The Acton Free Press

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1924

JEB' MY DOG

He hasn't any pedigree.
He isn't much on looks,
You'd never find a dog like him
In any story books:
He's jeb' my dog.

In color he's as yaller
As the onryest yaller cur,
But when I think o' his devotion
It fills my eyes with blur;
He's jeb' my dog.

He wouldn't bring a dollar
If I wish'd ter hev him sold,
But every single yaller hair
To me is purest gold;
He's jeb' my dog.
—Bertha Lyon McKinney.

EDISON'S MOTHER

"My mother was the making of me. She was so true, so sure of me; and I felt that I had some one to live for, some one I must not disappoint," said Thomas A. Edison to a writer of the New York World. Mr. F. A. Jones, in "Thomas Alva Edison," says that all who knew her appreciated her goodness.

"I did not have my mother very long," Edison said, at the time spoken of, "but in that length of time she cast over me an influence which lasted all my life. The good effects of her early training I can never lose. If it had not been for her appreciation and her faith in me at a critical time in my experience, I should very likely never have become an inventor.

"I was always a careless boy, and with a mother of different mental caliber I should have probably turned out badly. But her firmness, her sweetness, her goodness were potent powers to keep me in the right path. I remember I never used to be able to get along at school. I don't know now what it was, but I was always at the foot of the class. I used to feel that the teachers never sympathized with me, and that my father thought I was stupid, and at last I almost decided that I must really be a dunce. My mother was always kind, always sympathetic, and she never misunderstood or misjudged me. But I was afraid to tell her all my difficulties at school, for fear she, too, might lose her confidence in me.

"One day I heard the teacher tell the inspector that I was "addled," and it would not be worth while keeping me in school any longer. I was so hurt by this last straw that I burst out crying, and went home and told my mother all about it. Then I found out what a good thing my mother was. She came out as my strong defender. Mother-love was aroused, mother-pride wounded to the quick. She brought me back to the school and angrily told the teacher that he didn't know what he was talking about, and that I had more brains than he himself, and a lot more talk like that. In fact, she was the most enthusiastic champion a boy ever had, and I determined right then that I would be worthy of her and show her that her confidence was not misplaced."

BENEFICENT DIRT

Scientifically considered, dirt is only matter out of place, and economically considered, it is of the utmost use to civilization.

"What an easy life we should have if there were no dirt!" said a lady to her washerwoman.

"I shouldn't, ma'am. I should starve," replied Bridget, and she spoke for hundreds of thousands of women the world over.

It would be interesting to discover how many hours of wage-earning work which may be called cleaning—including washing, ironing, scrubbing, sweeping, dusting, polishing, cleansing—are done in one day among our eighty millions of people. A single institution like the Toronto Public Library gives thousands of hours of work each year to scrubwomen alone. In cities the work goes on day and night. No sooner do sweeping and dusting stop in the homes of the town than an army of women with pails and mops invade the shops and offices, where they fight with dirt literally from night till morning.

Busy as we are in Canada trying to keep clean, Holland excels us in the art. There the housewives scrub not only floors and windows and steps and sidewalks, but fences and electric light poles, and one may even see a strong-armed maiden using hot soapsuds and a brush on a white tip-cart. Horses and cows are washed in Holland as regularly as children.

Moralists pleading for cleanliness do a double service—to the wage-earners as well as to mankind at large. Fortunately for all concerned, the desire to be clean lies very deep in the noblest qualities of human nature. Wesley's famous saying, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," may be traced back hundreds of years to the wise teaching of the Jewish rabbi, Phinehas ben Yair:

"The doctrines of religion are resolved into carefulness; carefulness into vigorousness; vigorousness into guiltlessness; guiltlessness into abstemiousness; abstemiousness into cleanliness; cleanliness into godliness."

ENCOURAGING TRADE FIGURES

"An examination of the trade returns for the last twelve months reveals a very hopeful situation," states Hon. Thomas A. Low, Minister of Trade and Commerce, in a recent statement.

"Canadian trade figures showed on September 30, at the conclusion of the first six months of the year, a much more buoyant tendency than was the case a month earlier," he states.

