

**STRANGER THAN  
FICTION**

*by*

**The VOICE of  
EXPERIENCE**

# STRANGER THAN FICTION

BY  
"THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE"



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## FOREWORD

WHEN I signed off at noon, Friday, July 13, 1934, for my last current broadcast over the coast-to-coast network to go on a vacation, I had completed a little more than eight years on the air conducting a radio forum of questions and answers. This last series which the vacation interrupted had included eight nation-wide programs each week.

Carefully kept mail records show that my listeners have sent me more than two and one-half million letters. The great majority of these letters have contained problems submitted to me by troubled, perplexed, or baffled individuals who were seeking an avenue of escape from some onerous situation.

These millions of tales of human woe have run the gamut of human emotions and they have come to me from persons of all ages, all nationalities, and all walks of life.

Most of the problems which I have presented and discussed on the air have been entirely typical of those everyday problems which many thousands have had to meet themselves in their own attempts to live as co-operative individuals in those family and social circles wherein environmental influences or personal choices had placed them. With unbelievable regularity, how-

ever, other problems have found their way to my desk,—problems which have been either bizarre or unique,—problems which have arisen from seemingly impossible situations. It should also be said that in some instances the sequels to my answering and discussing these letters over the radio have been equally astonishing.

Because of the split-second limitations of time with which I am confronted before the microphone and because of the ever-increasing number of appeals for immediate advice or assistance, it has not seemed wise or expedient, after a problem has been handled on a broadcast, to take up further valuable time to acquaint my unseen audience with the outcome of a problem once discussed.

Many times, after reading an ultra-dramatic appeal from some listener, I have been deluged with letters in all of which there have been triple requests: My other listeners wanted a copy of the letter I had just read, they wanted a copy of my analysis of the problem and my advice to the individual, and they wanted to find out because of their friendly interest what was the final outcome of the case referred to. These appeals have so increased both in number and in insistence that it has seemed opportune that I reproduce in permanent printed form a few of the outstanding human dramas submitted to me.

May I make it clear that, in order to protect and safeguard the identity of those whose almost unbelievable stories furnish the contents of the chapters of this

book, I have carefully avoided throughout any use of names and places and that I have deleted any reference from which anyone could make any such inference.

Almost everyone enjoys reading a good novel, novellette, or short story, particularly if it is extraordinary in situation or plot. Although the chapters of this volume contain the actual experiences of real persons, I believe my readers will agree with me as they read its pages that some of these stories put fiction to shame,—at least from the standpoint of human interest and because of their “believe-it-or-not” qualities.

I am deeply indebted to those whose confidence in me has furnished the material for this volume and, in making this acknowledgment to them, I sincerely trust that my readers may find both pleasure and profit from much that is contained herein.

“THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE.”

*August 4, 1934*

## INTRODUCTION

BY P. CASPAR HARVEY

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WRITERS of fiction are precluded from depicting life of which they know nothing and are restricted to what they as individuals have observed or understood personally. The best novelists and short story writers deal with and present the truth as they see and feel it. From the muddy stream of life they distill their stories, but every novel or short story is the product of the thoughts and emotions of these individuals as individuals. This is as it should be. We are given the results of their insight as individuals—and sometimes it is rare and precious insight.

These writers of artistic and therefore truthful fiction have, as Robert Browning has said once for all artists, taken something which the masses have passed a hundred times and not cared to see, but which becomes meaningful and significant when set forth in their novels and short stories. They have lent their minds out to their readers. But it is always only one mind, however valuable. All the fiction taken in aggregate is supposed to portray "the present American scene." But is it? Who should or could say? Certainly not the

writers of fiction. They are rightly too many in number.

What about the emotions, feelings, problems, situations, ideas and thoughts which have not attracted a novelist? What about the dramas enacted in life which have not reached any novelist's notebook? What about the silent millions who have no voices? Who was it who first said that a voice was more to be desired than bread? The burden of the inexpressible is the greatest of all burdens. Those who give voices to men have been the saviors of mankind and they always shall be.

The artist with whatever medium he employs—clay, marble, paint, the stage or screen, the printed page—indulges the soul-saving and inevitable tendency and passion in all men "to make believe." Thus he tells truth obliquely—the art that is akin to prayer.

It is not necessary to record the happy as well as fortuitous concatenation of circumstances which have made "The Voice of Experience" a national clearing house for those who need someone to speak for them and to them. That rich experience is evident not only from the variety and number of problems which reach him but also from the character of his solutions and help. Literally millions of persons have presented their problems to him—most of them problems which they believed they could present to no other person. This has given "The Voice of Experience" a case-book perhaps unequalled in the history of the world.

The very intimacy of the radio has bridged a chasm



which seemed impossible before except in limited numbers. People will write to a "voice" which enters the privacy of their homes things which only God knows, once that "voice" has established their confidence. The "voice" becomes their voice. It becomes a part of their daily routine. At first they only listen. Then they take the "voice" into their most solemn confidence. This fact does not mean a few do. It means that millions do. This further increases the power and usefulness of the "voice" and thus "The Voice of Experience" has become the sacred, secret confidant of ever-increasing millions. It would be startling to contemplate the way in which his "voice" affects millions of persons. I sometimes wonder whether he himself dares to stop to think about it.

"The Voice of Experience" has, therefore, become a medium for the millions. The ancient adage, "Truth is stranger than fiction," becomes something more than a quotation from a long-forgotten copybook as these millions of letters have piled in upon his desk. The life stories in this present volume have not been distilled from life—they are life. Yet as "The Voice of Experience" has used them on the air and in this volume they have assumed perforce a significance not unlike the significance of fiction. The reader of fiction may have in them surcease from his reading of fiction and yet at the same time satisfy those longings which have been heretofore satisfied by fiction. The reader of this volume may become his own novelist for the few hours he peruses this book, creating for himself

the "truth" which his own insight might not reveal without the "voice."

Despite the starkness, the reality, and the nakedness of life revealed by these stories, there is nothing in them to offend. There is no morbidity for the sake of morbidity, as all too many writers have in the recent past attempted to present in fiction.

As I read these stories I could not but speculate on how Robert Browning would have revelled in their dramatic power because "The Voice of Experience" seems to have unconsciously adopted Robert Browning's creed for the artist—that life is no blot—that it means intensely and means good—that finding these meanings is the meat and drink of the artist who thus in turn becomes the "voice" of the voiceless millions. These stories from his daily broadcasts show how people respond to one who shows them how life means intensely and means good.

