

The Free Press Short Story

THE LEDGER OF LIFE

BY EARL REED SILVERS

THE feud between James Clarendon and Irving Carewe began in their senior year at high school. Both were members of the football team, and when Captain Arthur Lennox moved from town unexpectedly, both James and Irving announced themselves as candidates for the captaincy. James was a half back, a brilliant runner, and an expert forward passer. Irving played at left end and was the hardest tackler on the squad.

The captaincy really did not amount to very much, for the team had a coach that year who ruled the players with an iron hand and who was the sole arbiter of all disputes. Nevertheless, both boys desired the honor with all the grim intensity of youth. Each was ambitious and each possessed the potentialities of leadership. Moreover, even in those early days, each wanted to be elected, so that he might go to Angela Hartland and say: "I am the captain of the football team."

When the ballots were counted, just before the opening game of the season, it was found that James had been the choice of his teammates by a vote of eight to seven. Irving, with inscrutable face, walked across, the dressing room and held out his hand. "Congratulations!" he said. "Thanks, old man!" answered James. Later, when the game was ended and the team had won, James met Angela at the entrance to the field and regarded her with shining eyes. "If you don't mind," he said, "I'd like to come over to see you to-night. This is a big day, you know, for I've been elected captain of the team."

Angela was only seventeen, a rather small girl with big brown eyes and auburn hair. Although she led the class in scholarship, she was interested in athletics and so she was able to understand James' elation. "I'll be pleased to have you come," she answered. Irving Carewe, passing them as they stood by the gate, nodded pleasantly. That was the beginning of the feud between him and James.

They were clean-cut youths, both of them, little better than average scholars, and—fair all-round athletes. People thought well of them and predicted that they would be successful in whatever field of activity they entered after graduation. Each had his quota of friends, and each his measure of loyalty. Each boy possessed a certain indefinable quality which grated upon the other, however, and because of their youth, they lacked the breadth of view which would have permitted them to overcome this instinctive antagonism.

They were both well on the road to success in their business careers; Irving had already been made a member of his firm and James' commissions' now totalled several thousands of dollars a year. People respected and admired them; they were young men of high standing in the community and in the church.

The feud persisted, and although each in his heart of hearts may have been slightly ashamed of it, neither could quite bring himself to take the first step toward reconciliation. They knew that, sooner or later, the spark that smouldered within them would be fanned to seething flame.

In the early winter of their twenty-third year, they entered a handball tournament of the Young Men's Christian Association. Due to long practice, they were admittedly the two best players in their class. Gradually they overcame all opposition until they found themselves scheduled to meet for the championship. There was nothing unusual in that, for they had met before; but on the evening preceding the match they both asked Angela to the annual reception of the Community Club.

They had met at her house with three or four other young people, and the two of them had accompanied her to the kitchen to help make sandwiches. "Angela," said James, "I'm hoping very much that you will go with me to the reception."

Before the girl had time to answer, Irving broke in. "And I'm hoping that you'll go with me." For a moment Angela hesitated. She liked them both and wanted to be friends, but she did not care just then to make an outright decision between them. As she was not ready for that yet, she smiled into their eager faces. "I'll tell you what I'll do," she announced. "I'll go to the reception with whichever of you wins the handball tournament."

When the singing ended, and the pastor, a gray-haired man with kindly face, began to talk. "In another few minutes," he said, "we shall write final at the bottom of one page in the ledger of life. Then we shall turn to a new page, unmarked by a single line. What is written upon it lies with us. It may be a record of good deeds, of problems solved, of temptations resisted. But whatever we write upon it should be free from bitterness, free from anything which is small or unworthy. In the page from which we shall turn, there may be a record of deeds not befitting us as Christian men and women. But that will be ended now, and the new page awaits us, white and clean. God grant that we may keep it so."

The big clock in the corner boomed twelve, and the assembled people rose to their feet, and sang: "Abide with me, fast falls the evening." When the singing had ended, James looked down at Angela. As her eyes met his, he found in them, for the first time, something for which he had long searched in vain.

From outside drifted the vague sounds of bells and whistles. A new year! A new page on the ledger of life! They waited around talking, but finally James' particular group wandered outside. The others left one by one until James was alone with Irving and Angela. In front of Angela's house they halted. The girl turned to James. "I'd like to have you come to dinner to-morrow. Do you think you can?"

"Of course," he answered. His heart missed a beat. Angela had invited him, but not Irving. "Good night!" she said. When they were alone, both young men waited indecisively. Then James spoke. "Irving, I've been thinking over what the minister said about the new page which we've come to. There shouldn't be any bitterness there."

Irving said nothing, but his hands were clenched tightly at his sides. "It seems to me," continued James, "that now is the time for us to end our feud. If fighting it out with you down at the Y is the only way to end it, I'm willing, old man." Still Irving did not answer, and after a minute James spoke again. "That," he said quietly, "is my New Year's resolution. To end this rivalry of ours, and be—friends."

