun, dazed him. The other clubbed Stein on the jaw. But during the struggle Hommers got out his 29-cent whistle and began to blow it. That turned the tide. Both robbers were frightened and jumped back in alarm.

"Close the door!" they yelled at the operator. "Run it downstairs!"

Then the elevator shot downstairs Hommers blowing the whistle while Stein held the money bag lightly under his arm.

Over across the street a taxicab driver was lounging in front of a cafe. At the first blast from that cheap whistle he picked up his ears. A moment later as the ear-splitting was still shrieking he drove his car to Fifth Avenue and shouted at the officer to go to it. Other policemen joined in and surrounded the building.

Meanwhile the lookout in the automobile had looked out for himself first, and driven away. One of the two other men also escaped.

After it was all over the two messenger boys went back to the bank and had their pictures taken and were congratulated in the president's private office.

"When I bought that police whistle," said Hommers, "the woman who sold it to me said that if I couldn't do anything else I could scare the robbers away with it, and it looks as if she was right."

BOWERY—REFORMED BY PROHIBITION

I have been visiting New York and Brooklyn lately, after an absence of some years, except Conference occasions. I found a new New York. Prohibition has completely changed the liquor business and liquor subjects. I never saw for days a person under the influence of liquor, nor did I smell that foul breath in street cars, on the streets, in the churches—everywhere, as in the saloon days, for in the former times in travelling in New York City the fumes of liquor were in evidence at all times, and in every place.

Not only has liquor gone in New York City, but the ragged "bum" has gone also. I rode up to the Bowery from Grand Street to Forty-second Street, and looked carefully for the dirty ragged "bum" of other days, but he was not to be found. I visited a "bum" lodging-house, but there, as elsewhere, the men were sober and wearing clean clothes.

Then, we naturally ask the question, Why do so many newspapers publish that there is as much liquor drunk in New York as before prohibition days? Of course, the newspapers that publish these lies know it is not the truth, but this whiskey-soaked crowd loves a lie. Their lives are bent on falsehood. The large majority of the people of New York drink liquor when they can get it. Their lives are not good. They hate good and love evil; but one would think that they would respect truth.

I notice that some of the judges in New York express themselves from the bench, that "prohibition is a failure, and there is more liquor drunk now than when we had the legal barroom." What does such a judge wish to gain by such bold lying? He wishes to please the thirsty drink crowd, and to get their votes at the next election.

Well, I'm glad to have lived to see this glad day of national prohibition. All honor to those public servants like William Jennings Bryan, Josephus Daniels, and thousands of others who have stood in the front ranks and fought the devil in party politics, high and low, and won this righteous war.

"Prohibition doesn't prohibit," they say—but the fact that the Liquor Dealers' Association, and brewers, and lying politicians say, this is proof that the saloon is out of business in this country. Let us like Paul of old, "thank God and take courage."—Evangelist J. V. Williams.

THE DOCTOR'S BIG FEE

The following incident is recorded in Dr. Wilfrid Grenfell's new book, in speaking of the neighborliness of the poor people of Labrador:

Take as a sample of these men of the Labrador, Skipper John, who received the doctor when he came to Deep Water Crik to see the sick man, Uncle Solomon. Around the Skipper's fire three children were playing with a young man, evidently their father. They are not exactly his, the Skipper explains, "but us took Sam as our own when he was born, and his mother lay dead, and he've been with us ever since. Those be his little ones. You remember Kate, his wife, what died in the hospital?"

After a sparse meal—sparse because the fishing had been bad—the doctor suggests that they should depart to the house of the patient, only to find that Uncle Solomon and his wife, Aunt Anne, had also been given a home by Skipper John when they were starving and were upstairs.

The doctor does what he can for the patient, which was but little, and before he goes the Skipper makes promise of a fee, if only he can get a skin that winter. "The old couple," he explains, "has taken the little us had put by." The rest of the story the doctor shall tell, in an excerpt from his pages:

"Skipper John, what relation are those people to you?"

"Well, doctor, no relation 'exactly.'"

"Do they pay nothing at all?"

"Them has nothing," he replied.

"Why, did you take them in?"

"They was homeless, doctor, and the old lady was already blind."

"How long have they been with you?"

"Just twelve months come Saturday."

"Thanks, Skipper," was all I could say; but I found myself standing with my hat off in the presence of this man. I thought then, and still think, I have received one of my largest fees.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

"Now Edwin," said the Sunday-School teacher to a member of the juvenile class, which would you rather be—the wheat or the tares?"

"The tares," answered Edwin.

"Why?" asked the teacher in surprise. "How can you say that when you know wheat represents the good and the tares the bad?"

"Oh, that's all right," replied the precocious youngster, "the wheat gets thrashed and the tares don't."—Exchange.

ABRUPTNESS

The manners of Cornelius were worse than those of most children of seven, and his mother's admonitions at table rarely produced much effect. At breakfast one day Cornelius said, "Pass the salt." "If what, dear?" asked his mother with a frown. "If you can reach it."

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