What a cross-section of American life must be seen by "The Voice of Experience"! What a panorama of those intimate realities which kin and neighbors never see must pass before his eyes! This volume is only a peep behind a few of the numberless curtains which he sees behind during the course of a year. With this plethora of problems constantly before him, what he has to say about them gains an importance from two other sources: Their very number is staggering and his anonymity is confidence-producing. No veil of personality obscures his vision or inhibits those who have

or will present their problems to him.

The intimacy of the myriad-voiced radio has made it possible to enter where never another has trod before. The stories in this book show how astoundingly intimate the radio has become in millions of lives. For instance, the story presented under the title, "Without Benefit of Solomon," shows that more than 28,000 persons wrote to "The Voice of Experience" about this one problem—all of them rank outsiders who did not know the names or the home town of the two mothers involved.

As I draw these words to a close, the itch to write out the name of "The Voice of Experience" is almost so great that my fingers cannot resist writing it. I first knew him when we were in college together a quarter century ago—when I called him by his name—when he was not nameless in order that he might be more and more useful and helpful to a constantly increasing number of people—this "Voice of Experience" who is more than a voice—who in fact and deed is a shoulder to America—and shoulders do not have names, you know.



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LOVE IS NEVER BLIND

## CHAPTER I

### LOVE IS NEVER BLIND

ON Monday evening, June 25, 1934, on my regular evening broadcast, I relayed to my audience what seemed to me to be the most unusual romance that I have ever had come to my attention.

Let me allow this boy to tell you in his own words of his love affair. Then my reply will follow.

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

Your kindness in dealing with problems of the blind in your noon broadcasts gives me hope that you will take time to answer my problem, which is probably a bit different from any you have received.

I am blind, am 24 years of age, and in love with a girl who is a deaf mute, 22 years old.

Twelve years ago, when I was just a lad, on the Fourth of July, I attempted some pranks with fire-crackers and paid for my folly with the loss of the sight of both eyes. Being a boy, full of life, I can't tell you what hell I went through to constantly find myself in total darkness, unable to enjoy the sports and the active life that up to that time I had entered into with such enthusiasm.

For a little while, I was a novelty and my former friends came and visited with me; but their eager sto-

ries of what they were doing and how much they missed me made my anguish all the more keen. So I guess I unconsciously discouraged these visits, until before very long I had only my mother for a companion and friend.

Then Pal came, a wonderful dog with the intelligence almost of a human. He has been more than eyes to me, for, next to my mother, he was my greatest comfort, my closest buddy.

About a year after this accident occurred, a family moved into the other end of our block with a daughter just two years younger than I. She was deaf and dumb. She has an older sister and younger brother, but neither of them were much company for her, because she slowed up everything for them by not being able to hear or speak.

I heard you say that fellow-suffering makes us wondrous kind and I am sure that you know that fellow-loneliness forms a strong, common bond between two individuals, even though one may be blind and the other lacking the ability to speak or hear.

It was peculiar how we got started to associating in our hours of loneliness. Mother at that time didn't like for me to go where I had to cross the streets. So, in order to be out in the open, I would go round and round our block. When we'd come to her house, she was usually out in front and would stop Pal and feed him some dainty morsel. She couldn't speak, but she could make some peculiar, guttural sounds so I recognized her presence. I couldn't talk to her for she couldn't hear me. She couldn't make signs in the deaf and dumb language because I couldn't see her fingers.



But, necessity is the mother of invention, they say, and I think each of us somehow realized the possibility of our whiling away many dragging hours together.

Occasionally her sister or brother would be there and would act as interpreter. Then I learned that she could read my lips if I spoke slowly and exaggerated the movement of my mouth.

So I conceived the idea, because I was learning to typewrite, that since I knew all the letters on the machine, I could either talk to her and let her read my lips, or write on the typewriter what I wanted to say. Then I could place my hands on the typewriter and she could, one by one, take my fingers and place them on the different keys, spelling out words and so forth, and by the position I would know what she was spelling out for me.

Mother bought me an old typewriter for a few dollars and we put it out in her front yard under a shade tree and Pal would take me up there each day and I would spend hours talking slowly, oh, so slowly at first, through this peculiar medium of speech that we had established.

This went on for several years before both of us realized that we needed an easier medium than just a typewriter through which to converse. So she and I worked out a language of our own—a touch system employing her fingers and mine and different parts of our hands. I believe you'd be surprised at the speed and accuracy with which we can now converse with one another.

I don't have to tell you, Voice of Experience, what happens even to a blind boy and a deaf and dumb girl

compelled to do their talking by the delicate touch of fingers against fingers and hands against hands. Whoever said that love speaks a universal language certainly knew what he was talking about, because for the last two years, much that we have had to say to each other has been more of a silent communion than of real expression.

Just two years ago tomorrow night I kissed her for the first time, and I can't tell you how much pent-up affection responded to real emotional hunger in that and subsequent caresses. Together we began to build air-castles—(oh, not the pretentious ones that boys and girls who are normal in every way are able to build).

You see, we would be satisfied with so little, provided that we could just have each other. So, maybe I shouldn't have said "air-castles"; but, anyway, the hours that we spent planning have been a big boon to both of us.

Now, Voice of Experience, we want to get married. Her folks are perfectly willing, because, though neither of our families are wealthy, we both are far from being poor. But my mother seriously objects and has enlisted the support of our minister against me. He has tried to argue that, instead of our becoming helpful to each other, that, should we get married, we would become a double burden to whichever family decided to keep us. I explained that we could live half the time with one and half the time with the other and, thereby, would be a double burden only half the time at most.

But, look, Voice of Experience! I can be ears and speech for her and she can be eyes for me. We can

talk between ourselves almost as rapidly as other folks do. In fact, she can read my lips perfectly without using our code. So I claim that she would lessen my burden and I would lessen hers and that together we would be less burdensome to either family. Her folks see this perfectly, but my mother just won't.

I have never disobeyed mother and have tried to be as little trouble as possible and I would hate to do something to deliberately hurt her. Without her knowledge, we have even visited their family physician and ours. Both of them have given us advice, but they tell us to go ahead and get married.

Now, Voice of Experience, mother follows your broadcasts regularly and will probably scold me severely for having written this; but, you see, I am desperate in my desire to find happiness for us two, to whom it seems Nature has been so unkind. Still I want mother's blessing.

Please, sir, then, won't you talk to her and use your influence to get her to see things our way? If you will, you will earn the undying gratitude of a girl who, although unable to speak, has told me in many ways how much she loves me, and of a blind boy, who can truly see happiness ahead, provided that he can marry this girl of his choice.

I am not trying to go behind mother's back in writing you. I am just fighting for one chance to be as normal a human being as I can. God knows I will try to be a good husband, even as I have tried to be a good son.

