The Acton Free Press

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1922

BE SQUARE

We may name a hundred drawbacks
That a man must meet in life,
We must say it's all a "battle"
And a never-ending "strife."
Then resolve to meet it bravely—
Bind the test, and do and dare—
But the secret of true victory
Lies in one word, just be "Square."

There is something in the twinkle
Of an honest fellow's eye
That can never be mistaken
And can never be passed by.
He his station high or lowly,
There's that dauntless upright air,
Which convinces all beholders
That the man they see is "Square."

Heaven give such man influence
Over those they daily meet,
If they see a fallen brother
They will help him keep his feet—
Make the "sneaks" a bit uneasy—
Make the "false" act kind of fair,
For the greatest rogue on record
Will respect the man who's "Square."

THE VERDICT

Ernest L. MacFarlin

ESTELLE had given up the idea of going to college. The oculist had been the first to tell her it was impossible. Though her eyes were as bright as any girls, and could look the world in the face without the aid of glasses, the fact remained that they rebelled when subjected to too severe strain. It had been hard work getting through High School. Fortunately her brother was in the same class, and they had done a great deal of studying together, Roy reading aloud, and saving his sister's eyes. But Roy was now to enter an eastern technical school, while Estelle had hoped to attend a local woman's college and thereby be spared the necessity of leaving home. But now it seemed that college was out of the question.

"You know enough already, don't you?" joked Dr. Strong. "Why do you want to be a blue stocking?"

"I've always liked blue," laughed Estelle.

"Seriously," said the doctor, speaking in his most impressive bass voice, as if to show how serious it was, "you mustn't think of such a thing. With careful treatment your eyes are going to stand by you all your life. Probably you won't have to put on glasses for steady work much sooner than most folks. But these eyes must be humored, and college work won't humor them."

When Estelle carried the news home her mother was not at all surprised. "I'm sorry to have you disappointed, dear," she said. "And I own I'm disappointed, too. But your eye-sight is too precious to risk, even for the sake of anything as important as a college education. And I've been afraid for some time that what you wanted was impossible."

It was a matter of wonder to Estelle that so few of her friends were surprised by the bad news. All of them, seemingly, had anticipated something of the sort. Aunts and uncles, cousins and friends all said blithely, "Why, yes, Estelle, college is out of the question with those troublesome eyes of yours," and then began to talk of something else. Some of them indeed, wondered at her disappointment.

Perhaps no one, not even Estelle's mother, knew quite how deep the disappointment had gone. Estelle was a girl who did not believe in making other people shoulder the burden of her troubles. She put a bold face on the matter, and began to make plans for the next year in which college had no part. But she had an uncomfortable feeling as if her life were out of joint. Should not know how to adjust herself to the changed outlook. Ever since she could remember, she and Roy had talked over their plans for college, and she felt as if the bottom had dropped out of something she had thought of as substantial. Estelle had plenty of pluck. Few of the people who met her during those hard days guessed what a battle she was fighting.

She kept herself as busy as possible, that she might have less time for thinking. As she was about to start upon an errand for a neighbor one day her attention was attracted by the throbbing sound which still has the power to thrill the pulses despite the ease with which the world becomes accustomed to a new sensation.

"An airplane," Estelle exclaimed. "Come quick mother, and look!"

They went through the gate of the white wooden fence, and against the blue of the sky saw the latest development among the clouds, now indulging in hair-raising manoeuvers, as if to vary the monotony of the journey. The mother and daughter gazed silently at the spectacle still unfamiliar enough to seem a miracle.

"How queer it must seem to the birds," philosophized Estelle. "They must feel as we would, if all at once we saw a super-man stalking around the streets, terribly big and strong and able to do any number of things we can't."

Mrs. Gilette laughed. "Doesn't sound pleasant a bit, does it? I don't know how the birds feel about it, but it doesn't seem as if I would ever outgrow the thrill of seeing a man in flight."

It was one of those co-incidences which are so common that sometimes it seems as if there must be a law which governs them, that Estelle should have come across her grandfather's letter that day. She was dusting the books in one of the cases in the library and had taken out a heavy volume with a leather binding, when the letter dropped to the floor. She examined it and uttered an exclamation.

"Mother, look! Here's a letter from grandfather to father. And it's the funniest thing; it was written when I was about a month old."