"In export trade, September last was the best month the Dominion has had in four years; and shipments during this period of thirty days of Canadian products to other countries exceeded the shipments during September of last year by nearly $18,000,000.

"The foreign exports in September," continues the statement, "also exceeded those of the corresponding month in the three preceding years."

An examination of the figures for the half-year also discovers ground for optimism, added Mr. Low. The Dominion's exports exceeded last year's record showing for the six months ending in September by $2,000,000; so that, even if there is no further gain, this year's record will surpass all preceding high levels, except those attained under the artificial conditions that prevailed during the later years of the war and following its conclusion. With the above gain in the first half of the year and a strong tendency upward still evidenced, a further gain during the second six months may be reasonably expected.

GOOD HUMOR AND GOOD MANNERS

The statement recently has been made that good humor is the highest attainment of good manners, a statement that will surprise some of you. Many of you young people who are grouchy, irritable, and gloomy, fail to realise that you fail in courtesy. If you go about wearing an expression which shows you are out of tune with life, you are impolite. You would apologise for stepping on somebody's toes, but you do not realise that that lowering brow of yours makes scores uncomfortable, instead of one. The bad temper of a single member upsets the peace and harmony of innumerable households. When the spirit of courtesy takes command of a life, it flowers in good humor.

I've Wandered in the Village, Tom

I've wandered in the village, Tom,
I've sat beneath the tree
Upon the schoolhouse playing ground
That sheltered you and me;
But none were there to greet me, Tom,
And few were left to know,
That played with us upon the green
So many years ago.

It is freely said that it is an able editor who can select articles written by others which are just as acceptable to his readers as those he writes himself. Well, I think you folks who seem to enjoy this column from week to week, will enjoy a good selection from my old pen too.

Here is a story written by a chap named Belton, who had not visited the old home of his birth and boyhood for a full generation. There are so many things about it, such as similarity of location and surroundings, the things described, and the experiences related, that it might almost be Acton and vicinity this home-sick man is writing about. I concluded, after I had read the story to Mary, and she thought so to, that you would all enjoy it just as well this week, as anything I could write for you.

After a full generation, thirty-three years, of absence, broken only by one brief call. I have visited again the haunts of my childhood in the little eastern village. As the poet said in the old school-book rhyme—few were left to greet me in the little place at the foot of the hills or in the countryside around it where I roamed as a lad.

But the trees and the brooks were there as ever, the eternal hills had the same contour, the fields had not changed to any great degree, the little river flowed between the same banks. And these things inanimate seemed to know and welcome me as a prodigal returned to his own again. I could find my way by meadow and stream, along the winding paths I explored in boyhood—yes, I could go in the dark or with my eyes shut to the big rock at the head of the beaver-meadow, or along "the road to the rapids," known to the Indian centuries before our grandfathers came, to the fishing rock or the maple-sugar camp where Uncle Ed held welcome at sugaring off time. Nature, big out of doors Nature, was the same, and had a welcome for her child.

But the thing which surprised me most in that aspect of the place was the return of the wild things to the haunts around the village from which they had fled. There were partridges in the covert where I used to surprise them decades ago; wild ducks flew at dusk and at dawn along the old river route to the lake and the wild rice fields on its border; suckers ran in the creeks and even the mill-dam had sizable fish ready to bite; yes, and in the pinery a few miles into the rocky hills there were deer again to be found. Conservation and common sense, combined with the strict enforcement of the game laws for those devoid of these qualities, had rewarded the people of the east with rich results in places where those of us have been west and seen the too often wasteful destruction of our frontier country, hardly expected to see any wild life left.