A thousand apologies for this lengthy letter. Feel free to make it shorter if you wish, but please answer me in my fervent prayer.

Blind, but Hopeful, ED.

I am now quoting my answer as given over the microphone:

My lad, I have received many thousands of letters since I started broadcasting. I have had some most unusual problems submitted to me; but I think my constant listeners will agree that I have never used a more beautifully presented case, nor, in my opinion at least, have I received one that, on the face of it, seemed worthier.

Without condemning your mother, let me say frankly that I cannot understand her attitude, unless she is in possession of information that you have not given me. I have taken the most of my allotted time in reading your letter. I did not want to delete any of it, Ed, because it has proved a wonderful lesson to me and I wanted to pass that lesson on in toto to my listening audience. Thank you, lad, for having written me so brilliantly of your unusual courtship, despite difficulties; and I assure you that I hope it will terminate in marriage.

You ask me now to convert your mother. Well, Ed, if I were to merely argue with your mother over this matter, I am inclined to believe she would consider me a rank interloper, and my opinions would simply be those of one man pitted against those of one woman—your mother, at that.

I believe, therefore, Ed, that a different method than just my discussing your situation would prove far more effective. Certainly there are a number of conscientious men and women in my audience right now who, through the hearing of your remarkable letter, have become sufficiently interested in your case to have formed a conclusion, one way or the other. I do not feel that it is an imposition on my part to ask every listener, who feels so inclined, to express in writing his or her opinion as to whether your mother should give her consent to your marriage.

So, I am going to ask my listeners to cooperate with me in helping you by writing to the "Voice of Experience, Box 400, Times Square Station, New York City, and adding their opinions to mine. Then I want you to write me and give me your mother's name and address and I will gather all these letters that come in from other mothers and fathers, from sweethearts, too,—and probably some from the blind, and I will add my say to this compendium and send the whole batch of letters to your mother.

Just as you have expressed your faith that I would be on your side, do you know, Ed, I have the same faith in human nature at large and I believe that almost a hundred per cent of my listeners, who will be thoughtful enough to write me in your behalf, will be on your side, too.

*Now*, in the face of the preponderance of evidence that I believe I can present to your mother, if she really loves you as I am sure that she does, and is seeking your best interests, certainly then she is going to weigh care-

fully what all these unseen friends from every part of the United States and Canada will have to say.

Thank you again, Ed, for your confidence in me and for the wonderful lesson that your letter has proven, not only to me, but I am sure to many of my listeners, too.

One thing more! After you have given me mother's address and after I have sent all these letters to her, when she finally gives her consent, as I believe she is going to, won't you wire me collect immediately? You see, I think many of my audience, like myself, will be interested in learning the outcome of your case.

My respects to your mother, son, and tell her I am not trying to interfere, but simply wish to present to her the opinions of many mothers and others, too, on this problem of yours.

I am sorry your little sweetheart is unable to hear this broadcast, but I think you will derive a lot of pleasure in relating it to her. Will you tell her for me I am glad you found her and she found you and that I hope together you may find mutual happiness, long life and prosperity!

Thousands of my listeners were evidently impressed with this boy's letter and were desirous of helping me to persuade his mother that this marriage was not only feasible but advisable.

I wish once more to express my appreciation to these unseen friends and, since my vacation from the air-waves followed so closely after the broadcast of this

story, this is my first opportunity to offer the sequel to this lad's appeal.

The letters were forwarded to the mother. She accepted them in the right spirit and I am sure that many of my readers will be happy to know that, by the time this book is published, this romance will have culminated in marriage.





WITHOUT BENEFIT OF SOLOMON



## CHAPTER II

### WITHOUT BENEFIT OF SOLOMON

ON Tuesday, February 13, 1934, I read on my noon-time broadcast a most dramatic letter from a little foster-mother out on the Pacific Coast. The response from the listening audience to my reading this letter was, I believe, the greatest that I have ever had to any problem I have ever broadcast over the network.

But let me present you this woman's story in her own words. I think you will understand why thousands of mothers and foster-mothers joined me in attempting to help this woman solve her unusual problem. She wrote:

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

Two years ago I went to the maternity hospital to await that greatest of all events—motherhood.

My baby was a girl and, although hubby and I both wanted a boy, I cannot tell you with what joy I cuddled the tiny, emaciated, little form which God gave us in my arms. But not for long, because baby spent only two days with us here and then passed away.

In the same hospital, but in another ward, a young girl, just nineteen, gave birth to a fine, bouncing baby boy. Although she was not married, both she and the father of the baby were college-bred and, through an

intermediary from whom I found that the baby was not wanted, I made arrangements without ever seeing the mother to have the baby transferred to me.

As soon as I left the hospital my brother and his wife went back, met this girl who left the hospital with her baby, accepted the baby from her—all papers had been drawn up, but she, of course, did not know to whom the baby was to go.

Sonny is now as fine a little two-year-old as anybody could ask for. In fact, he is the pride of our whole household. Probably the fact that no one, save members of my own immediate family and my attorney, know that this is not my baby accounts for our feeling towards Sonny as though he were our own flesh and blood.

Of course, Voice of Experience, you are only a man and you could not understand my saying so, but it is nevertheless true that I even forget myself that this baby is not my very own flesh and blood.

Just a month ago a young married couple moved into our block, only three doors removed from us. I got acquainted with the young wife and have tried to make her feel at home in my house. From the very start she just could not let my baby alone. Then, finally, she broke down and told me of her experience two years ago in a maternity hospital when, prior to her marriage, she had given birth to a baby and before she left the hospital had allowed it to be adopted out to strangers. Four months later she married. Three months after the marriage, her husband's uncle died, leaving him a small fortune.

She has spent a considerable amount of money trying to locate her baby but unsuccessfully. She is always saying how much Sonny looks like what her baby would be like, but I have never let on.

Now, Voice of Experience, I know that this is that woman's baby. I haven't felt any jealousy over her playing with Sonny and showering affection on him even since I have known that there was a real blood reason for her doing so, although she doesn't suspect it. But somehow I feel a sense of guilt every time she comes into the house.

My husband is the only one that I have discussed the matter with, but he went to our attorney and talked to him about it. The attorney said there is absolutely nothing that she can do to reclaim the baby because we had obtained legal possession of him.

But now of late fear has almost overcome me and even though we own our own home I have begged my husband to sell the house and move to another part of the city for fear that this woman will in some way find out this baby is hers and take it away from me. It would be hard enough for me to see Sonny taken away by death, but in that event I would consider it would be the Lord's will and I would be resigned. But if it should happen that this woman should come in and take my baby, even though it is her baby, I don't think I could possibly stand the shock.

