

SOME STORIES FROM REAL LIFE

Some eminently practical men are wont to laugh at their fellows who deal in that sentiment which Lowell described as "intellectualized emotion, emotion precipitated, as it were, in pretty crystals by the fancy." But these "pretty crystals" never hurt any one.

THERE WAS A BOY

Doubtless this "intellectualized emotion" was strongly developed in Wordsworth, as his bit of verse entitled "There Was a Boy" goes considerably farther in the way of sentiment than many of the rest of us are able to follow. Wordsworth did not know the boy except as he was accustomed, in passing the fields, to observe that boy's communion with nature, and he became so interested in the little fellow that, stranger though he was, when the lad died Wordsworth's "intellectualized emotion" made it possible for him to stand "a long half-hour" looking at the boy's grave.

Commoner readers will doubtless be interested in this Wordsworth verse. It follows:

There was a boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And Islands of Winander!—Many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him.—And they
would shout

Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes
loud

Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of jocund din! And, when there came a pause
Of silence such as baffled his best skill,
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he
hung

Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Pre-eminent in beauty is the vale
Where he was born and bred; the church-yard
hangs

Upon the slope above the village school;
And, through that church-yard when my
way has led

On summer-evenings, I believe, that there
A long half-hour together I have stood
Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies!

THE ANTITHESIS

If one were to search for the antithesis of this example, he might find it in a little story of real life. For perhaps fifteen years a certain family lived in a little home. Many of the children had been born there. Most of the trees on the place had been planted by various members of the family. The lawn had been laid off in a beautiful flower garden, and great care had, for many years, been exercised in keeping up the large number of walks. The lawn was covered with some of the most beautiful roses.

This family removing from the town, it became necessary for them to dispose of their home, and after the sale had been effected the mother, addressing the new home owner, said: "I should like very much to take some slips from those roses, but of course you would not consent to it."

The new owner promptly replied: "You may take them all as far as I care. I don't intend to cultivate them, and I intend to let the grass grow up in all those walks, so my little girl can have a place on which to tether her pony."

The mother was shocked, and, indeed, many of the neighbors who had for years looked upon that beautiful spot were shocked also. When this good woman happened to remark that there must be something vicious in this man, she was reminded by her husband that even though he had no use for well arranged walks and did not care for flowers, a man was not altogether bad whose conspicuous thought was to provide a

tethering place for his little girl's pony. As a matter of fact, he was a good man; he simply had made no effort during his whole life to cultivate "intellectualized emotion."

A POET'S SYMPATHIES

Years ago I sat in the presence of a master in chancery of the federal court. A man whose home was to be sold was present. He had exhausted every effort at delay known to ingenious lawyers, and having reached the limit was indulging in reminiscence concerning his experiences upon the valuable farm which was about to pass under the hammer. He told how in the long ago, accompanied by his bride, he had settled on that farm; how their two children had been born there—had died there and been buried there. And then he added: "When you sell this farm, Mr. Master in Chancery, although you will not know it, you will be disposing of all of these precious memories; and you will sell, also, those little graves."

I was then a reporter on a daily newspaper, and when I returned to the office I was greatly depressed because of the recital to which I had listened. The first person I met in the office was a fine newspaper woman, to whom I unbosomed myself, relating to her all of the details of the life story with which I had been so greatly stirred. She was a woman, good and true, and was, of course, sympathetic; but it happened that at her elbow there stood the "poet" of the publication, a man who had prepared many verses which had attracted considerable attention and favorable comment within the sphere of the publication for which he had written. Many of the productions of this so-called "poet" related to little children, and from his writings one would think that he was among the tenderest of men. With wide open mouth he listened to the story I had to tell, and then at its conclusion, he observed with a gasp: "What is he worrin' about? Can't he remove the 'stiffs'?"

I need not say that I had then small respect for anything that person wrote wherein he sought to depict the love of parent toward child, or the tender affections with which—thank God—this turbulent life is indissolubly bound.

FEARFULLY APPROPRIATE

Recently at the Sunday morning services held at the Nebraska penitentiary, the prisoners marched into the chapel while the choir sang that old hymn "Trust and Obey, for There's no Other Way." It must have occurred to many of the on-lookers that the song selected was altogether too appropriate for the occasion. Many prison officials were stationed throughout the room, and while no weapon was in sight, it must have been plain to the careful observer from the determined look on the faces of those officials that they were there for a purpose and were amply prepared to carry it out. To these prisoners it was "trust and obey," for there was, indeed, "no other way." Of course, the selection of this particular hymn was purely accidental, just as on many occasions the texts announced by preachers, and hymns suggested by choir masters, have seemed to fit just a bit too snugly into the situation.

