



Whether Common or Not

By WILL M. MAUPIN.

Letters From Far-Away Friends

Fredonia, Ky., September 22.—I am sending you a copy of a poem I heard a school girl recite more than twenty years ago. It is entitled "His Mother's Song," but I do not know the author, nor have I ever seen the verses in print. It is a beautiful poem, and a great favorite of mine. I would like to see it published in The Commoner.

MRS. ROSA HAMILTON.

(The poem in question is published in another column.—W.M.M.)

Deckersville, Mich., September 6.—Here is a temperance story that was told from the platform of a country Sunday school more than fifty years ago: A woman living in one of the old cathedral towns of England was sorely addicted to drink. Of a Saturday she was often so drunk that she would be seen on Sunday morning sleeping off her debauch by one of the tombstones in the churchyard. This became very annoying to the respectable people going to church and finally the arch-deacon took means to stop it. Calling the sexton to him he told him that when the incident occurred again to take the offending woman and put her into a certain old vault, locking the doors upon her and secreting himself nearby to take note of what happened; also giving him various questions to ask of the offending woman. The opportunity soon came and the drunken woman was carried into the vault. After a time the woman roused up and looking about her asked: "Where am I?" The sexton answered, "You're dead." "An' how lang hae I been dead?" asked the woman. "Two years," replied the sexton. "An' hae lang hae ye been dead?" again asked the woman. "Two years," replied the sexton. The woman fumbled in her pockets for a moment and then said: "Here, Hinney; here's a shillin'; gang along an' git some whusky. Ye ken mair about this place than I dae."

Maybe this demonstrates that while a man may be cured of the drink habit a—but I forbear.

JACOB TRUMBULL.

Wittenberg, Wis., August 31.—I have no voice for singing, but I like a good song. I can not tell a story, but I like to hear one with a point. And one of the best I ever heard was told by Mr. Bryan, it being about a young lad fresh from college who got a job in a lumber camp and was put on one end of a cross-cut saw with an old-timer. After a while the old-timer paused and said: "Young man, I don't care how much you ride on this saw just so you keep your feet off the ground." The moral of that story may be applied in a thousand ways. I would like to have a copy of a "stump speech" I often heard recited by a man named Darrow when we were working on the railroad in the early 80's. It began: "Ladies and felly Sdiggigans—I will now be the undertaker to address you this evenin', confin' myself to these points which are already alluminated. I stand here like a pigeon tied to a ricket henroost; like a wigwam shattered and torn; like a shadow in a bush fence, etc., etc." If any one can supply me with the complete address I will be under obligations. My favorite song is "Silver Threads Among the Gold." I also like "Kathleen, I'll take you home again,"

"Michael Snyder's Party," "Down on the Farm," "The Shanty Boy," and "Ben Bolt." B. JONNESCH.

Chelan, Wash., September 15.—Here are a couple of stories about Irishmen—the Irish being never failing subjects for stories. I heard my father tell the second one forty years ago, and the first one I heard a Presbyterian minister tell fully as long ago. These were days, you know, when you could find an occasional Irishman who would indulge in a dram, and now and then a good old Scotch Presbyterian minister who would take a little tansy pitters for the stomach's sake. But to the stories: An Irishman awoke one morning with a thirst, penniless and with the knowledge that while his credit might be good for a twopence worth of crackers it was not good for twopence worth of whisky. So he went into the grocery and called for the crackers. They were tied up and handed to him and he made for the door. Suddenly he stopped and said: "I'd rather have whisky than crackers; will you exchange?" The grocer agreed, and handing the crackers back, Pat took his whisky straight. When he started for the door the grocer said: "You didn't pay me for the whisky." "I gave you the crackers for the whisky," said Pat. "Then pay for the crackers," said the grocer. "But I gave you back the crackers," said Pat. "That's right," said the grocer; and Pat went away smiling. The other is about an Irishman who was fooling with a snapping turtle and suddenly found his thumb in the turtle's mouth. After trying vainly to release his thumb Pat drew back his clenched fist and exclaimed: "If yez don't let go me t'umb I'll knock yez out o' the box yez're in." H. B. MILLER.