The little creek that ran through the school grounds was flowing full, for it was early in April, but some hound in human disguise had dug a channel around the falls behind the school—which I promptly filled up at considerable labor and was rewarded by the old music of the little falls. I followed the stream back to the swamp from which it rises, then—out though amongst the hemlocks to an opening in the woods still nicknamed "Skunk Street" in memory of the boomers of an hundred years ago who were laying out a subdivision when a denizen of the woods expressed his opinion of the proceedings in a manner which many will agree was fitting to the case, and to many others such cases of subdivision selling that occurred since then. Going around a swampy place still ungraded I entered the little "cedars;" here, I thought, used to be a place where a partridge might be seen—and, as if to confirm the thought there was a sharp whir of wings and one flew like a bullet from not thirty feet away; standing still and moving my eyes only I made out another motionless against the protective colouring of some low brush; and I stalked it within ten yards before it flew—and fluttered brokenly as if lame or with a broken wing; the same old trick of a nesting bird. So they are still raising their young only a stone's throw into the woods in the thicket where they nested, I suppose, for centuries before the white man came. I turned to the right in the next valley or "gully" as they still call them down there and I crossed Watt's Creek, stepping from stone to stone as we did many times when we were boys and played Indians following the war trail. And well we might play it there; for these stones were worn flat on top by centuries of moccasined feet following the old trail of the red men that still can be traced through the woods that have never been cleared since the village site was planned. I stood with my back to a huge maple and pictured the scene when a wild Iriquois band in full war paint filed by, centuries ago, on their way to wage extermination against the hated Huron who had adopted the ways of the white man.

This maple was alive then, a sapling perhaps, but yet a tree. To-day it is one of the thousands that provide the toothsome dainty called maple sugar to the nice palates of the big city. In my day the far side of the creek was Tim Blair's sugar bush; many a night we made the woods ring with boys' and girls' laughter and song when the sugar season was on. They say the business of making maple sugar is "commercialized" now and is more "efficient," but in this out-of-the-way corner the old welcome still waits and the day of good cheer still holds even through the "cooler" or huge kettle for boiling sap, is replaced by the evaporating pans. That name "cooler" for a big iron kettle still is used around the village; it comes from the day when the settler cooled the potash in these big iron pots; my father could remember when potash from the ashes of the maples or beech was the only product for which the pioneer could get cash; all else was barter. What would a few hundred maples and beeches then burned be worth now? Here some still stood, towering far upward, as beautiful as anything that beautiful nature has ever grown. Yes, I've seen the rows of Royal palm that line the approach to the ruined homes of grandees in Cuba, and the big redwoods of the Pacific coast and I stilted, artificial grandeur of Florida but nothing more beautiful than an old eastern hardwood bush has my eyes been presented to my view.

I followed the depression that the Indians used for their path, along the line of least resistance, through the woods and out of the clearing over which I could see across the "concession" to the two rounded hills that mark the spot where my grandfather brought his bride and established his home in the bush about a century ago. Along the edge of this clearing was a famous pigeon roost; and I can remember when Bid Blair, a lad of twelve, would get as many as a dozen pigeons there with his "grump's" old muzzle-loader. These were local flocks, I suppose, but the flights of pigeons that flew over the village and migrating time literally darkened the sun. Here in this hardwood bush must have been one of the last stands of the true passenger pigeon, for I distinctly remember seeing Bid with a bag of half a dozen or more when I was less than ten—less than forty years ago. Will they ever come back to these woods, as some other species long lost have done? I fear not. Like the great auk, they are gone forever. But if we had even a few we would soon restore the species as they are restoring the buffalo out west, and as other sorts of wild game are being restored by the wiser generation down east.

This is a story of the wild things of the woods, not one of the people down east—you can read that story elsewhere. I turned from the view of that ancestral home and went down the "concession road" to where it runs into the "drowned land" above the mill-dam at the edge of the village. Along the drowned land I went, to the "Point" where I found a fishing rod hid behind the overhanging bank where we used to hide them, caught a frog for bait and with the first cast I got a good bass. The owner of the rod grinned at me as I turned to take the fish off the hook; he wondered how I found the fishing tackle when "jist a few of the lads knowed where it was alwus hided;" and he had, no doubt, a tale to tell at supper of the aged man who had fished from the Point in the dim Femote past.