For instance, we have been told that a young man whose reputation was not of the best had escorted the preacher's daughter to church. The usher had some difficulty in finding seats for the couple, and while they stood waiting in the aisle the preacher announced as his text "Behold, my Daughter is Grievously Possessed of a Devil."

AN EMBARRASSED LEADER

"Joe" Critchfield, the famous temperance orator, was once holding a series of meetings in Cameron, Mo. Among the printers in the city was one who was fast succumbing to his appetite for intoxicants, and his comrades began striving to "snatch him from the burning." Not one of them was an abstainer, but all were "moderate drinkers." They worked with their friend for several days, and finally he agreed to sign the pledge but insisted that the others do likewise. He declared that he didn't have the "nerve" to walk up all alone and sign. It was agreed that on a given night, and at a sign from Mr. Critchfield, the whole band of printers should start forward and all sign the pledge. The night arrived and the sign was given. The half-dozen or more printers arose in a body and started down the aisle, the brother whose salvation was so earnestly sought being in the lead. And just as

the little procession was fairly started down the aisle, the band of enthusiastic singers upon the platform burst forth into that good old song:

"See the mighty host advancing,
Satan leading on."

And it was only with the greatest difficulty that the leader of the procession could be convinced that it was not a practical joke at his expense. But he signed the pledge—and, what is better, kept it.

A NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN CHOIR MASTER

Many years ago a hanging took place at the little town of Corning, Arkansas. The victim of the law's lawlessness was known as L. Bent Taylor. From all portions of the surrounding country men, women and children had gathered to take in the awful sight of a man being put to death by civilized society. A singing teacher more or less famous in the neighborhood, was conspicuous on that occasion. The condemned man, manacled at wrist and ankle, was seated in front of the judge's stand in the great court room, which was crowded with people. A fine old preacher delivered a fine old sermon, and then the singing teacher took his place in the front and announced that while they were singing a hymn those who desired could pass the prisoner and bid him good-bye. In single file the people marched before the condemned man. Tears were coursing down the cheeks of most of them, and many women and children were sobbing with emotion as they grasped the hand of that healthy yet dying man, and all joined under the leadership of that never to be forgotten choir master in the singing of the hymn "Oh tell me, Brother, will you meet me on Canaan's Happy Shore?"

Later, when the scaffold had been reached and the noose and the black cap had been adjusted, that same choir master stepped to the front and invited the immense throng to join him in singing that fearfully appropriate hymn: "O Come, Angel Band, and Bear me Away on Your Snowy Wings."

"THOU SHALT NOT KILL"

Reference to this incident recalls the fact that the American people are making some progress along these lines. In many states it is decreed by law that executions shall take place in the state prison, thus relieving the community in which the crime was committed from the disturbances incident to a public execution. No state that has tried this reform could be persuaded to return to the old plan.

But a better sign is the evidently growing tendency against capital punishment. A few weeks ago in the city of Omaha so much difficulty was encountered in securing a jury whose members would permit the infliction of the death penalty that the attempt was abandoned. The county attorney permitted a sentence to life imprisonment, upon the plea of guilty, and, somehow or other, every one felt relieved.

The arguments against capital punishment are too well known to require restatement at this time. They are in the heart of every man. In the absence of that deep personal interest that cries for vengeance or in the abandonment of the foolish notion that men in mass must slay in order to prevent individuals from murder—those arguments force their way to the front and cluster around the centerpiece provided in the divine command "Thou Shalt Not Kill."

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

If I had ever believed in capital punishment I am sure that my observations at Corning, Arkansas, would have converted me. Being a correspondent in a neighboring town for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, I was detailed to report the execution of L. Bent Taylor. I arrived at Corning the night before the hanging took place, and spent the night with the condemned man. It was only natural that those experiences should make a marked impression upon one of my age at the time; I was then but 19 years of age; yet subsequent experiences and observations have but confirmed my opposition to the infliction of the death penalty.

Physically Taylor was a fine specimen of manhood.

He did not look like an assassin. Yet while he claimed that he was innocent of the particular crime for which he was to be executed, he admitted that he had killed several men, for which crimes he had not been called to account.

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