"That was one of your father's books," said Mrs. Gilette taking the ponderous volume and turning its leaves. "No one has opened it, I suppose, since he left us. And very likely the letter has been shut up in it ever since he first read it."

There was something fascinating in the idea. Estelle dropped her duster and seated herself on a hassock. "Sit down and read the letter aloud, mother," begged. "Let's hear what grandfather had to say about his wonderful new grandchild."

The first part of the letter, as Estelle had assumed, was devoted largely to the reports that had been received regarding the new baby and its mother. Mrs. Gilette read that portion with a rather uncertain voice, for the letter which she had never seen, brought back vividly the happiest time of her life. Then the letter passed to bits of news more or less intelligible after a lapse of eighteen years, and at the conclusion was a paragraph which set Estelle to thinking.

"Saw Randall to-day, the first time in over a year. And you'll be sorry to hear, my boy, that he's as crazy as ever about what he calls 'dominion of the air.' Otherwise he is as sane as you or I. In our little talk I tried to reason with him and to show him that to expect man to fly was as reasonable as to expect him to develop gills and live under water like a fish. He's working away at an invention now, and I really feel apprehensive about his future. At present unless you touch on his monomania, you would never think of his being unsound in mind, but as he seems unable to throw off his delusion, there is no knowing how soon he will be worse. I don't know that argument can help him, but it would do no harm for you to write and point out that he is endangering his reputation as a thinking man, by holding such an attitude toward something clearly impossible. With love to Mary and the little new arrival,

"Affectionately,
"Your father."

Mrs. Gilette let the letter drop into her lap. Her eyes met those of her daughter and both laughed aloud.

"It doesn't seem possible," Estelle exclaimed. "Only eighteen years ago and grandfather was so sure it would never be. And yet it's already such an everyday matter that we wonder how long we'll be interested enough to look out of the window at an airman."

"It shows that we ought to be very sure before we pronounce a thing impossible," said Mrs. Gilette. "Put the letter away, Estelle. Sometime when Aunt Vi is here, she will be glad to hear it."

Mrs. Gilette was very far from suspecting what an impression had been made on Estelle by hearing her grandfather's letter. Estelle had been hearing the word "impossible" very frequently lately. She had yielded to its repetition with the feeling that it would be altogether useless to hold out against it. But now she wondered how many people believed air navigation possible before it had been demonstrated. It was underestimating, rather than exaggerating to say not one in a thousand. Perhaps she had been a little too ready to accept that verdict as infallible.

Estelle began to do a great deal of hard thinking. She had put the idea of going to college out of her mind as far as she could, considering very sensibly that since it was an impossibility, the less she thought about it the better. But suppose it was possible. She began to wonder if she were not too receptive of other people's opinions. Day after day she went through her duties with an upright crease between her brows, indicative of concentration. Night after night she wrestled with her problem. Could the impossible be made possible?

Mrs. Watts, wife of the registrar at the college Estelle had hoped to attend, dropped in one day on an errand. "I don't suppose, Mrs. Gilette," she said, "that you'd want to board a student in return for her help about the house?"

In spite of the negative form of the statement, her voice lifted on the last word showing it a question. Mrs. Gilette laughed. "Instead of help about the house, I need work about the house. My maid is so competent, and Estelle does so much that I am left with nothing to do."

"I imagined that would be the case. But my husband had a letter from a girl who wants to come to college next year and both he and I formed a very favorable impression of her. And I did want to get her into a nice home," continued Mrs. Watts appealingly. "Some people have such queer ideas about the proper way to treat college girls who work for them. I suppose, though," she added, "it's as long as it's broad, for some college girls act as if they felt above the work they've agreed to do."

"You haven't the letter with you, have you," Mrs. Watts?" Estelle asked eagerly.

"Why, yes, I have, Estelle." Mrs. Watts glanced at the girl's flushed face and thought how sweet it was of her to be so interested. "Now listen," she said as she smoothed the crumpled sheets. "See if it doesn't give you the impression of a really worth-while girl." And forthwith she began to read:

"Prof. H. D. Watts:
"Registrar of the Carey Woman's College.

"Dear Prof. Watts:

"I am a girl of eighteen, a graduate of the Mirror Lake High School, and I am very anxious to enter college in the fall. I have been assured so often that it is impossible that it seems a little presumptuous to set my own opinion against the opinion of every one else, and yet I can't give up. For writing the best solution of a mystery story which appeared in one of the city paper, I was awarded a prize of one hundred dollars, and that with a little money I have saved up will pay for my books and tuition. Now if I could get a place where I could pay for my board and room by doing house work, the problem would be solved.