I left him fishing—ever notice how much more you want to fish if someone has your rod?—and I followed the old path up the river to Price's clearing behind Andy's Island, and slipping down to the water's edge I startled a wild duck from her nest in the reeds. She flew straight toward the lake screaming "Speck, Speck," and was answered by the demoniac laughter of a loon that crossed her path. A dozen more ducks answered from the reeds and I knew the old nesting place was tenanted as heavily as ever again. So I turned and cut back directly toward the village again, and turning the corner of a spruce grove, came upon a hut that was not there in the olden days. Out of the door came—none other than "Pup," the Indian boy who had lived in just such a hut on the edge of the village with his squaw mother. He had played with the rest of us, in boys' social equality, and gone to school a little like Huck Finn, and even became quite a worker on good roads building. But nature had reasserted itself and he was making more money than I can get out of authorship. The muskrat and mink fur craze had given him an easier and more profitable jiving than work would provide. He guided parties of hunters and now was putting a gasoline launch on the little old river to take pleasure trippers to the chain of lakes farther away. Except for age he had not changed a whit, and he said he would have known my hide in a tannery.

Down the main (and only) street I went across the Long Bridge (about thirty feet long). The dam that broke once and caused the biggest excitement since the forest fire swept within a mile was replaced by a cement structure. The water was roaring over it with the spring flood as it always had done and oh a raft of "booms" above some lads were lying looking into the water with spears in their hands to catch suckers. I remember when Bill Drummond caught forty in a day in that manner. The practice is frowned on—perhaps outlawed—but so long as only suckers are caught there is little to condemn. One of the lads asked me to go the next day to Josh Martin's creek to net them—for it still was the famous creek for the sucker run. I turned out through Drummond's fields and started a rabbit not fifty yards from the place where the hare left the street. Partridges again rose, this time in a nice flock, so tame as to suggest a bird sanctuary. In Drummond's bush I fancied I caught the glimpse of a deer, but this seemed incredible until Bill Bolger, the famous hunter who could get a deer in the pinery even in the scant days, told me that it was quite likely one, for they were becoming more plentiful every year and knew where they were safe. I crossed the river below, at the site of Bill Smith's old mill, a venerable wreck in my boyhood and now a memory, for it was the last of the upright one blade saw-mills that replaced the whipsaw worked by hand in a saw-pit. I remember seeing this old mill at work—the first of the many advances that have aided the ripping our woods into lumber.

Coming back through Bellamy's sugar-bush I saw a beautiful black squirrel; there was none in the district when I was a boy but they have come in since and are plentiful, and there were coons in the corn-fields again, as there had been in father's day but not in mine. Mrs. Bellamy, who was Katy Bolger as a child, discussed forest preservation with me and agreed that the maple woods were the greatest asset of the district and should be preserved and even planted out. So there will be woods there in the old home district when my son or grandson goes back to see the place where his forefathers first foregathered in the wilds of Canada. And there will be game for him to see, or even to hunt if he comes in the right season.

And so back to the village I went across the "common," feeling the crooked joint of the finger I broke catching baseball bare-handed here in the days of real sport. And in the sunset I walked out along a road we used to shun but which has not the same dread for me now; sometimes in my dreams I see it with a welcome look to its gentle windings and a restful spirit beaming from the hillside to which it leads.

Sitting in a natural chair made by the cleft in a rock at the hilltop, I could see the river winding down from the lake, the green fields of pasture and plowed ground ready for spring planting, the rocky hilltop that showed the character of the higher hills beyond, and the soft green pines along a pleasant little valley where a brook murmured faintly. And I could read from where I sat the names of some who played and hunted with me in the woods and fields and now rest among the scenes they loved in life.

I am a part of all that I have ever met. Possibly the greater part of that which is "me" was implanted among these fields, rocks, trees, woods and streams, of a rough, but beautiful countryside.

And when our time has come, Tom,
And we are called to go
I hope they'll lay us where we played
So many years ago.

The Old Man

BATHING IN THE DEAD SEA

It is well known that the waters of the Dead Sea are much heavier than those of the ocean. This is due to the great amount of salt held in solution. A few years ago Sir Gray Hill, of England, made trial of swimming in the sea and then in the Jordan, to compare the two. He tells the result in his book, "With the Beduins":

Many tourists while at Jericho bathe in the Dead Sea and the Jordan, and for very shame I could not pass by without doing so. But my experience was peculiar. I had with me one of the Jericho sheiks and one of the muleteers, and we rode first to the Dead Sea. Its waters are generally very still and of a splendid blue color; but now, owing to the storm, they were very rough, the waves ran high, and for some two hundred yards from the shore were of an ugly brown.