This woman never listens to the radio. In fact, she does not even have one; nor is she ever here at the time of your daytime broadcasts. So please, without signifying what part of the country this comes from,

won't you tell me first, whether I am committing a sin by not letting this mother know that the baby is hers, and, second, if she did ever find it out could she take the baby away from me?

The uncertainty and my conscience are giving me no peace. Please hasten your reply.

AGONIZED SOUL.

After reading this letter on my broadcast, I explained to my radio audience that, in my opinion, the application of psychological and sociological theories to this particular problem would prove inadequate, because there would be lacking a very important human element that I felt essential in sanely advising this young foster-mother. I, therefore, asked the mothers and foster-mothers of my audience to constitute themselves voices of experience and send me the reply that they would give to this young mother in the event that her question had been put to them.

No premium of any kind was offered and yet more than twenty-eight thousand replies came pouring into my office.

While my secretaries were busily analyzing these letters in order to arrive at a majority vote, I received the second letter from "Agonized Soul," almost as dramatic as her first. Although this second letter showed that my services were not needed and gave me no opportunity to play a part in this human drama, I believe that Providence more justly solved this problem than

could any human agency. I think that you, too, will agree with me in this respect upon reading this woman's second letter:

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

I want to thank you for the consideration that you gave to my letter, and I ask you to thank all those that wrote to you in their desire to help you solve my problem correctly.

I am the woman that wrote to you telling of the death of my baby at birth, and how I adopted the child of an unwed mother, without the mother ever having seen the child. Then I explained that this girl married the baby's father, inherited money, and they have moved into the same block with us. I also told you how she visited me so frequently, and what a fascination my baby, who is two years old, now holds for her, which I soon learned was actually her blood-baby, too.

I also told you that I wanted my husband to sell our home and move away, for fear I would lose this little fellow that has become so close to me, even as close as though he were my own, my very own.

Of course, I don't know just yet how you expected to solve the problem, or what you expected to say. But things have happened since I wrote you last, and I just had to sit down and tell you as briefly as I can.

You remember, I told you that this mother was trying her best to locate her baby. Well, maybe it was intuition or mother instinct—call it what you will—but, anyhow, a few days ago we were here at my house

all alone, except for the baby, who was sitting on her lap. I was mending a snag in his little coveralls, and she looked up and said: "Do you know that this baby just seems like it belongs to me? Isn't that queer?"

I don't know what made me do it, Voice of Experience, but I just broke down and told her that it wasn't queer.

Then I confessed to her that the baby was her own. I pleaded with her not to rob me of my choicest possession. I explained to her that after having nearly lost my life on the last occasion and having lost two babies at birth, my doctors have found it necessary to make it impossible for me ever to become a mother again. I told her it would just break my heart if this little tot, who came into my arms to fill the void left by my baby that died at birth, were taken away from me.

Then she began to cry, too. But I soon found out that they were tears of joy, because she let me share then with her the secret that she is now expecting another little tot to come to bless her home. And so, after a few months, she will have another one of her very own, blessed by the sacrament of marriage, as this one was not.

We had a good cry together. So she is teaching Sonny now to call her "Auntie," and she is going to teach her baby to call me "Auntie" too. So we will let the children think that they are cousins, so that they will feel at least akin to each other, as they should.

Why, I feel so much better. It just feels like a big weight had dropped from my heart, and I am as happy for her as I am for myself. I have promised her that



I would pray that when her baby comes, it will be just as fine a baby; so fine that she will forget her former sorrow.

Knowing that you believe in prayer, too, and that you have asked your audience before, that is those who believe in prayer, to join you—won't you request them to pray that it will be God's will that this mother, after giving up every thought of taking my baby away from me, will be blessed with a dear little one for herself?

Again I want to thank you for the interest you took in my case, and although my problem has solved itself, seemingly, won't you send me the names of those that were kind enough to write you in answer to my problem, and I will try and thank each one of them in a little personal letter? I know it would be quite a job, but I am just so happy that I am even willing and glad to try it.

"NO LONGER AN AGONIZED SOUL."

After congratulating both of these young women upon the amazing turn which events had taken, and complimenting both of them upon the way they had conducted themselves, I took occasion to answer the part of the woman's letter in which she expressed a desire to answer personally all the letters written to me in her behalf.

And then I surprised her by saying:

I can well understand your desire in your present state of happiness to express your personal thanks to all of those who have interested themselves in your case

sufficiently to sit down and write me their solution to your problem. But I wonder, little mother, if you realize the herculean task that you have set for yourself and the cost to you of such a gesture?

In the first place, there are more than 28,000 of these unseen friends to whom you would have to reply. If you were able to write fifty personal letters per day (which you will agree would be quite a task), it would take you almost two years, working eight hours a day, seven days a week, for you to complete all of these replies. Your stamps and stationery would cost you between \$875 and \$900. So I think, little lady, that you had better allow these friends of yours to accept your spirit for the deed and, since I believe that you will agree with me in this thought, I shall act just now as your spokesman and extend your thanks to all who have attempted to help you.

If you still feel duty bound to make all these replies personally, simply notify me and I will send you by express this enormous file of correspondence and let you start on your unending task.

Needless to say, I received a wire from "Agonized Soul," saying that she never dreamed of the effort and expense involved and expressing her happiness in my having saved her both time and money through my thoughtfulness.

**“DAD AND GOD TURNED ME DOWN”**

### CHAPTER III

#### "DAD AND GOD TURNED ME DOWN"

SOME of the most beautiful stories that have found their way into print have revolved around a boy and his dog.

As interesting a story as I have read in novel form, is the one that came to me in a touching little appeal from a crippled boy, whose first name is Joe, which I used, together with my answer on the evening of November 7th, 1933, on my coast-to-coast program.

Probably the group of listeners who are hardest to please in any broadcaster's unseen audience is the fraternity of newspaper men. On the night that I read Joe's letter, one of the members of my staff, a man with years of experience in the newspaper field, happened to be present in the editorial rooms of a metropolitan New York newspaper. A number of noted columnists and journalists were listening to my program. He reported to me later that there was scarcely a dry eye in the room as this story unfolded itself. Certainly, if these blasé and experienced writers were stirred by Joe's appeal and my reply, a repetition of that tale should prove interesting to my readers.