"I shall have to tell you that I am a little bit lame. I really am very strong and not afraid of work, but sometimes when people see me limping, they think I must be delicate and are afraid to give me anything hard to do. They needn't feel that way.

"I had almost given up the idea of going to college as everyone said it was impossible. And then I happened to read somewhere that someone—I suppose it must have been Napoleon—said that impossible was an imbecile word and I made up my mind that I wouldn't give up till I'd tried everything. I don't care how hard I work.

"Very truly yours,
"Ethel M. Porter.

"P. S.—I forgot to mention that I led my class in High School, though that might not help me in getting a position."

"Don't you call that an appealing letter?" asked Mrs. Watts looking up from the carefully written sheets. But Mrs. Gilette did not answer. She was staring perplexedly at Estelle. "Why, my dear child," she cried, "what is the matter?"

Estelle's cheeks were flushed, her eyes unnaturally bright. "Why, don't you see?" she cried. "It's the way for both of us. Two impossibilities make a possibility."

"Estelle, what are you talking about?"

"She could come here, mother, and live with us, and instead of working for her board, she could read me my lessons. And it would be her part to read them to me until I learned them."

Mrs. Gilette looked at Mrs. Watts. "It's a perfectly wonderful idea," cried the wife of the registrar.

"I don't see myself why it mightn't work out," exclaimed Mrs. Gilette. "But it seems so simple that I don't know why no one thought of it."

On the day college opened, two Freshmen walked side by side across the campus to enroll, one of them accommodating her pace to that of the other who walked with a slight limp. Suddenly the faint purring of a motor caused them to lift their eyes. A moving speck in the northeast was swiftly approaching, taking definite form as it neared them. Estelle laughed softly as she saw it. "Nothing's impossible," she declared.

"Impossible," an imbecile word!" answered the other Freshman.

STILL MISSING

Johnny—"Say, paw, I can't get these 'rithmetic examples. Teacher said somethin' 'bout findin' the great common divisor."

Paw (in disgust)—"Great Scott! Haven't they found that thing yet? Why, they were huntin' for it when I was a boy!"

"GRAY-EYES"

I should never have thought of letting Jane go fishing with me, but "Gray-Eyes" was different. She was not my sister, that was the main point. Still she was a girl, and girls have no business to want to go fishing. I felt mean and abused that I, a man, should promise, in a moment of weakness, to share my birthright with a woman. Then there was Joe Wallace, that cruel wynic and satirist of the school yard—what if he would find it out? What would he say on Monday morning?

On the whole, I was in a pretty dejected state of mind, and was digging for worms in a half-hearted sort of way, down by the kitchen-garden, when Gray-Eyes herself came skipping out of the house and across the lawn.

"Oh, let me pick them up!" she cried, going down on her hands and knees in the soft earth. "I'm not afraid. You want to catch right hold of their heads and pull quick, before they have time to get their feet braced. Then they won't break to pieces. I know. Uncle Al told me. Isn't that the way?"

I nodded. The fear of Joe Wallace was strong upon me. Why did I promise to take her fishing? It might not be too late yet. At least I could try.

"You feel all right this afternoon?" I inquired, politely. "You're pretty strong, aren't you?"

Gray-Eyes looked up anxiously.

"Because," I continued, "it's a long way. I'm afraid I didn't think how far it was when I told you about it. I get tired myself sometimes."

Her face brightened. "I don't mind walks," she said, decidedly. "I never get tired."

"That's an awful pebbly brook," I soliloquized, looking up at the sky. "My feet are all big blue bumps after I've been wading in it. Hurts, too."

"Perhaps I'd better wear my rubbers," she suggested.

"Joe Wallace saw a tramp up there last week," I hazarded, in desperation. "A greasybig one with black whiskers."

Gray-Eyes laid her hand on my arm. "I shouldn't be afraid," she said. "You would take care of me, wouldn't you?"

"Why—oh, yes, of course," I made haste to answer stoutly. "Well, all right, then. Come along. Hurry up and get your rubbers."

