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Every author when writing has some motive for telling his story. He also has some inspiration which compels him to set forth his thoughts that others may read them. This is apparent from the works of Poe, Dickens and all the other writers of merit. It seems that the motive of present day writers is mercenary and that their inspiration is not always a worthy one. The result is a flood of worthless and bad literature.

Since the time I can remember I always tried to study the motive of the people who I came in contact with. I wanted to know whether they were good or bad and what it was that caused them to be what they were. I am still what you might call a student of human nature. I want to know what people are and what causes them to be what they are.

My motive in writing this theme is to show what I am. The manner in which I choose to show what I am is to tell how I came to be what I am. The inspiration for my story is the result of an incident which happened last Friday night and in which I was one of two principle characters. Laugh if you like but I took it very seriously.

I am told that I and my twin sister were born in the second story of a house in Gilmore on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1913. At that time my father kept a salon (saloon?) on the first floor. I do not recollect much about this salon because we moved to the farm when I was three years old. I do

remember of me and my twin sister Agnes sitting on the counter eating cheese sandwiches and drinking beer. Another incident that comes to mind now is of a drunken brawl that started while I was at the bar with pap. When the row started he shoved me thru the door into the wareroom while he settled the trouble. And when he settled the trouble it generally stayed settled until somebody threw some cold water onto its face. I felt my way to the bottom of the staircase that led up into the kitchen. Because there was nobody home except pap and me and because I was not yet able to mount what looked to me like a mountain of steps I stood clutching at the bottom step and crying until fatigue and fright cause me to fall asleep.

Another incident that I remember very clearly was the first time of me having a wholesome respect for my father's ability. It was early in the morning and I don't think there was more than one customer in the saloon. I was sitting on the counter probably having my usual glass of beer when a tall man rode up to the porch on a horse and dismounted. Immediately when I saw him I had a premonition of trouble. Pap confirmed my fears by saying that there is Long Bill looking for trouble. I guess whereupon I suggested that we go upstairs and lock the doors. Pap grinned and told me not to be afraid that he wouldn't let me get hurt. I thought pap was very capable but a little too confident in himself. Long Bill (I refrain from giving his right name here) did not hardly get in the door before he called pap a name I did not know the meaning of. Pap said that he would not take that from anybody and he walked from behind the counter and gave Long Bill a knock that I thought had killed him. The reason I remember

this incident is because of the horror that I felt at the thought of my father having killed a man. But after a while pap administered a very generous dose of very cold water in a very dashing manner on the man's face which being done Long Bill with a little rough assistance from my father roused himself and took a hasty if clumsy departure.

But this is enough of these sordid scenes. Upon looking back upon them I have a feeling of contempt when I should regard those who indulge too freely in strong drink with pity. True it is that men drink because they think they enjoy it. But I should think they would better enjoy seeing their wife and children properly fed and clothed. People talk about the evil of the open saloon and the scenes that take place in them. But what matters if uncouth men indulge in a drunken brawl or even if a rum soaked sot gets killed, the harm done does not compare with the suffering that is caused innocent women and children who are under the care of a father who is often drunk and sometimes unkind. It is in the home and not in the saloon that whiskey does the most harm. Yet I have seen whiskey keep children and sick people from starving. And so it often happens that God permits an action that is evil in itself to have a good result.

However these are my personal views concerning whiskey and I ask you to excuse me for presuming that they have any merit because all my life (here let me mention that I have attained the age of twenty years and have no great desire to be twenty-one) I have had to deal with whiskey in one way or another. Many times I have seen my father crazed and cruel from drink. I have bought whiskey, made whiskey and

in my father's service I have even sold it, and at times drank a very little. If I had not had a conscience to bother me and a respect for the law I might not now be in the present financial difficulties that I have encumbered upon myself. However I am glad that the unlawful business had no appeal for me and I quit it when I got away from my father.