I looked askance at it as I undressed, but felt bound to go in. The waves very promptly knocked me down, and filled my mouth, nose and eyes with their strong brine. Again I tried, and again, picking up one after another of the bare branches of trees which are carried down by the Jordan and washed on to the shores of this strange lake, with which I tried to steady myself as I walked in. But the force of the waves, aided by the great floating power of the water, twisted the branches out of my hands, and knocked me down time after time until, feeling that I had done enough for principle, I acknowledged that the victory did not lie on my side, and scrambled out, smarting most unpleasantly.

Then we galloped off to the Jordan, where I thought I should succeed better. So I cast about for a suitable place to jump in, for I did not like to crawl in ignominiously at the pilgrims' bathing-place, near which we were, and which would have been the wisest course to adopt. I wanted to take a header. So procuring a long stick, I ascended the stream a little, and made sure by sounding with it of a deep spot under an overhanding tree.

In I plunged, intending to swim down to the regular bathing-place, where I knew there must be a good bottom for getting out. Down I came with the fast-flowing yellow flood, striking out in the fullest enjoyment.

But when I was just about to put my foot to the ground, I was brought up sharp with a tremendous blow on my right breast. If it had struck me on the heart it would, I think, have killed me on the spot. I had come down on to the end of a stake pointing up-stream, and driven in to mark the upper boundary of the bathing-place, but which was hidden, owing to the rains having raised the surface of the river. I had some difficulty in crawling out again, and was black and blue in the chest for a month afterward. There is nothing like a little experience to teach one wisdom.

LIKENESS AND UNLIKENESS IN FRIENDSHIP

Often we are attracted to people because they are different to us. To meet two friends who seem almost the exact opposites is not unusual. One may be very talkative, and the other silent; one inclined to boast about his achievements, and the other ready to admire. The reason for such an intimacy is the fact that one person acts as a complement to the other.

While these superficial differences may attract, the basis for a lasting friendship, after all, is likeness. A young fellow who had never been out of his native state, is likely to be attracted by one who has travelled extensively. If the first would rather lose his right hand than tell a lie, and the second tells one whenever convenient, the repulsion between the two may more than balance the attraction.

Superficial differences are good stimulants in friendship. When we come down to the great principals of conduct, however, there must be unity in ideas. An honest man will not choose a thief for a friend. People of clean lives do not form intimacies with the vicious. As Paul put it, "What communion hath light with darkness?" In friendship the differences must be superficial, while underneath is unity in the fundamentals.

DECIDED NOT TO PROSECUTE

The Judge—This lady says you tried to speak to her at the station.

Student—It was a mistake. I was looking for my room-mate's girl, whom I had never seen before, but who'd been described to me as a handsome blonde with classic features, fine complexion, perfect figure, beautifully dressed and—

The Witness—I don't care to prosecute the gentleman. Anyone might have made the same mistake.

FOCH'S PHILOSOPHY

This is my philosophy of action: Every time you have a task before you, examine it carefully; take exact measure of what is expected of you. Then make your plan, and in order to execute it properly, create for yourself a method. Never improvise. The fundamental qualities for good execution of a plan are, first naturally, intelligence; then discernment and judgment, which enable one to recognise the best methods to attain it; then singleness of purpose; and, lastly, what is the most essential of all, namely, will, stubborn will.—Marshall Foch.

THE FAMILY THAT STAYED BY

There was once a tiny little church in a small and scattered community. It had a varied career, but came at last, after a good many years, to a position of strength and vigor. A half-dozen times the church was torn by dissensions, or weakened by removals, or disheartened by the apathy of the community, but it never quite gave up.

Looking back over the long period of uncertainty, when the life and usefulness of the little enterprise hung in the balance, it appeared that the connecting thread of life from one period of hope to the next had been a single family. This was the more remarkable because the family was a humble one, and had not been prominent officially.

