

A Few Impressions of Writers and Things

By O. O. MINTYRE.

If you are the proud parent of a precocious 4-year-old son, and, at a moment when the nurse is lax, the son and heir topples from the high chair to the floor, landing on the soft spot of his head, have no worries. Everything is going to be all right.

The chances are he will become an author or a poet, be invited out to drink 14 kinds of tea, eat 16 kinds of cake every day and live happy ever after. Yessir!

He will be impervious to eyes that can wreck an empire and if he can dodge the sheriff until he reaches bother about his meals. By that time he will either have starved or learned to live without eating.

Writers may not be entirely "blotto," but all I have bet act funny. And they have a queer look in their eyes.

Sometimes I have wondered if they are really human. They do such things and they say such things.

My favorite author is the mildest mannered of men. He has a disposition that is the marvel of all who know him. A cross word never passes his lips. He fairly beams at all times. Yet one day his wife picked a thread off his coat sleeve and he flew into a violent paroxysm of rage—stormed and blustered and almost wrecked the hope of future domestic happiness.

He has been buying flowers and candy since to square himself and has never been able to explain the brainstorm.

Afraid of Elevators.

Take Arthur Somers Roche—K he is not mislaid some place in Europe—he writes thrilling stories of adventure and mystery. One follows his red-corpused heroes through one chapter after another, breathless with suspense. And yet Mr. Roche himself is the only man I know who is afraid to ride in an elevator in an office building. Whenever he wants to see an editor he invites him out to lunch, sometimes even paying the check.

Fred C. Kelly writes human interest articles about men who have dared and won. He tells how they overcome insurmountable obstacles and yet Kelly is so fearful of water no amount of money could induce

him to cross a body of water—large or small.

Samuel Blythe has the reputation of being one of our shrewdest political reporters and is also a novelist of distinction. But when he writes on the typewriter he refuses

settled, he settles down himself and finishes his novel without stopping. But when he is told his work must be finished at a certain time he finds he is not able to work at all.

Ring Lardner is another rare bird. He lives on his magnificent

abouts and about twice a week the children forget him.

I used to play Kelly pool every Saturday afternoon with a group that included Berton Braley, the poet. Braley, despite the fact that he is a poet, always had plenty of loose change in his pocket, but he would never put cash into the pot. Instead he would write out a check for the small amount needed and when the game was finished retrieve the check and tender the winner cash.

H. C. Witwer deserted New York some time ago to live in Southern California. He comes east about every three months. Before coming he wires a certain hotel on Central Park West for reservations and demands they have a few candles in the room. He has a horror of New York suddenly becoming lightless. What a bright idea this is!

Meredith Nicholson, the Hoosier novelist, is also a frequent visitor to New York. He stops at one of the best hotels in town but invariably has breakfast at a little basement place where the waiter has somehow got the impression that Nicholson is part owner and treats him with unusual deference. And refuses to accept a tip. On second thought, there is nothing so foolish about this.

The Irwins—Wallace and Will—are rarely seen together in public although they are the most devoted of brothers. Just recently they were scheduled to speak at a banquet to honor their old alma mater Stanford university. Will breezed in and did his stuff and departed. Five minutes later Wallace appeared.

Irvin Cobb and Will Hogg, son of the late Governor Hogg of Texas, are devoted friends and meet several times a week in the late afternoon for a walk. Hogg's offices are on Madison avenue and Cobb meets him there. But he always gets off at the floor below and walks up one flight.

Donn Byrne, the young Irish novelist, has a country home near Darien, Conn. He is an accomplished horseman and may be seen galloping about the countryside early every morning when he is in America. He has also played polo with recklessness and daring. But he will never walk on Fifth avenue

because of his uncontrollable fear of crossing the streets.

I could go on recounting a score or more phobias among writers which would sound more or less theatrical or neurotic, but what's the use?

They are just that way and nothing can be done about it. The only thing is to let 'em suffer.

Of course, in this age, of auto-suggestion they might be able to Coue themselves out of their mild delusions but, if they did, perhaps they would not be able to write. It may be they are just suffering from suppressed desires and a good square meal would do them more good than months of autosuggestion.

Judging from what is being done with a pet neurosis by therapeutic weaving almost any writer can take a case of acute melancholia and weave it into a fine Persian rug or something.

One-Lung Typewriters.

Science is really becoming wonderful! If they keep up the good work it may not be long before a writer who finds he is too lazy to labor can chase around the corner, have a gland permanently waved, and in a few days find George Horace Lorimer and all the rest of the editors sitting on the doorstep crying for his wares.

All in all, the writers are an odd bunch but they manage to have a perfectly dandy time just the same. Their pet phobias may be annoying, but so is congress and a lot of other things.

Very few were born to the purple. They have battered their way with the aid of a one-lung rented typewriter from poverty to some affluence and if they have picked up nothing enroute but a set of "second company" nerves they are more to be pitied than censured.

If you happen to meet one and feel alarmed just laugh it off. You will find him perfectly docile. In my many years mingling with them I have yet to find one who has scuttled a ship or nitroglycerined a bank.

