

The Free Press Short Story

On the Midnight Express

By GRACE S. RICHMOND

OMERLOCKERS! In spite of his two years at a great preparatory school, Jack Hilliard could never go back to it, leaving his home and his father and mother, without feeling a wrench of pain. He stood with them on the platform of the railway station, admitting to himself that saying good-by to them hurt just as much as the physical bumps and bruises of the football field.

"Why does summer have to end!" he said regretfully. Mr. Hilliard smiled. He put his arm through Jack's, and father and son paced together up the platform. The midnight express was already late. It would have to make up time somewhere during the night.

"That was a wonderful month in the woods," said Jack. "But the weeks at home were better yet. Good old home."

"We're glad you feel that way, son. But you must face your own responsibilities at school. Play fair, and you can't fall. Now we must go back to your mother."

Far away in the black night the train whistle sounded. Jack Hilliard ran to his mother and gave her a great hug. She was a tiny figure in his big arms; and when she emerged from his bearlike embrace she had lost her breath. He was a demonstrative boy, not one of those who think it is childish to show their parents that they love them. As Captain of the school football team Jack Hilliard was a forceful, not to say imposing, figure on the field. But he lost all this dignity when at home. He romped with his mother still; and his mother adored him for his willingness to be as much of a boy as his six feet of strong young manhood would allow.

He smiled at her. He wanted to leave her smiling. Every time a son bids farewell to his father and mother, if he thinks of it he knows that he runs the risk of never seeing them again. This thought came into Jack's mind. He thrust it out again and drew his mother back from the edge of the platform, with a protective sweep of his arm, while the long train thundered into the station.

The porter briskly opened the sleeping-car doors. The conductor called "All aboard!" in a tone that clearly suggested that the express was now going to make up lost time.

"I'll see you at Christmas," called Jack from the vestibule of his car. He waved his hand as the train, after only a momentary stop, gathered headway again. Homesickness! The feeling came on him strongly. He squared his shoulders, as the porter showed him to his berth. The parting was over. He was going back to football, to interesting studies, to all the contacts and excitements of school life. He put his mind on these things, but a vision of his home and of the delightful pair who were his father and mother came back to him, as it did so often in his daily life.

and Jack impulsively stopped him. "How far's that fellow going, please?" he questioned. "He looks pretty sick to me."

Something of pity came into the conductor's eyes, accustomed though he was to such sights. "Boston," he answered. "I was talking to him not long ago. He's come down from Canada, he says. Pretty hard proposition for a chap just up from a fever. Fainted away after he got aboard tonight. Lots of sand, though. Never owned up to it hadn't anything to eat for twenty-four hours till that old woman behind him kept at him till she made him admit it."

Jack stood watching again when the conductor passed on. A notion that he ought to do something about it turned suddenly into an inspiration to do something definite, and without loss of time.

As he looked, the hollow black eyes opened. Jack's purpose swiftly enlarged into the desire to do the friendliest act possible under the circumstances. He walked quickly over to the narrow seat, dropped on one knee so that he could talk into the boy's ear, and began, though quietly, to speak in much the same declamatory way as in which he was accustomed to address his fellow players in the "huddle" on a football field.

"See here, friend, you can't sit up all night. I have a berth for you in the next car. I want you to come and get into it—right away, quick. Come, stand up, and I'll help you."

The fellow straightened, feebly, and Jack thought he saw a retinal coming. But he smiled into the pale face with a look of comradeship and laid his hand upon the other's shoulder with such an insistent friendliness that the sick boy hesitated, tried with faltering lips to answer, and then rose weakly to his feet, half pulled up by the other's strong grasp.

"That's the stuff," Jack went on hurriedly into his ear, as he led him to the car door. "Just a few steps and we'll make it."

But he found that he had to put his arm around his companion and hold him steadily. They passed the conductor, and he gave a curt nod with more than the shadow of an approving grin beneath his thick moustache. When they reached the sleeping car "Hiawatha," Jack summoned the porter and slipped something into his hand.

"See here," he said when the two had made the invalid comfortable in Jack's lower berth, "can't you get him something to sleep on? A cup of soup and some bread?"