We started off down the road I with the fishing-poles across my shoulder, and Gray-Eyes twirling a rubber overshoe in each hand. As we trudged along, my heart grew lighter. After all, this was not so bad. The road was shady and cool and mottled, where the sunshine came through the leaves, like my gray pony's back. One could not be depressed long on such an afternoon. We might not meet Joe Wallace, and besides, a girl who would pick up worms was not to be held in utter contempt, especially when she was looking at you now in a way that made you scuff hard in the dust from pure self-satisfaction. It was a little brook, but in those days it seemed deep and mysterious and awful. It ran first through a ravine with thick spruce woods on each side, and altogether fearful place, dark and cold even on the brightest and warmest of summer days. You never fished long here but hurried on, with quick glances over your shoulder, to the warm meadows and the reassuring sunshine.

There the brook was yellow and shining, and ran swift with a rattle and rasp of tiny pebbles. Long grasses hung over into the water, and bobbed up and down with the current. You could mark the brook by the alder bushes winding across the meadowlands to the river.

Gray-Eyes sat down among scarlet bunchberries and pulled off her shoes and stockings, while I baited the hooks and pondered deeply. I ought to let her fish ahead of me as we waded down the brook, I knew, but she need not expect to have everything done for her.

I had been kind to bring her along, anyway extremely kind. None of the other fellows would have done it. And I had lent her my second-best pole. Besides, she might scare the fish; then there was the alarming possibility that she, not I, might catch them, too. She could keep near me, to watch, to admire, but on the whole I decided it was better that Gray-Eyes should stay behind.

Tiptoeing over ferns and mosses, or wading ankle-deep in the cold water, we followed the turnings of the brook, through the dark spruces, out across the sunny meadows, nearly to the river. And now the afternoon had gone, as only Saturday afternoons can go; the shadows of the alders were long and purple; it was time to think upon the stern consequences of being late for supper, and not a fish, not even the feeblest nibble! I was tired and cross and hungry. There could be but one reason for such fortune, and I scowled back at the unoffending Gray-Eyes.

Her hat was hanging by its elastic; her dress was wet and draggled. She sang quietly to herself as she waded along, patiently untangling her line when it caught in the branches overhead, and fishing with eager hopefulness in the very pools I had just splashed through.

"Why don't you catch something?" she called, quite innocently.

"How can I when you go splashing round that way?"

"Why, I don't. Not half as much as you."

"Well, I don't keep singing loud enough to scare every trout from here to the river. You catch me taking a girl fishing again, I know how it would be. You won't get anything in that pool. Didn't you see me fishing there?"

I started down-stream again, lashing the water as I went.

There was a little scream from Gray-Eyes. I looked back. She had dropped her pole and was pulling at the line. Something thrashed the water; then Gray-Eyes was wading toward the bank, holding that something tight in her skirt. She knelt down in the tall grass.

"O Tom, come quick! Isn't he a beauty? How do you take him off? I don't care if I am all wet. See his red spots, and isn't he a big one? I'm so glad I got him! I wish he wouldn't make his mouth go like that. Do you suppose it hurts him? Poor thing! I wouldn't lose him for anything. Come quick!"

I hurried back.

"He isn't so very big," I remarked, as I strung the trout on a branch of alder.

"He is. He's a monster. Ever so much bigger than the ones you and Uncle Al got the other day. Ever and ever so much."

"Well, hurry up! It's most supper time. You'd better let me carry him. I can take him and the poles, too."

"No, I'm going to carry him myself," said Gray-Eyes, decidedly.

"But you'll smell all fishy," I remonstrated. "I did, awful, the other day."

"I don't care!" she insisted. "He's my fish, and I want to carry him myself."

"All right, carry him, then."

I had to swallow hard to keep back the tears. I should have liked to stay out there on the meadows all night, and let Gray-Eyes go home alone. And I had made her stay behind all the afternoon, and had splashed in the pools when I passed them to scare away any trout that might prefer her hook to mine. Gray-Eyes kept giving me little side glances as we walked along.

We came in sight of our stable, and I could see the men sitting about the big door in the twilight. We should have to pass them, too. The little sob that had been in my throat so long popped out in spite of me. I felt Gray-Eyes' hand touch mine. She was holding out the alder branch.

"Here, Tom, you take it now," she said.

I did take it, little wretch that I was, and marched past the stable door as if I were a conquering emperor instead of the meanest beggar on earth. Gray-Eyes followed a little way behind. My father met us on the lawn.