Here then, is Joe's letter to me, copied with very little editing, followed by my reply:

## DEAR MAN OF EXPERIENCE:

I guess I got a lot of nerve as I know what I want, but, ghee whizz, if you don't ask you never get nothing nohow, and I'm in awful trouble. You see, it's like this:

I had a wire-haired terrier dog and him and me was regular pals. Dad made him sleep out in the woodshed, but the other night it was awful cold, so I fixed him a box in the kitchen. Dad come home at night and, of course, he didn't expect the dog and the dog didn't expect him and Dad got bit in the dark. You couldn't blame the dog. He didn't know who it was until Dad cussed him and then it was too late.

So, what does Dad do but to give my dog away and he won't even tell me who he give him to. You see, I'm crippled and I can't go nowhere except on my crutches. I can't play with other boys, baseball and marbles. So "Spot" (that was my dog's name) kinda took their places with me and now he's gone.

'Course, you're a man and you can't understand, but I darn near cried my eyes out for that dog. I got down on my knees and I begged Dad to get "Spot" back and all I got was a cussin. You know, it's darn near made me hate Dad. I don't want to do that because he's done lots for me.

My Sunday School teacher was here and I told her all about it, or as much as I could, because I cry every time I think about "Spot," and she told me when I went to bed to pray to God to send my dog back.

Every night for five straight nights I begged God to show my dog the way back home. Either that teacher

is full of prunes, or God's too busy to listen to just a kid, because every day I watched for "Spot" to come back and God ain't done nothing about my prayers.

I hear you lots on the radio and I heard you tell about finding a girl what her mother had lost seventeen years ago and I said to myself, "If he can find a girl what was lost seventeen years, I bet he can find 'Spot.'" "

Gosh, mister, I'd be your friend for life if you'd do that. I asked Mummy if I could write to you and she said she'd mail it. I listen every day to you but don't answer at night. Mummy and Dad listen to you always at night, but I'm always in bed at that time. So, don't forget.

You see, Dad and God turned me down. Please, sir, won't you find "Spot" for me? I know he wants me as bad as I want him and I'll be your friend for life.

Oh, please don't you turn me down, too.

JOE.

A verbatim report of my response to this letter reads as follows:

I want the rest of my radio audience just to take a beauty nap for a few moments, because I want to talk to Joe's father.

I believe this is the first time in my years and years of broadcasting that I have ever double-crossed anyone who has written me in confidence. But, sir, your son has appealed to me as a last resort. That boy's heart is broken because his dog, his pal, is gone, and you have

wounded that boy just as truly as though you had stuck a knife into that little heart of his, when you took away from him his most priceless possession, his dog. And, sir, your son is a cripple at that.

Joe asked me not to answer him at night, because he can't hear the night program, and that's just the reason I am answering his letter on a night broadcast. I don't wish him to hear.

Now, he has lost faith in you, father, and, as he puts it, God has turned him down, too. That boy is pinning his last bit of faith on me to get that treasure back into his arms. I want you to know, sir, that I feel that trust, that childlike faith, that your boy has shown in my ability to find "Spot"; and it really hurts me to know that day after day he will be listening for me to reply to him—and I have let him wait so I could talk to you tonight.

But, my friend, there is something more important to that boy and to me than that I shall keep faith with him. That is, if possible, to re-establish his faith in you as a loving father and his faith in the goodness of God. That is my reason for talking to you instead of to him.

Listen, friend. In your boyhood, did you ever own a dog? (And I take it for granted that you weren't crippled either, or your son would have said something about it.) Well, I wasn't crippled, and I never had a dog until I was a man, but all of that boyhood admiration and love of the canine world was expressed in me as a young man for a wonderful English shepherd dog that was to me both a pal and a chum. But he de-

veloped a bad habit. He sucked eggs. He paid for that habit with his life. Up to that time when "Prince" was killed, I had never lost a close relative. But had that dog been flesh of my flesh, I could not have grieved more than I did over his loss.

I can understand then just how Joe feels now that "Spot" is gone. I hated the man who killed my dog, even though that dog had destroyed his eggs.

Now, sir, even though you have a grudge against the dog, do you want your son to hate you because you have taken away that which is almost as dear as life to him? Do you want him to go through life feeling that God doesn't answer prayer and, thereby, make an atheist out of your boy, simply because it offers you an opportunity to avenge a bite given to you by that dog in the dark—and the dog didn't even know who you were? I don't think so.

Will you accept kindly then my suggestion to you, that wherever that dog is, you get him back for your son; and, if there's any expense involved, I'll be glad to reimburse you, if you will just notify me? When you get the dog back, won't you tell the boy that there must have been somewhere the Hand of Providence guiding you, because it was whispered in your ear (and I am doing that whispering right now) that that dog must be returned to your boy?

If you let Joe feel that both you and Providence are lending a hand in the return of his dog, can't you see that you will be serving a double purpose in the restoration of the boy's faith, both in his dad and in his Heavenly Father?



Just as your son went on his knees to you, sir, and asked for that dog's return, I, too, am metaphorically, doing the same thing—pleading only as a man who loves boys and loves dogs can plead. Please reunite these two chums.

I repeat, my friend, this is the first time I have ever double-crossed anybody that ever wrote me, and I will probably sacrifice Joe's confidence in my ability to do anything for him, or my desire, for that matter, to do so. But that's all right.

You see, I'm not Joe's dad, and I'm not his God. But, if I can persuade you to restore his belief in his God and in his dad, his loss of faith in me will be inconsequential. Won't you do that for him now?

Then wire me, collect, in care of the Columbia Broadcasting System, New York City. Just address it to the Voice of Experience, and let me know what you have decided to do. I'll appreciate it.

I haven't meant to be unkind in my appeal to you. I have simply taken it for granted, sir, that you were thoughtless, but are amenable to reason. Joe has lost faith in you. Don't make me lose faith in you, too.

More than three hundred people wired, phoned and wrote me immediately, offering to give Joe another dog, in the event that his father was unable to secure the return of "Spot." Much as these offers were appreciated, however, I did not have to take advantage of any of them, because Joe's father was listening-in. His heart was touched, and he wired me that Joe and "Spot"

would be reunited as quickly as he could possibly arrange it.

Joe didn't hear my broadcast; but, upon the return of his dog, he was thoughtful enough to write me another letter, in which he stated that he was sorry for having put me to any trouble, but that I didn't need to do anything about his case, because God and his dad had answered his prayer. He told me he had apologized to God for losing faith in Him, and that, somehow, his daddy seemed a lot different for some reason.

Although Joe to this day doesn't know that the Voice of Experience had anything to do with the solution of his problem, my objective had been reached—which, after all, was the original purpose in using Joe's letter on the night broadcast, instead of some noon when Joe could have heard his letter aired.