Jack remembered that his berth had been Number 1, at the very end of the car. With sinking heart, he scrutinized all the passengers as they were rescued. The pale boy was not found until the very last. Knowing his condition, Jack felt that it would be a miracle if he were still alive after such a shock.

But he was. Jack carried him out in his arms, with his head rolling helplessly from side to side. He laid the inert form down tenderly on the grassy bank at the side of the tracks. Smoke and flame were showing from the telescoped baggage car, and in the glare Jack established himself that the boy's heart was still beating. He tended the unfortunate stranger as best he could until motor ambulances, summoned by telephone, began to arrive and take away those who were badly hurt.

An hour later, after telegraphing his own safety to his father, Jack found himself in the lobby of the hospital where the sufferers lay.

He soon succeeded in finding the bed of his charge; and the surgeon had just finished applying bandages to a badly sprained shoulder.

"Not seriously hurt," he said to Jack. "He'll do very well, as well as a boy in his general condition."

"Give every care, won't you, sir?" Jack begged. "And then, after a breakfast which he found went far to calm his own nerves, more shaken than he had at first realized, he returned to the hospital and waited a chance to speak to the stranger. He sat for some time by his bedside. Perhaps it was merely quixotic to care so much how this boy came out. But Jack realized that he felt a real responsibility for him. It was not long before the hollow black eyes opened.

"You're absolutely OK," said Jack, cheerfully. "Your doctor says so." The sick boy nodded feebly. "I know who you are," he said. "You're Jack Hilliard."

"Of course I am. But how—how do you know?"

"We used to live near each other. I'm Jack Hewitt."

KEEN OBSERVER
Numberless are the stories told of George Washington. Upon one occasion while the American army was in camp, Washington heard that the colored sentries were not altogether reliable. He determined to test the matter for himself. One night, therefore, when the password was "Cambridge," the General went out and walked up to a colored sentry.

"Who goes there?" cried the sentinel. "A friend," was the reply. "Advance, friend, and give the counter-sign."

"Roxburgh," said Washington. "No, sah," replied the soldier. "Medford," said Washington. "No, sah," was the response. "Charleston," said Washington.

The sentry lost patience. "I tell you, Masses, 'Washington,'" he said emphatically, "no man can go by here without he say 'Cambridge!'"

union between mother and son. Gently Jack questioned him. Jake shook his head faintly. "Oh, yes, you're going home," said Jack firmly. It was his football voice again. "You're going home with me—straight!" he added.

Jack Hewitt's big eyes were fixed on the window. A shaft of sunlight streamed into it. "It feels good to be alive," he said unexpectedly.

"Sure thing," assented Jack. "I'll go home—if you think Mother will take me."

"What I think has nothing to do with it," said Hilliard. "If you play fair with your mother, she will play fair with you. I don't think that. I know it."

There was a frown on Jake Hewitt's face. "You've had a rotten time," said Jack. "You look like a hobo to me. Don't you know that all your bad luck has come because you never gave your mother a chance?"

Even while he spoke, he said to himself that it wasn't fair to lecture a boy who had just been dragged out of the jaws of death. But Jake Hewitt was smiling now.

SLATS' DIARY
BY ROSS PARQUHAR
Friday—Mr. Gillen brung home his pitchers with the had tuk down at the photographers last week and he looks so grouchy that pa and the photographer must of told him what they was a going to do before he pressed the Button on him.

Saturday—well I forgot to carry in the coal witch pa ordered this morning and tonite when he come home he cudden see my side of the story and he tub me in to the Basement and like to wore out the Razer strap on me. I think he is very very onreasonable and from now on he is just my Mothers husband.

Sunday—Charlie Flett and his new wife cum home from there funny moon last nite and they was a talking to pa and ma including me and they sed they was wnderfully happy and they sed they want on pa sed to ma that was just Beginneres Luck and she got very sore at pa. even tho we are not speaking I feel kinda sorry for him. Sum times.

Munday—Ant Emmy finished reading A Cereal story today and she sed to pa that she didn't think much of Modern literature becuz they was putting too much love in Fildon now days and pa replied and sed Yes and they is a great deal of Fildon in love to. Ma herd him say it.