The mother was a widow, with a large group of children, and very little with which to feed and clothe them. She worked early and late for them, and they also worked as soon as they were able. There were so many of them that almost every class in the Sunday school had a representative from that home, and therefore at least one regular attendant. And although the mother was not there always, her heart was there all the time.

The Sunday school class might run down, but it never could quite disband; or if it did, there was the nucleus for a new beginning. And in time the children of that household began occasional work as substitute teachers. One of the sons became church clerk, and one of the daughters, a rare, sweet girl, after some experience as assistant, assumed entire charge of the primary department.

The mother, busy as she was, was usually at the sewing society, where she took a modest but effective part. The women came to trust her, and she became an adviser and peacemaker.

But all the mother's work, and most of that of the children, was unofficial. Not in acts that could be recorded did this family do its work, but in constant and reliable support.

After a period of years, new life came to the community and the church. The troubles of the past were forgotten. Better homes were built, and new people moved in. A settled pastor was secured, and the work moved prosperously.

There came an anniversary, and, as the minister looked over the records of years, too many for the work that appeared to have been done, he wondered why the church had not disbanded more than once. But always there had been a little nucleus of the faithful, holding on with numb hands, and always, inconspicuously among them, had been this widow and her household.

One day the minister called upon her, and out of a full heart he thanked her for all the fidelity of the years. "It seems to me," said he, "that but for you this church would have disintegrated."

The good woman fairly gasped; for she had been so busy caring for her children, helping her sick neighbors, doing little and mostly unremembered acts of good, it never had occurred to her that she was helping to make history. Yet it is such as she who are always making the history of the world worth while.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee?" Heaven is filled with people who reached it by the way of good deeds performed and forgotten.

AN ONTARIO FAVORITE

It is a significant fact that the Family Herald and Weekly Star of Montreal has more readers in Ontario than any other paper of its class. Ontario farmers and other folk take the Family Herald and Weekly Star year after year because it gives by far the greatest value obtainable anywhere. The market news and prices in the Family Herald are the most complete and up to date available, and it retains the services and contributions of the foremost agriculturists in Ontario. The magazine and news sections are brimful of the choicest reading for each member of the family. This year the Family Herald will give away ten thousand dollars in prizes, a beautiful calendar and picture, and other valuable rewards to subscribers. A catalogue of rewards will be sent free of charge to any address. No words can do justice to the excellence of the Family Herald.

RELATIVE VALUES

The president of one of the minor colleges was sauntering down a shady lane one day in the early summer, when he met a tall, handsome youth.

This youth had just been graduated. He was very poor and very intelligent. In all his courses he had taken honors, and in athletics also great honors had been his.

"Well, Allen," said the president, "through at last, eh?"

"Yes, sir," replied the young man.

"And now what are you going to do?"

"I hardly know yet, sir. I have had two offers."

"Two? Wonderful!"

"Yes, sir. One is from a scientific society, offering me a secretaryship at five dollars a week, and the other is from a baseball magnate, offering a five years' contract to pitch at five thousand dollars a season."

TWO EXAMPLES

The teacher was explaining to the class the derivation and significance of the word "ambidextrous." It comes of the word "ambidextrous." "It comes from two Latin words," she said, "ambo, making both, and, dexter, meaning right, or right-handed.

"Literally speaking an ambidextrous person has two right hands; that is to say, he can use his left hand just as well as he can use his right. Do any of you know of an ambidexterous person?"

Two little boys raised their hands.

"My sister is," said Tommy Jones. "She plays the typewriter with both hands."

"He's my mamma," said Bobby Smith. "She spanks just as hard with the left hand as she does with her right."

A ROSARY OF TROUBLE

Some people make a rosary of their troubles. An illness, the loss of a position, a quarrel with a friend, are bad enough to live through once; but these foolish people rehearse their troubles so often that they might as well happen every day. Everyone must undergo trouble, but sensible people, when it is over, are done with it. No one can indulge in a more foolish pastime than that of making a rosary of his troubles.

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