**CACTUS IN BED**



## CHAPTER IV

### CACTUS IN BED

HERE is a problem and my analysis, which should be interesting to every reader who is afflicted with a temper as well as to those who are compelled to live in close proximity to another who is the victim of "tantrums":

#### DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

I have a husband who is 99 per cent good and 1 per cent rotten. He is a lovable mate and a considerate father, but his one outstanding fault periodically ruins all his good qualities. That point is his violent temper. He is like a cow that gives a good, big pail of milk and with one, vicious kick, spills it all over the place. The peculiar thing is this: These spells come only once in a while and last for only a few minutes. But, when they happen and while they last, he is like a raving maniac. He snorts and cusses and cavorts until he is red in the face. Just as quickly as the storm begins it subsides. Then he is apologetic; admits he didn't mean the abusive things he said, and is really contrite and penitent. But before this stage is reached, sometimes almost irreparable damage is done.

For example, he can't take a joke on himself from anybody, particularly from any member of my side of the house. Now, I have a kid brother, just eighteen, who wouldn't harm a soul. But he is as full of the old

nick as he can be and is forever pulling practical jokes on somebody.

Just last week he and mother came to spend the weekend with us and, since we live in the semi-arid region, cactus is plentiful. Now, I know my brother didn't mean any harm. Just for a joke, he put some of this cactus between the sheets of my husband's bed. When hubby retired, he let out a yell that could be heard for a country block and, of course, demanded to know who the culprit was.

Well, of course, I laughed. I just couldn't help it. He'd have laughed, too, if he could have seen himself dancing around in his nightshirt and running first here and then there. He doesn't like to be laughed at. He demanded to know who put that cactus in his bed. Never having lied to my husband, I told him that my brother did it as a practical joke.

Hubby didn't even stop for his dressing gown, but went at top speed to the room my brother was occupying. Brother wasn't there. He had gone to the bathroom to take a shower. It didn't take my husband long to find him and his yelling awoke everybody in the house. The way he flew at my brother so frightened the kid that he slipped on the slick tile floor and ended up with a broken wrist.

The minute my husband found my brother was hurt, he was as quiet as could be and solicitous, too. But he had already said some mighty nasty things. Of course, his being sorry didn't mend the broken wrist.

Needless to say, my brother and mother didn't stay for the weekend and, although my husband had the

doctor to treat my brother's arm, I know there is a wound in both my mother's and brother's heart that will long outlast the time that it takes his arm to knit.

This is the worst result of his temper that I can remember, but at least it is an example. As I said, he always tries to make amends. Already he has sent brother a nice present and a nice letter to go with it. He also wrote to mother apologizing for his actions, but if he could just govern his temper and hold in instead of turning loose, these apologies would not be necessary.

Now, Voice of Experience, my husband has a lot of confidence in you and I know if you will talk to him about the matter it will help him in exercising self-control. I will be deeply indebted to you if you can take time from your broadcast and discuss this problem for us.

THE WIFE.

(My answer):

Well, listen, friend wife. I take it for granted your story is a straight-forward recital of facts and first I want to call your attention to the cause of the terrible "tantrum" you used as an illustration.

You refer to your brother as a practical joker. Without taking sides with your husband, may I say that I don't consider putting cactus in a man's bed a practical joke and I wouldn't want to test the patience and equanimity even of a clergyman by inviting him to sit on a bed of cactus. As much as you love your brother, if he had put the cactus in your bed and you had unsus-



pectingly piled in on all those little barbs, I imagine they would have pricked something besides your skin, too, and you wouldn't have seen the practical side of your brother's joke.

You say your husband's demeanor so scared your brother that the boy slipped and fell and broke his wrist. While I commiserate your brother upon his accident, in all fairness to everybody involved, I must say that to my way of thinking, your brother invited that accident and, therefore, should not hold your husband responsible.

Rage, my friend, is one of the primary human reactions to pain or discomfort. The average person is born with a temper. A tiny infant shows this when his bottle is denied him. His little ego has been frustrated in the satisfaction of a most primitive need and he is letting the world know that he doesn't like that frustration by the squall that he sets up. Now, if he gets his bottle as a result of this little tantrum, the infant is wiser for a very rich experience. He has learned quite unconsciously that rage brings its reward. The result is that a very definite pattern of conduct is laid down for the rest of that infant's life. A few weeks later, he over-indulges in the bottle—his bottle of milk, of course—and he gets a touch of colic. Again he sets up a squall and father or mother or both will walk the floor with him and his pattern is reinforced. The result is that the child soon begins to use rage or temper as a means toward compelling others to do his bidding.

Now, the man or woman who has an uncontrollable temper is almost invariably one of these spoiled chil-

dren who has learned a technique of life in infancy and carried that false technique over into adult life.

Just as the child, when frustrated, screams and rages, so the adult loses his sense of perspective. He yells, shakes his fist, raises his blood pressure, gets red in the face and, sometimes, strikes at the object that frustrated him. As you said, he acts almost like a maniac.

Now, you ask me to help your husband to suppress his temper. I am going to surprise you by saying that suppression, if anything, would be worse for everybody concerned than the actual outbreak. Although occasionally there is real damage done by the display of temper, it does allow for blowing off steam and for a quick termination of the tantrum. While I grant the tantrum has a bad effect, it is usually transitory in character.

On the other hand, if he attempts to suppress his tantrum, it will have a very bad result on his heart, the muscles of his viscera will contract, his glands will pour activity-provoking hormones into his blood stream, with no opportunity to do their work. His whole abdominal system will be deranged by abnormal secretions. The emotional vents which should be allowed to open up, remain closed and you have a situation exactly like that of putting additional heat under a boiler with all valves closed, when the boiler is already at the bursting point. If there isn't an actual explosion, at least there will be a terrible internal damage to the human just as to the boiler.

Some people suppress their rage and anger and temper tantrums for a lifetime, in an attempt to remain

dignified. Nothing is more harmful to the personality. Sooner or later a terrific mental upheaval takes place which, sometimes, assumes the form of mania. All the pent-up emotions that have been stored during a lifetime of suppression and repression, suddenly overflow the dam of the conscious thinking processes and the individual so far exceeds reasonable bounds in the expression of his temper that we call him a maniac. He is insane and has to be forcibly restrained to prevent himself from hurting anyone else or even himself.

Probably the most normal person in the world experiences occasions when some "blowing off of steam" is necessary for the health of his emotions. There is an innate perversity in inanimate things that taxes our patience to the breaking point. Swearing was invented for these occasions. While I am no advocate of constant profanity, an occasional heartfelt "Damn!" is a life-saver and a soul-saver. Other people let out the accumulated emotions of a hard working day full of frustrations by cheering at football games or prizefights, or in crying at the movies or theatre, as the case may be.