When one shows signs of becoming dangerous, give him a cup of tea and let him rave.

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If the son and heir topples to the floor, landing on the soft spot of his head, don't worry. The chances are he will become an author or a poet.

to space between the words. At least he used to.

When James Oliver Curwood is commissioned to write a novel he is insistent upon one point and that is that no time limit be put upon him. He may have one year or two years. Having had this point

estate, Dandruff-on-the-Knob, at Great Neck, L. I., and is an indefatigable worker. But, unless the little Lardners come in every morning and romp with him, Poppa won't work all day. There may be some sort of bribery about this, for there is a lot of golfing to do there-

The Wicked Flee

(Continued From Page Seven.)

By Merlin Moore Taylor

of Chicago with his loot and then, in a hare and hounds chase, elude the long arm of the law? Or could he force himself to go about his daily life as if nothing had happened and trust to the uncanny good fortune which never had failed him before to get him off free if he were accused of the murder?

The question was decided for him. Lurking in a doorway across to street from his lodging house his keen eye caught a bulky shape that even from the next corner he thought he recognized as that of Eagan.

So they were already after him! And they knew of this room in a respectable part of the city which he had deluded himself into believing none of his associates even were aware of it. No doubt at his other room, too, the plain clothes men were lying in wait for him.

He must flee at once. He felt his nerve slipping and he knew that never would he be able to undergo the torture of hour after hour of questioning which would follow arrest. They would break him down in the end and he would confess the Vanlandingham robbery. After that it would be necessary to obtain from him a confession of Solly's murder. Deny it as he might, they would fasten that upon him, too. Eagan and "Necktie" O'Reilly would see to that.

All thoughts of the Vanlandingham jewels in their hiding place in his room were gone now. If the police knew of his room they would know of the secret compartment, too, or it would not take them long to discover it. To try now to recover his loot and the tools of his profession would be equivalent to deliberately sticking his head in the noose.

In the railroad yards near Englewood Slippery caught the blind of an outgoing passenger train, west-bound, clambered to the top of the mail car and stretched himself out flat. And there he clung for hour after hour, lashed by the wind, chilled by the damp night air, and bedeviled by the rain of hot cinders from the locomotive's stack. But fear and determination rode him hard that night, fear of the gallows and determination to put as great a distance as possible between himself and Chicago.

At a division point in the early hours of the morning Slippery climbed stiffly down and staggered away across the tracks to where dim lights hinted at all night restaurants and food.

The town night watchman came

in while Slippery was eating a hasty meal. The limb of the law betrayed some interest in the fugitive but he asked no questions. Yet to Slippery the blue uniform and shining star represented the enemy and he gulped down the remains of his meal and hurried from the place. In the railroad yards he caught another train and rode it to Kansas City.

There, in the exclusive residential district of the south side, he picked out a modest but costly house, jimmied his way into it with the aid of a piece of pointed iron, and obtained \$100 from a bureau drawer.

On the first train he rode the cushions to Denver, where he departed from his usual customs and robbed a house in daylight. First, however, he had ascertained that no one was at home by the simple expedient of ringing the front door bell. Here his haul was better, some jewelry being added to the not inconsiderable sum of money which he located in a tin box in one of the bedrooms.

The jewelry he disposed of in a tawdry pawnshop which, to his irritated eye, bespoke a fence, accepting for it a sum ridiculously small in comparison to the real value of the gems.

In front of the Brown Palace hotel he had stopped for a moment to light a cigar and in that instant he saw, standing not 10 feet away, a figure which he recognized immediately as that of Tom Vanarsdale of the Pinkertons with whom he had had one encounter. The detective had come off second best in the attempt to fasten upon Slippery a robbery of one of the concerns protected by the detective agency and had been added to the list of those who had tried, but tried in vain, to send that eel-like individual over the road. With Vanarsdale in Denver, Slippery preferred some other city, and he took a train for Frisco.

The San Francisco police got him in a raid on a shady hotel, and released him only after a torturing night in a cell when every clank of the lock when the turnkey opened the door had set the fugitive's heart to pounding lest it meant a summons to the dreaded third degree.

Freed, however, he took a boat for Seattle, where he again robbed a house and replenished his now depleted purse. Strolling down the street, he almost bumped into Nardigan of the Chicago force. The plain clothes man was leaning against a water plug and his face was studying the passing throng

as if seeking some one. Slippery knew Nardigan of old, knew his infinite patience when set upon a confusing trail, his bulldog persistence in hanging on until he could clap his irons on the man he was after.

So Slippery, certain that he had not been recognized, slid into a crowd, hurried to the cheap hotel where he was registered, got his bag, and hurried to the principal railroad station. The first train that was leaving was southbound and Slippery bought a ticket back to San Francisco. He arrived there late at night and sought a respectable hotel where he felt he would be safe from the police, and slept until noon the next day. In the lobby on his way out for something to eat—he could not bring himself to the hotel dining room—he stopped abruptly. Nardigan was coming in the front door!