SLATS' DIARY BY ROSS PARQUHAR

Friday—Cuzen, Clarence has got himself in a hole. He is engaged to a girl to marry her and finally he disabded mebbly he mite be just as well off not to get married so he made a fake confession to her and fold her he was a Book legger and now she has made him trade in his 2nd. Handed ford for a new car witch costed 11 hundred \$ & he is still ingaged.

Saturday—Pa says all this worryng about teaching Evalushion in the skools is foolshness. He sed they fast falls the evening. When the singing had ended, James looked down at Angela. As her eyes met his, he found in them, for the first time, something for which he had long searched in vain.

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Suddenly Irving's tense body relaxed. "It's my resolution, too. I'm willing to do it, Jim." "And we'll fight, then?" "No!" Irving turned and laid his hand on James' shoulder. "Your way is the best way, after all. If you're willing, we'll just shake hands and call it off."

JUST NATURALLY

The traffic policeman was questioning the fair motorist who had swerved across the wide village street and crashed into a pole. "Surely," he said, "on a road as wide as this you could have done something to prevent the accident."

"But I did do something," she assured him. "I didn't see it," was the reply. "Oh, but officer, surely you heard me. I screamed as loud as I could."

A nifty young flapper named Jane, while walking was caught in the rain. She ran—almost flew. Her complexion did, too. And she reached home exceedingly plain.

Theresa—Gentlemen prefer blondes, anyway. George—You ought to know. You've been both.

"Emil was arrested for attempted burglary." "Just like him. Always starting something and not finishing."

COLLECTING THE CURE

The preacher was conferring with the vestrymen who had passed the plate at the evening service. "My cough has been dreadfully troublesome to-night, Perkins," he remarked.

"Well, sir, you have a lot of friends," was the reply. "Eight of them put cough drops instead of dimes in the plate to-night."

Customer—"What's wrong with these eggs?" Waitress—"Don't ask me. I only laid the table."

Grocer—"You want a pound of ochre? Is it red ochre for making paint?" Small Boy—"No, it's tappy ochre for making puddings."

SCIENTIFIC MYSTERY

A gentleman somewhat inebriated picked up the telephone. "Hello! Hello! Hello!" "Hello!" returned the operator.

"Hello!" "Hello!" "My gosh," said the gentleman. "How this thing echoes!"

Judge—Did you know the defendant, Rastus? Rastus—Ah had a logical acquaintance with him. Judge—What do you mean by a logical acquaintance? Rastus—Well, us both belonged to the same lodge.

Marie—I have my faults, but I'm not two-faced. Jean—I can easily believe that. If you were, you'd not come out with that one.

He—Didn't I write you not to bring your mother along? She—That's what she wants to see you about.

Only Half a Newspaper... No matter how well edited or how many columns of real, interesting news appears in a local paper, that newspaper is only fulfilling half of its purpose if it fails to carry plenty of store news. Half the news of a town concerns the goods in its stores—the price changes, the new styles, the new materials, the new methods of production and the varying qualities. The newspaper is a co-operative enterprise. It is fashioned to carry all the local news, the news of the store as well as accounts of other happenings. A Town Without A Newspaper. Opinion is almost unanimous that a town without a paper is a dead town. Reams could be written to prove conclusively that this must be true and very little could be said to offset these arguments. Who would care to defend an opinion in opposition to this statement? A Store Which Does Not Advertise. Place yourself in the position of the reader of a town paper and endeavor to analyze the impression created by the omission of news from any particular store. How can it fail to be anything but unfavorable? To the readers of any newspaper, store news is considered most important --- to some the most important part of the paper. Its omission cannot fail but have a harmful effect. The Acton Free Press

THE ECONOMY QUINTET By Betty Barclay

The long and dreary depression which now seems to be about over has given birth to a number of economy diets, trifles and quartettes which have been so well received that they will thrive long after the depression has been forgotten.

Necessity is the mother of invention and necessity has taught Canadian housewives how to make many palatable and nutritious dishes out of a few simple and inexpensive ingredients.

Thus I introduce "The Economy Quintet." Blended in the proper way salt, pepper, flour, sugar and a cheap cut of meat may be turned into a delicious broiled steak or pot roast that will serve as the main course of a meal.

Try these two simple recipes which call for nothing except the five ingredients which go to make up "The Economy Quintet." BROILED ROUND OR RUMP STEAK Select a steak cut 1 to 1 1/4 inches thick, rub into it a mixture of one teaspoonful each of salt and sugar, and 1/4 teaspoonful of pepper.

ELEPHANT HELPS COMRADE

Elephants are just as much right and left-handed with their trunks as a human being is with his hands. They use their tusks when searching for roots in soft ground, and while some are right-tusked, others are left-tusked.

It seems as if elephants realize that it is their tusks that the hunters are after. Only male elephants of fair age have the valuable massive ivories, and female elephants will sometimes shield an old tusker from shot and spear with their own bodies.

Mr. Suthbert Christy, who tells us this in his book, "Big Game and Pygmies," once saw a herd of elephants moving through the bush in a compact mass, with what seemed like a wounded tusker in the centre, shaking his head from side to side.

SOME EXPERIENCE

"I had a strange experience the other day at the races. It was the 13th of the month, I live in a house that is No. 13, and I backed the 13th horse on the card with \$13."