All these are desirable and necessary vents to pent-up emotions. Of course, the very best of these emotional vents is a good "belly laugh." If only more people who were subject to temper tantrums could get a good laugh at their own gyrations and contortions; if only we could hold a mirror up to the really angry person and let him see what he looked like when all his animal, infantile, soul-searing passions were aroused, how much less damage there would be from temper tantrums!

There are two kinds of temper tantrums. One type is the sort of temper tantrum that an individual has been using for a lifetime in order to get his private wishes gratified. The other type comes from the unusual petty frustrations and annoyances of daily life. In both cases some kind of "letting off steam" is desirable. Suppression of rage and temper is worse than its expression. But the cures for excessive temper tantrums are different in both cases.

In the first case, the case of the individual who has been spoiled and, therefore, habitually tries to gain his end by "throwing" a temper tantrum, plain suppression will not work.

What such a man or woman needs is some kind of psychological clarification. If you are cursed with this type of pattern, you must realize that you are really suffering from a childhood hangover. While it is true that you always got what you wished for when you screamed and raged as a child, the grown-up world of which you are now a part does not run on these principles.

If you have temper tantrums now you will simply be put down as a boor. Temper tantrums, irascible, hair-trigger tempers, frequent rage and loss of self-control are just forms of bad manners. They are not sicknesses, as you think. They simply mean that you consider your little ego and the satisfaction of your egoistic demands the most important thing in the world. If you do not change and modify your attitude toward life, life will change it for you.

Do you want to go through life as a sour, embittered, unhappy individual? Then just continue having your

temper tantrums. Your wife, your stenographer, your maid servant, or your janitor may pay attention to you because they have to. But your equals and associates will quickly desert you and leave you to express your rage in solitude. No one will take the trouble to cultivate your friendship or buy your goods. You are too dangerous to have around. You carry a charge of emotional dynamite with you wherever you go and people as a rule like peace and quiet in their vicinity. You hurt yourself and you injure your chances for social success.

If you belong to this type you must find out that your situation is not unique. You cannot have one set of laws for yourself and another set for the rest of the world. You have to put the energy that you utilize in rages into the job of helping yourself keep out of trouble and frustrations. Most of the frustrations you experience, the things that set your hair-trigger temper off, are frustrations of your exalted and inflated ego.

You may think yourself very important, but the minute you exhibit a bad temper you immediately put yourself down as a helpless child. You might just as well suck your thumb in public or get into a panic of fear when you see a small dog. What you have to do is to become more independent and self-confident. You have to let your skin thicken and let fancied insults to your vanity bounce off your armour-plate like peas from a plate glass window. You have to grow up and get a new set of values. No one is going to spoil you now but you can easily spoil your own chances of happiness by alienating the affections and esteem of your friends and neighbors. Every one in the world is sorry for a

man or woman who loses his temper, because such an exhibition of childishness provokes the pity of grown-up onlookers. Every time you exhibit your temper you show yourself off as an incurable egoist, a conceited fool, a grown-up man with the soul and mind of a little child.

When you have a temper tantrum you declare your emotional bankruptcy and announce in so many words, psychologically, that you are incapable of solving the situation that evokes your anger.

A grown-up person does not have as many frustrations and temper outbreaks in a year as you have in a day. If you lose your temper more than once a month in the ordinary course of life, you ought to see a psychiatrist and let him help you to change your emotional patterns.

Until you do this you will never really be cured of your temper tantrums, but I can tell you how you can help to cure yourself. Every time you have a temper tantrum you can fine yourself the price of some dearly beloved luxury and pay the fine to some worthy charity.

Never show your temper to anyone. If you feel you are going to have an outbreak, go into a room, lock yourself in and tear a newspaper into tiny bits, break a cheap plate or phonograph record into pieces (preferably on your own head) or have a good time cussing yourself out as loud and as hard as you can. But do not let anyone see you. If you have a punching bag available, punch it and punch it hard.

One of my friends cured himself of a bad temper by

taking a cold shower with all his clothes on as soon as he felt one coming on.

If you are otherwise a normal person and things go wrong, and you feel frustrated, do not take the perversity of nature and inanimate objects too seriously. You, too, may try the newspaper or phonograph record technique of "getting it out of your system." You do not have to worry. You are just one of the many human beings who gets reasonably mad from time to time.

Don't be dignified. Get it out of your system and get it out good. Getting mad at yourself, at the stupidity of people, at the perversity of things, is a normal experience. Do not take it too seriously!

"AM I A MURDERER?"





## CHAPTER V

### “AM I A MURDERER?”

HAVE you ever read a signed confession of the events leading up to the taking of a human life by one who was not apprehended for his crime? If not, this chapter contains for you that unique experience, because I am herewith reproducing verbatim such a confession, the original of which is locked-up in my files along with other extraordinary documents.

This is one of the most dramatic letters I have ever received; and yet, after you have read it, I think you will conclude with me that I would have been unwise in having brought this letter to the air-waves. Perhaps some of you will condemn me for the method that I employed in this particular case. But, let me briefly relate the problem which I had used on one of my noon broadcasts, that prompted this boy to make his confession to me, and then reproduce his letter.

A little more than a year ago, I received a letter from a man who gave me his name and address, but for evident reasons asked that he be referred to simply as “A Greek Refugee.” Before taking this man’s letter to the air, I sent an investigator to his home, checked his story with him, his wife and the two children referred to, and I was absolutely convinced both of the truthfulness

of the man's confession and of his sincerity in his desire to find relief from a false sense of mental anguish and remorse.

His letter had told of a tragic experience, through which he and his family had passed a number of years ago when they were a part of a band of refugees fleeing from the Turks.

There were more than a hundred adults in the band and almost an equal number of children. For several days they had been compelled to travel by night and hide out in dense thickets or in caves by day. Foraging for food was almost impossible. The result was that many of the children became emaciated and some were on the point of starvation.

Naturally, the younger ones, unable to understand the situation, were continually crying for food. Their cries endangered the safety of the entire band. So, a conclave was called of the leaders of the group and they voted that, if they were to be saved from ignominious death at the hands of the marauding Turks, these babies who would undoubtedly suffer death by starvation in any event would have to be killed. By decree of these leaders, each father was to put to death his own children.

With a heavy heart, this Greek refugee had had to snuff out the life of his tiny babe. But he had two other children—one three years old, the other four. These he spared. Immediately, however, he was ap-

proached by the headmen and commanded to put these two children to death, before their cries announced to any lurking Turks the presence of the hidden band.