Webster City, Ia., October 1.—I told you some time ago I thought the old times better than the present. Why? Because everybody was friendlier, more sociable; people visited more and in general were happier. It is true they did not wear as good clothes or smoke as many cigars or cigarettes—don't forget the cigarets. Nor did they ride in such fine carriages or in automobiles. But for genuine hospitality they were there with the goods. Then the winter night visits after the evening chores were done. We hitched the team to the sled and hiked over to some neighbor's house and were joyfully received. After the first excitement was over the hostess started up the cookin' stove and—say, such a supper! Hot biscuits and honey, sassaige, coffee, preserves, apple butter—well, it made us sing like Bob Bragg, "O, for a thousand tongues, and a throat a mile long!" And after supper the host would get out his fiddle and the way he sawed off the tunes set every foot to tapping. "Old Zip Coon," "Arkansaw Traveler," "Rye Straw"—in those days I want to tell you the fiddlers played tunes! Now violinists render music. Then the old school house meetings. Oh, what times we used to have! Every body went—no one stayed away on account of poor clothes. If one had good clothes he, or she, wore them, but was no better than the other fellow. And if a man was there in his work clothes, why he was not shunned because of a patch on the west end of his pants. Everybody

welcomed everybody and about one-half went home with the other half for dinner. Then the old songs—good old tunes that we all knew, and all could sing—and did. Of course there was no orchestra, pianos or organs, but for all that we had plenty of noise. There was no choir, or beating the air with a stick, but there was always someone to start the tune and get there with it. But for fear that I am taking too much space for one issue, will close for the present, and if you think this worthy of space, will finish on the old songs in the future. G. P. KARR.

Enid, Okla., September 10.—Like most people I would like to see some of my thoughts in print, so here goes my conception of a funny story. The new minister had found it necessary to go to the postoffice early Sunday morning; not being acquainted with the town he made inquiry of some boys who were engaged playing marbles as to where the postoffice was. The information was readily given, but before proceeding on his way the minister felt it a duty to lead the boys away from their game on the Sabbath day, so he says: "Boys, don't you go to Sunday school?" "Naw!" said the boys. "Well, I wish I could induce you to come to my church this beautiful Sunday morning and I would show you the way to heaven." The red headed boy spoke right up: "Yes, like thunder you will; you don't even know the way to the postoffice." Speaking of the good old songs that were so full of melody and harmony, they would fill you with such peace you wanted to love everybody. I think Joe Emmett's lullaby stands at the head. Certainly there were many sweet songs in the good old days. And never did they sound sweeter than on a moonlight night when a quartette were out serenading their best girls. Having been a reader of The Commoner since its first number I have certainly enjoyed the page "Whether Common or Not." No writer has ever taken me back over the old stamping ground like the editor of that page has done. When I was younger I recall how we children—eight in number—used to laugh at father for always quoting the New York Witness as authority on all subjects. Of late years they compare me and The Commoner with "Pap" and the Witness. J. F. HUNTZINGER.

Milaca, Minn., September 1.—Perhaps it is wrong to tell stories having religion as a topic, but here are a couple, one I heard "fo' de wah." It was about a deacon who had something wrong with the end of his nose and applied a plaster. The plaster dropped off on Sunday morning and the deacon by mistake applied a bit of paper instead of the plaster. As he passed the contribution box everybody snickered, for the bit of paper on his nose bore in plain letters the words: "Warranted to hold out 200 yards." A minister new to the parish was inquiring of a good looking woman as to the whereabouts of her husband. "He's down there in that field," said the woman, pointing. The minister looked the wrong way and saw a negro. "My good woman," gasped the new minister; "couldn't you do better than that?" "Nope," replied the woman; "but my sister done worse. She married a Missourian." As it was told me by a Missourian I suppose the story will not offend any natives of the old state. Of all the old songs "Home, Sweet Home" is the sweetest. Next to that is "Happy Day." Another sweet old song is "Sister, thou were wild and lovely, gentle as the summer breeze; and thy words were sweetly spoken and thy paths were strewn with peace." I have not heard it since the funeral of a girl

chum of mine away back in 1868. What great times there will be over on the other shore when from old acquaintances we will part no more.—L. L. F.

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