Here let me stop my thoughtless or rather foolish perambulations and consider for a while my early life on the farm of which I made brief mention in the foregoing paragraphs. Many incidents I will pass over. In fact I only intend this to be a brief sketch of a greatly mixed up ordinary boy's life.

First I want to say that from the first moment of my existence until the present day Agnes has always been with me whenever it has been possible for her to be so. She played with me, she went to school with me and since mother died she has been both sister and mother to me.

Agnes and I played about in the fields together and how happy we were when there was not some family strife to disturb us. Mother got for us two kittens that looked like twins. They soon grew until we could not carry them. We called them Jim and Sam. One day Agnes and I strayed off the woods. We took Jim and Sam with us. Jim soon left us, he never was the companion that Sam was. When we started home we discovered that we were lost. We were not yet four years old so you can imagine our state of mind. We kept Sam close to us because we imagined he was a great protector. Finally after

becoming weary and giving up the idea of finding our own way out of the woods we struck upon the idea of putting Sam down and letting him lead us home. It wasn't long until Sam brought us up to the pig pen behind our garden. For a while after this Agnes and I stayed close to home but soon we were making excursions into the woods that were the marvel of all those who heard about them. Even my father liked to tell about how I could find my way about in the woods. Agnes would follow me any place or do anything I sanctioned. She still will. When I was in the woods and fields I was at peace if I were not lost. It was just such incidents as I have just related that gave me strength at this early age to overcome the fear of my father and to keep my mother's suffering from making too deep an impression of sorrow and despair upon me. At that age I witnessed scenes that would make the strongest man tremble. Fortunately I was too young to comprehend the full horror of the things to which I refer. Mother was strong physically and I believe she had the moral and spiritual strength to withstand any cruelty of which she was the victim. Often thru necessity there was no one to stay the hand of father's cruelty. Only once do I remember that mother was of a mind to leave father. It hurts me terribly to think that it was on my account that she stayed. Only once and that was recently have I felt anything that compared to the despair that I felt on that occasion.

Here let us forget every other thing while I give a brief review of my school days. We were Roman Catholics and when we were seven years old Agnes and I were sent to the parish school in Midland. The eighth grade was the highest in this school. Agnes quit in her eight

year. I went on and graduated at the age of fourteen. I passed my freshman year of high school at La Salle Institute in Cumberland Maryland. The next year due to the fact that I was advised by those near and dear to me and by our parish priest to do so I entered St. Francis College to study for the priesthood. Discovering that I had no vocation to the priesthood I left the cloister after having been there one year to the day. I did not go back to school until the next term when having moved from the farm and not being able to secure work (due to the recent depression) I entered Central High School in Conaoning. Here I received my diploma on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1933. At this time I was nineteen years old.

And now let us go back and pick up the thread of my narrative where I left off down on the farm. Because we never had much money to spend foolishly and because what we did have was spent foolishly and because we lived on a farm I led a rather secluded life, devoid of much companionship. Hence during my early youth I was devoid of bad companions. This was a good thing for I had a pliant nature and was easy to lead into doubtful pleasures and was sometimes too slow to realize when I was being imposed upon.

I learned to love the woods and solitary places and derived much pleasure from roaming in them. I liked to go hunting with my brother Bob. Before I was seven years old Bob and I would walk the mountains for miles and miles. We often went to the top of Dan's Mountain just for a look at the Potomac River valley. For long minutes we would gaze across mountain after mountain far to the south.

It was my dream to put a pack on my back and start off across those mountains which seemed to have no end. One of our Sunday pastimes in which we found no end of pleasure was hunting bee trees. Bob was good at the job and consequently we found as many as we cared to cut. My two oldest brothers Jim and Bill kept bees at home. After they went to the war the bees died thus confirming an old belief that bees will not live after their master has left them or died. This is a belief I do not put any stock in. And here let me remark that in spite of the fact that my father believed in hypnotism and personal magnetism, and in spite of the fact that I have had dreams that came true to the last detail in a figurative way I do not believe in hypnotism, necromancy, fortune-telling, dreams, tokens or any such things.