Tuesday—The teacher sent a note to Blisteres pa today and she sed she had cot Blisters in a lie and Blisteres pa went on pa sed to her and sed for her please to give the Boy a Chance becuz mebbey she woodent keteh him in a Lie after heed had a little mor Xperience.

Wednesday—We had are test in Langwidge today. I rilly cant see no use in spending a lot of time learning fokes to tawk English when the movie Stars get big wages becuz they cant tawk it.

Thursday—Every buddy is tawking about how well Mr. Mull looks here of lately. He told the reason he looks so well hep of lately is on acct. of he boughten san stocks that a friend tipped him off on and ever since that he had to go on a Saffick Diet.

THE FACE
Did you hear that Jones, who married the banker's daughter, is pleading poverty?

It's not surprising. He's probably living up to their wedding presents."

HERE AND THERE
Why not give as much attention to what you eat and drink as to what you wear?—Andre Simon.

What we need is a little more statesmanship in business and a lot more business in statesmanship.—Will Irwin.

Whether its marriage or business patience is the first rule of success. Too much freedom for children is not good.—Mme. Eschmann-Heink.

Canadians talk more than citizens of the United States; according to telephone statistics.—Canadians average 284 telephone call per annum per capita; Americans, 228.

Women have always worked, but they have not always been paid. The kind of advice we do not like to take often turns out to be the best. Pride is of such intimate connection with ingratitude that the actions of ingrateful seem directly reproachable into pride as the principal reason of them.—South.

RIGHT THEN AND THERE
The manager of a big office stamped furiously up and down his room as he waited for his office boy to appear. The boy entered the room.

Manager (raving)—Forgot! forgot! Suppose I forgot to pay you, what would you say?

Office Boy—I should come and tell you at once, not wait a month and then kick up a fuss about it.

OFF COLOUR?
HOW IS YOUR LIVER?
Wake up your Liver Bile Without Calomel.

You liver's a very small organ, but it certainly can put your digestive and eliminative organs out of order by refusing to pour out its bile. You don't completely correct such a condition by taking salt, oil, mineral water, laxative candy or chewing gum, or roughage. When they've moved your bowels they're through—and you need a liver stimulant. Carter's Little Liver Pills will soon bring back the sunshine into your life. They're purely vegetable. Safe. Sure. Ask for them by name. Refuse substitutes. 25c at all druggists. 45

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Memories are Sacred
Whether life has been rich with experience or confined within narrow limits, there are always memories held sacred beyond the reach of commonplace things. To those memories and to the finer things which they have inspired, one owes full reverence and respect. The beautiful custom of erecting a monument—dignified, lasting, beautiful—springs from this natural urge. Choosing such a memorial is often somewhat involved with doubt, and we respectfully offer our services in the capacity of counsel.
"MAKE EVERY GRAVE"
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CLASSIFIED ADS
The Door of Opportunity!
These Small Ads will Open the Door to Whatever You Are Seeking

Penny Wise!

A penny saved is not always a penny earned. Sometimes it is two pennies lost. The merchant who spends nothing on advertising is practising false economy; his losses in sales far exceed the pennies saved.

The money spent for plate glass windows is not looked on as lost; nor is the money spent on better interior lighting.

Anything that increases favor, that adds to sales, that multiplies customers is very properly regarded as a good investment.

Advertising is a good investment --- just as plate glass windows are. Advertising is the plate glass window the merchant can send into every home. Advertising sells more goods to more persons than shop-windows do.

A Word to the Public

Do you resent having a merchant address his message to you in the form of an advertisement in our columns? On the contrary is not your impulse to respond to his friendly overtures?

Advertisements are Store Windows

TO RELIEVE CATARRHAL DEAFNESS AND HEAD NOISES

If you have Catarrhal Deafness or are hard of hearing or have head noises go to your druggist and get 1-ounce of Par-mint (double strength) and add to it 3 pint of hot water and a little granulated sugar. Take one tablespoonful four times a day.

This will often bring quick relief from the distressing head noises. Closed nostrils should open, breathing become easy and the mucus stop dropping into the throat. It is easy to prepare, costs little and is pleasant to take. Anyone who has Catarrhal Deafness or head noises should give this prescription a trial.