

SOME TIMELY STORIES FROM REAL LIFE

"Last Words"

The Washington correspondent for the New York World says that recently the discussion in the democratic cloakroom turned to the last words of dying men. Several interesting stories on this line were contributed by different members, but Representative Trimble of Kentucky won the prize when he said:

"I don't know many of the last sentiments of great men, but this talk reminds me of the inquest they held over the body of Chad Howard in my state.

"Chad Howard was mixed up in one of the feuds and he killed a few of his opponents one day. They arrested him and took him to the county jail, which was a log affair, made with very thick walls and but one window and an iron-bound door. Howard was the only prisoner in the jail. One night the jailer came in to keep him company, and they began shaking a friendly game of dice on a box top, with a candle between them.

"After the game had been going on for half an hour a man who was allied with the other end of the Howard feud came up to the window, put a double-barrelled shotgun through and blew off the top of Howard's head. They had an inquest, and the jailer was the star witness. He described Howard's death in minute detail.

"Then the coroner said, 'Can you tell the jury what was the last words of the deceased?'"

"'Yes, sir,' the jailer replied. 'I reckon I kin. Near's I kin remember the last dyin' words of the deceased was, 'Three aces to beat.'"

This calls to mind the interesting explanation of the last words of Daniel Webster as given by Ben Perley Poore, in his "Reminiscences." It will be remembered that the last words of Webster as told in the school-books were: "I still live." The school children of the long ago obtained the impression that this was an assertion of Webster's faith in immortality, or perhaps a declaration that, although dead, he would live in history. At all events, it was presumed to be a dying declaration worthy of preservation.

Ben Perley Poore says that when the doctor called on Webster for the last time he realized that his patient had not long to live, and so instructed the nurse: "Give him a tablespoonful of brandy, and if an hour later he still lives, give him another tablespoonful of brandy."

A clock hung on the wall at the foot of the bed and when the hands showed that the hour was up, the nurse was not paying great attention to duty. Webster, turning to the nurse said, faintly: "I still live."

Mr. Poore tells us that Webster got his brandy.

Struggle Between the "Two Men"

A convict in the Maryland penitentiary, determined to reform, has adopted a novel means to that end. A writer in the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch, tells the story in this way:

His scheme is to make a chart from day to day of his thoughts. He takes a piece of paper and marks it off into squares. At the top of the sheet he writes "Purity," "Generosity," "Kindness," "Behavior," "Report," "Truthfulness," "Sincerity." For every good thought he gives himself credit, and for every evil thought he makes a bad score. If he manages to pass a day without being the victim of any evil thoughts, he marks an X in the block, which means perfect.

In other terms, this young man keeps a daily account with himself, and it is good "bookkeeping." The philosophy of life is to live one day at a time and have a reckoning at night. The man who will follow this rule and keep an honest score, crediting himself with his good thoughts and good deeds, and charging the bad thoughts and evil deeds against him, is apt by and by to fall into the habit of working in his own interest, so to speak, from day to day, so as to make as favorable an exhibit as possible when the reckoning time comes at nightfall. Why may not one fall into habits of thrift and enterprise in promoting his moral welfare as in promoting his material welfare? This youth in the Maryland penitentiary has given us all a hint worth thinking about.

Judge Lee Estelle of Omaha, who for many years has served on the Nebraska district bench, has a bright little boy who, like other little boys before him, finds it difficult at times to keep in the straight and narrow path. This lad's name is Murray. He occupies a trundle bed in his parents' room, and has the habit of getting up in

the night time and awakening his parents, pleading for the privilege of sharing their couch. One night he had indulged this habit once or twice and was reproved, promising that in the future he would be "dood." The following night, about one or two o'clock his parents were aroused by the child's sobs, and the mother inquiring as to the cause of his grief, the little fellow exclaimed: "Muddfe, it's awful hard to be dood!"

Not long ago a little boy who had frequently been reproved by his mother for his "badness" entered her room, and putting his little hand on her shoulder said: "Mamma, won't you please let me be bad just for fifteen minutes?"

It is not at all strange that these little folks find it hard to put down their mischievousness when even their elders find it so difficult to avoid real meanness.

To avoid the evils to which flesh seems to be heir requires constant struggle on the part of men, and while it is, perhaps, not practicable for every one to keep books like the Maryland convict, every one would find it advantageous if he required a daily reckoning between the "two men" who are in every one of us thus seeking, as the Richmond Times-Dispatch suggests, "to make as favorable an exhibit as possible."

Great faults grow from small weaknesses; disastrous results come from what, in the beginning, seem inconsequential lapses. It would be well if the little folks could be taught early in life the value of little things, not only for the purpose of economy so far as money is concerned, but as a help toward the correct life. A writer in the Chicago Journal gives a hint of "the value of little things" when he says:

From waste paper alone one railroad last year realized \$5,000.

Pins, pens, nails, old brooms, bottles, tin cans and worn-out machinery of all sorts are gathered up along the route by all the railway companies and turned into money. Even the ashes are sold or utilized for improving the road-bed.