"Well done, sonl" he said, approvingly. "We'll make a fisherman of you yet."

And behind my father, a crowd of aunts and cousins, their hands lifted in admiration, came to marvel, to exclaim, to praise me as I stood there in the evening light, holding up the trout. But no one thought of Gray-Eyes, and Gray-Eyes never told.—C. H. Brown.

SPEAK ENCOURAGEMENT

Put on our table the crust of sweet oil, as well as the crusts of vinegar and cayenne pepper. The vast ultitudes have more burdens than they can carry. If you can unbuckle the strap one hole, so as to make it less tight, do so. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." If a mechanic does for you a nice job of work, let him know that the banister is well turned, or the wall is well papered, or the carriage is well constructed. If the goods that come from your grocer are excellent, when you settle the bill let him know what thorough satisfaction he has given you. If, after long endurance from poor shoemaking, you get sandals that neither pinch nor chafe, let the man who sits wearily pulling the waxed thread through the leather know that he has saved you from pedal martyrdom. If a book that you read consoles or instructs or inspires you, inform both author and publisher of that cheering fact. If a musical instrument charms your household, so inform turner and manufacturer. If a coat fits, thank the tailor. Be more economical of your censure and more prodigal of your encomiums.

Take warning from Thomas Carlyle, who passed the most of his married life, according to his own statement, in making his wife, one, miserable. For two weeks at Craigenputtock, fifteen miles from any settlement, not speaking a word to her, and at Cheyne Row, London, pitches an omelet out of the window because she had not cooked it to suit him. Inflicting upon her all the meanness and outrages that dyspeptic devil could suggest to him. And then, after her decease, spending twenty years in extolling her excellence and deploring his injustices. Appreciation while living! Be that our sentiment and habit, and while anon coming to occasions of public approbation, let the same principle run all through every-day life. When the coffee is clear, and the bread is light, and the meat is masticable, and the dessert is delicately ingenious, let the husband praise the wife, and the wife praise the cook, and the cook praise the butcher and baker. When the child rapidly advances in schooling, pat him on the shoulder, and send an applauditory note with him to his overworked teacher. In that way we not only cheer others, but we help ourselves.

Seated in a carriage, you want to make many miles in a short time. Suppose you begin by blowing up the driver, and then telling him what a lazy and ugly team he is driving, and at every jolt shouting, "Ouch! ouch!" as though you were being injured. The result of all will be slow progress and a grouchy driver and an unpleasant journey. Say to the driver, if you do so truthfully, "I suppose you have been a driver so long you are expert at the business. Those horses look as though they had a good deal of go in them. My! my! How fast we are going over the ground! I am sure we will be there sooner than I at the start expected." Why, such a spirit inspires the driver, greases the wagon-wheels, smooths the road, and limbers the spavined legs of the horses. Commendation instead of hypercriticism. Applause rather than disparagement; flociality rather than ostracism. Benediction instead of anathema! Paean instead of curse! Advocacy instead of reprehension! Compliment instead of carping! But many faithful people will not get the encouragement they deserve on earth. God give them patience to wait until Christ, in the presence of an assembled universe, shall hand them everlasting reward and pass them in to the pleasures that never die! For all the neglects, and injustices, and fatigues of God's children here, heaven will more than make amends.—T. DeWitt Talmage.

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

A train in the Western States of American was held up by bandits, who ordered the passengers to give up all their money.

One of the passengers was a Jew from New York, and when his turn came he reluctantly drew three hundred dollars from his pocket, and taking six, put them in his pocket.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the bandit.

"Surely," answered the Jew, "you don't mind me taking a 2 per cent. discount on a cash transaction?"

MEAT AND DRINK FOR THE MIND

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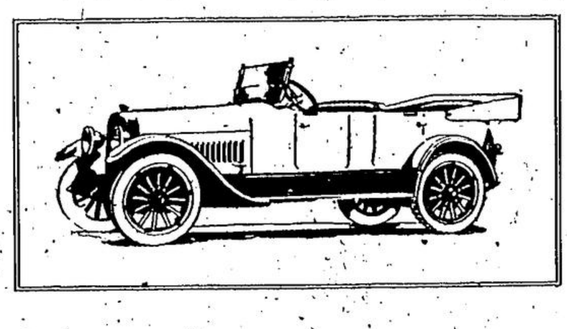

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