There is not much more that I wish to put down in this story but what I still have to say is mostly pertaining to our family affairs and are generally of a sad nature.

In 1917 Jim and Bill were called to the Great War. They both came home from camp before they went to France. I still remember the night Jim left. He and mother were standing at the door when he said he didn't know whether he was coming back or not. I thought he would know if he were coming back. He was drowned in France. He was officially reported accidentally drowned from cramps but there is a report which I have heard in the last month and for which there is some small foundation that he was murdered. God forbid that this is so.

It was during the Christmas vacation when I was home from St. Francis college in Loretto Pa. that my mother died. She had been sick for over a year before I left. The doctor said it was Bright's disease. Once when it was suggested that she move to town so that she could receive more frequent attention from the doctor she quietly observed that a doctor could not cure a broken heart. While I was at college I received favorable reports of her health. People thought she was getting better. The night I came home somebody opened the door for me. The first one I saw was mother sitting in front of the fire and before I got in the door I knew she could not last long. That night she was talking to us three younger children, Agnes, Mary and I. She told us she was going to die soon. We did not put much dependence on this statement. It is my belief that she knew we wouldn't. The next night she took a stroke and died about sixteen hours later. I believe that her death was caused by loss of sleep. Her death was the only peaceful moments I ever knew her to have.

Having touched upon these sad events, for I have only touched upon them, there is much more that I could tell about them which I think would make a deep impression on anyone who should chance to read this, but which I do not feel at liberty to put on paper I will try to relate a little more concerning my later years. Do not wonder that I have had to stop a few moments to compose my thoughts.

Jim is dead. Bill, Martha and Joe are married. That leaves Bob, Agnes, Mary and me at home on the farm with our father. He is sixty-four and I don't know how much older. Sometime after I



returned from St. Francis for good I thought it was necessary to inform my father in an indirect way that I would not see Agnes or Mary treated harshly. For this information pap gave me to understand in very direct and plain words that he would not give me the financial support necessary for me to finish my high school courses at La Salle Institute. What with suffering a few hardships and thru Agnes's help I received my diploma last June.

Pap has married again and is so often the case we do not agree very well with our step-mother. Agnes has long since left home on that account and now pap has told her to ask me to leave. He cannot force me to leave because I am not of age. But Agnes, Mary and I are in a position to do so and therefore we set up housekeeping. Since then Mary has secured work in Washington. That leaves Agnes and me. This I think is the climax to the events of my life so far. Because of an unforeseen and regrettable situation that could not be avoided Agnes has had to bear the greater responsibility of keeping our home. But we are trying to lead clean and charitable lives and have high hope of getting ahead. And before I close it might be interesting to note that pap regrets he did not keep us with him.

If I do not follow the course that my mother pointed out to me it will not be because she did not give me a good example. Nor will it be because I have not seen enough wickedness to know the folly of it. Neither will it be because I have not had a good religious and moral training. The one bit of advice that mother gave me which I recall most often is, "Be true to your religion. Always believe and practice

*what the Catholic Church teaches no matter what happens to you."*

*Often in adversity those words have held me from losing hope and kept me from losing trust in God. I don't think that anyone who suffered so patiently and long as mother did would say such a thing unless she knew it to be the absolute and whole truth.*

*Thus is recorded in brief a few of the incidents of my life up to the present day but before I close let me put down at the end of this attempt at an autobiography my philosophy of life. I have taken it from the prelude to the Vision of Sir Launfal.*

*Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;*

*Every thing is happy now,*

*Every thing is upward striving;*

*'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true*

*As for grass to be green or skies to be blue,—*

*'Tis the natural way of living:*

*Who knows whether the clouds have fled?*

*In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;*

*And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,*

*The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;*

*The soul partakes the season's youth,*

*And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe*

*Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,*

*Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.*

*What wonder if Sir Launfal now*

*Remembered the keeping of his vow?*