Slippery promptly turned and fled out a side entrance. He did not return after his bag and he did not once think, or care, about its contents. On the waterfront a sign stating that men were wanted for the Luella, bound for South American ports, caught his eye, and he went inside and was signed up for the crew.

Aboard the Luella his ignorance of things nautical made life a hell for him and by the time the tramp steamer reached Panama he was so desperate that he deserted with only the clothes on his back and \$10 in his pocket. Almost the first person he ran into was "Rat" Wallace.

So, unable to evade him, Slippery lied to him, his heart all aflutter lest the other see through his untruths. He told "Rat" that he was returning at once to the Luella, southward bound, and that he was going to stay with her until she reached San Francisco on the return trip. Then he left him, made sure he was not followed, and, with virtually his last money, bought a ticket for Colon.

On the other side of the Isthmus, emboldened by the slight knowledge of seamanship acquired on the Luella, he obtained a berth on the Rockaway, bound for Brazilian ports, and within 24 hours was afloat again. At Para he deserted the ship and went ashore only to be cornered by the Rockaway mates and compelled to return. Thereafter, at Pernambuco and Bahia, Slippery had no chance to take French leave, but at Rio he seized an opportunity, dived overboard, clambered upon a barge that was preparing to return to land, and managed to reach shore in sight.

He wandered away from the docks, overwhelmed by a strange city where he could neither understand the language nor make himself understood.

Began then weeks of suffering, mental and physical for the fugitive. His few bits of money gone, he eked out a precarious living around the waterfront, turning his hand to such odd jobs as he could obtain, sleeping wherever he could about the wharves, accepting such pay as was tendered him, eating when and how he could, and drinking himself into a stupor on aguardiente when his tortured brain refused longer to bear the ever-present vision of a slain Solly and himself standing upon a gallows trap.

It was a ragged, filthy, gaunt wharf rat whom finally the police picked up—far different from the dapper, modishly dressed Slippery whom the Chicago authorities knew. His nationality ascertained, the American consul was appealed to and promptly appeared to question him. Bewildered by his experiences, his will power shaken, and filled only with a great desire to die, Slippery's usually nimble brain failed him and he mumbled his name and that he came from Chicago.

The consul clapped him upon the back.

"Brace up, man," he cried jovially. "I'm from Chicago myself and I'm going to send you home. Home, do you understand? Home!"

So it came about that weeks later, garbed in a castoff suit of the consul's, he got off the train upon which the government's representatives placed him in New York after they met him at the steamer and wandered through the familiar Chicago streets. His spirit was broken. He shambled past uniformed policemen, eyes upon the ground, unheeding whether they recognized him or not, and not even the sight of Nardigan, the ferret, standing idly on a street corner while he shrewdly eyed the passersby, alarmed him.

North on La Salle street Slippery made his way, past the financial center, past the city hall, and into the next block. At the door of the detective bureau he stopped. Dully he was aware that this was the place that above all others he should shun, that inside and up a flight of stairs was the office of his arch enemy, Eagan. But his sapped will power was not strong enough to force him to go on and, after only a moment's hesitation, he turned and went in.

Eagan looked up sharply as the scarecrow with the graying hair and the seamed face and burning eyes was ushered into his office. The detective's keen eyes read in the face of the other the hell through which Slippery had passed, and in the heart of the man hunter there welled up a bit of sympathy for this piece of human flotsam.

"Well?" he inquired briskly.

Slippery raised lack luster eyes to the inspector's face.

"You've got me, Eagan," he said without emotion. "You said you would get me and here I am. I'm ready to take my medicine, for I can't run any more. You and your devilish detectives are too many for me. But, honest to God, Eagan, I didn't kill Solly. Me and him framed up to steal the Vanlandingham jewels, all right, and I got them. They're hidden behind the wall of the room I used to have over on Madison street. But I didn't kill Solly inspector, and you won't let them hang me, will you? I didn't get anything out of the jewels. They're there, every last one of them, and I'll take you and show you where they are. But you won't let them hang me, will you?"

"Hang you?" The inspector's voice was reassuring. "No, Slippery, I won't let them hang you. We know you didn't kill Solly. He tried to stick up a drunken man near the Vanlandingham home and the drunk man shot him. And so that's why you've been on the run all these months, eh? Hell, I thought you'd taken my tip and gone straight, but I guess you birds never do."

Into the eyes of the man in front of him suddenly dawned the light of understanding.

"You never suspected me of killing Solly?" he demanded.

Eagan shook his head.

"You never framed up with Solly to get me mixed up with the Vanlandingham jewels so you could get me with the goods on?"

Once more the inspector shook his head.

"Then you'd never known I pulled off that job if I hadn't come in here and given myself up?"

"No," Eagan reached out to tap the bell that summoned the turnkey of the cellroom. "No, Slippery, we never had the slightest idea you were mixed up in that. We hung it on 'Second Story' Milligan on circumstantial evidence in spite of the fact we never found the jewels, and he went up to Juliet for 25 years for it."

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