These things seem small to command the attention of a rich railway company. But it must be remembered that the railway company is rich largely because it looks after the little things.

The greatest corporations in the world are not above taking care of the fractions of pennies.

The railway scrap-heap of the country last year reached the value of \$1,250,000—a most respectable sum of money, notwithstanding it came from picked-up pins and paper, old nails and old brooms.

If some man who has lived long enough to recognize the mistakes of his life could reduce these mistakes to figures, giving to even what at the time seemed to be the smallest of these errors their proper place in the column, he would render distinct service to society.

* Every profane word uttered, every unkind act committed, every impure thought tolerated, every enmity cultivated, every piece of folly committed, makes some contribution to the list of errors and weakens the structure of character undergoing the building process. On the other hand where, at every step in life, an effort is made to cultivate in thought and deed those things suggested by the better man within us, the good results count up rapidly.

Between the "two men" within every one of us, it is, as the politicians would say, "a long and heated struggle." Every time the better man wins a victory he finds, somehow or other, new strength for the succeeding contest; and one who in the process of character-building ignores these small things works upon the sand, where the man who places a proper estimate upon them builds upon the rock.

Governor Hogg's Monument

Sometime prior to his death the late Governor Hogg of Texas speaking to his children said:

"I want no monument of stone or marble. Let my children plant at the head of my grave a pecan tree and at the foot an old fashioned walnut. And when these trees shall bear let the pecans and the walnuts be given out among the plain people of Texas so that they may plant them and make Texas a land of trees."

What better monument could any man ask? There is something so intensely practical about Governor Hogg's suggestion that it would be well if men generally could adopt his view on the monument question. In this country, as in other

countries, fortunes are wasted in the erection of monuments of stone or marble, and these do not serve to perpetuate the memory of the one in whose honor they are erected, while they are of no practical service to society. If some of the vast sums spent in the erection of monuments of marble and of stone had been used for the establishment of orphan asylums or of old people's homes, the memory of the one in whose name such contributions were given would be more lasting.

We are told that Governor Hogg's children intend to carry out his wishes in this respect. The people of Texas, grateful to this man for the services he gave to the public interests, will not be slow in gathering at his grave in order that, while doing reverence to his memory, they may secure a seed consecrated with his dust, plant it in Texas soil, and make the Lone Star state "a land of trees."

It is at once a beautiful and a practical suggestion. It is eminently characteristic of the man who made it. He was a plain American citizen, having supreme contempt for the foibles and the vanities of life. It is related that while Governor Hogg was visiting in England the American minister offered to present him at the court of the king. Governor Hogg accepted the invitation and arrayed himself in evening dress. He was told that in order to be presented to the king he must be fitted out in knee breeches and other regalia peculiar to the court. Governor Hogg revolted, and promptly declined the invitation, saying that in evening dress he could be presented to the president of the United States, and if that apparel was good enough for the American White House it was good enough for the court of a king.

Who knows but what Governor Hogg's suggestion with respect to a monument may be the beginning of a great and necessary reform in that line? To many people it has seemed strange that we have clung so tenaciously to the foolish custom of seeking to perpetuate tender memories by the erection of useless stone. It is, of course, proper that the memories of men who have given faithful service to society be preserved, but this end may be better attained when the method adopted serves in a practical way as a reminder of their worth. Governor Hogg will live in the memory of Texans for many years to come because of his faithful service to the people, and so long as the pecan tree and the walnut tree that are to be planted at his grave give forth seed, in order to make Texas "a land of trees," rising generations will be reminded of his good deeds.

It may be true that after awhile thinking men and women will bring about some other essential reforms with respect to the dead. Many people are impressed with the idea that we have all too long adhered to the mourning customs which prevail today, but which, properly, belong to the dark ages. No service can be rendered the dead by these outward displays of grief, while those who at the moment need all the relief that is within the power of humans to bestow are not aided by the somber display attendant upon our funeral ceremonies. Sometime in the not distant future the band of crepe on the man's hat, and the heavy black in the widow's apparel will be abolished. Instead of the black ribbon on the door knob there will be a wreath of flowers, and in every particular the ceremonies will be robbed of that outward display which if it represents anything at all, indicates an utter hopelessness directly at variance with the faith most of us profess. The immense sums of money now spent in the purchase of cut flowers that wither on the grave will be diverted—and in the name of the dead—to sweet charity. We will plant and cultivate the rose, the violet and the "forget-me-nots of the angels" in the soil where our beloved sleep; but we will turn resolutely away from all temptations to that vain display which makes mockery of grief and gives affront to the memory of one whose life was devoted to the service of his fellows.

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MIGHTY SLOW

The Wall Street Journal says that without regard to the guilt or innocence of John R. Walsh, "the arrest of a bank president on such a charge as this is a wholesome development." But we can not forget that considerable time elapsed before Mr. Walsh was called to court, and long ago we were told by the secretary of the treasury that Walsh would not be prosecuted. It will occur to a great many people that there is altogether too much reluctance on the part of officials when it comes to the prosecution of influential men who have been guilty of grave offenses.