These children had made no outcry, and the father and mother refused to add further to their guilt of infanticide by doing away with them. Thereupon, the parents were told that, unless they immediately complied with the order, right after nightfall they would be banished from the tribe and forced to face the dangerous trek to the borders alone.

In order to save the lives of their two remaining children, the parents chose this alternative. After harrowing days and endless nights, they finally reached the border and safety.

Two years later, the family moved to America. Today the son and daughter, who were spared, are senior and junior respectively in an eastern high school.

During all these years, this mother and father have tortured themselves with the thought that, inasmuch as they had saved this son and daughter by preferring the danger of isolation from the band to the protection of their traveling companions, that, had they taken this same action before putting their youngest child to death, they might have rescued it along with the two other children.

According to this man's letter, he had never revealed this story outside the limits of his own family, until he reduced it to a confession and mailed it to me.

Many of you who heard me use this letter on the air, will recall my having asked my unseen audience to participate with me in determining whether or not this man was justified in the taking of his baby's life.

I received replies from criminal lawyers, judges, medical men, psychologists, ministers, and men and women in various other walks of life.

More than seventy per cent of the women who replied were unqualified in their verdict of innocence. Only fifty-four per cent of the men reached the same decision.

The physicians and psychologists who wrote me were one hundred per cent for vindication. Of the three criminal judges who replied, two were of the opinion that, although the taking of this child's life was premeditated and, according to the letter of the law of this country would be classified as murder, that no jury in the land would convict either the father or the mother of this crime. The other judge classified the act as justifiable infanticide.

The compendium of replies from the ministry surprised me, because almost eighty per cent said there was no justification in their having taken the life of an innocent babe, no matter what the pretext might be.

I do not believe that this is representative of the opinion of the ministry at large. At least, I hope not, because I contended at the time that the very fact that this father and mother refused to secure their own safety

at the expense of doing away with their two older children, even after they had realized the necessity for insuring the safety of the entire group by taking the life of the baby that had added its cries to those of other children who were put to death, was prima-facie evidence of their innocence of premeditated murder.

Further correspondence that I have had from this family has certainly seemed to justify my plea that they stop torturing themselves with false remorse and rather give thanks that through their courage and bravery they saved two of their children and brought them to maturity. Both of these parents have revealed to me that, following my discussion with them, they commenced enjoying undisturbed sleep for the first time since this tragedy of many years ago.

The way that I handled this particular problem was the direct cause of my receipt of the following signed confession:

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

You have just discussed without condemnation the letter of a man who admitted to you that he was a murderer. Well, Voice of Experience, here is another confession and of the same crime, too.

I am a murderer! Or am I? I had better start by saying, "I have taken a human life!"

Two years ago, in a little upstate town, I lived with my parents and kid sister. We were all happy and working; had our own home and a fair amount of

money. Father enjoyed a thriving business and we had nothing to worry us.

During that summer, as always, quite a few folk from the city came to our village for their vacation. One fellow in particular, a sleek, oily-looking, young foreigner, was there and, for some unknown reason (probably because of his well-to-do appearance and smooth manner), my kid sister became infatuated with him. I suppose the rest is a story you have heard many times. She was wronged and, finally, in her fright over her condition, she confessed to my mother.

Now, mother had suffered from sinking spells and a weak heart. This shock was too much for her. She died before father and I could reach home.

My father was a very religious man and prided himself on the good name of our family. He and sister became so blue that, one week after mother's funeral, I found both of them in the kitchen, where they had taken the easy way out—the gas route.

So, of a happy home of four, the passage of a few weeks left me the sole survivor to face the shame and disgrace brought on by this contemptible man.

I sold our little home and place of business, stating that I was going to the big city to look for work. Well, I was going to the big city to conduct a search, but not for work. I was determined to find that man!

For eight months I searched diligently, going everywhere that I thought he might put in an appearance. Then suddenly one evening I ran right into him at a busy intersection.

God, how I longed to take him by the throat and choke the life out of him right there! But, of course, I controlled myself.

He spoke to me; asked about my family and, particularly, about my sister. I didn't tell him about them, but pretended that they were all well and were now living with me in the city. He said he would like to call and see my sister. So I told him that I knew she would be glad to see him, too. I gave him the address of the rooming house where I was staying and he said he would call the next evening.

Voice, you could not realize how my brain was swimming as I heard him talk so casually of taking my poor sister out again!

The next night I watched for him in front of my place. Sure enough, he drove up. I explained to him that we had an aunt living over in a suburb, who was quite deaf and had taken suddenly ill that morning. Since she was alone, sis had gone over to stay with her. I said that sister had asked, if he cared to come, for me to bring him over there to spend the evening. He fell for this, so I got into his car and offered to show him the way.

We drove across the city and, after a while, came to a lonely stretch in the outskirts. I purposely let my hat "blow" out the window so he would stop the car. No sooner had the car come to a stop than I seized him by the throat and told him why I had gotten him out there alone.

He whined and cried. He offered me money to let him go. He told me that he was selling dope and would



give me fifty thousand dollars and make me a partner in his business if I would spare him.

Then the picture of my sister and mother and father flashed before me, leaving nothing but a red blur before my eyes. When I finally got myself together, I discovered that, somehow, I had gotten hold of a hammer in the car and had beaten this man's head into a jelly.

I threw his body into the back of the car and drove around for hours, trying to decide what to do. Eventually, I found myself along the river front, close to a big pier with a sign illuminated by red lights. There was a foot and a half of planking around the edge of the pier.

No one was in sight, so I lowered the windows of the car, made a runway out of a pile of planks I found, then backed up the car and jacked up the rear wheels.

Just then a policeman came by and asked me what was wrong. I told him that I thought my rear axle was broken and I was waiting for a tow-wagon. After he had gone far enough away, I started the engine, put the car in high gear and advanced the gas on full. Then I got behind the car and pushed it off the jack.

As it came down, the wheels gave a shriek as the spinning rubber took hold of the planking. Then with a lurch the car flew ahead, took the plank runway and sped many feet beyond the edge of the pier.

I watched the car go down out of sight into the river. How long I stood there I don't know, but even as I watched the spot where the car had sunk, I was tempted to jump in and end the whole business for all of us.

Almost every night, now, I find myself on that dock where the car went over. I keep staring at the place where it went down. Each night the temptation for me to jump in is stronger. I am afraid this is just what I will do.

Voice of Experience, I have prayed and prayed, but it seems that God won't give any relief to a murderer.

I'd go to the police and confess the whole story; but everyone that knows of the facts is dead, and I would rather end my life than to spend the rest of it in prison.

I've watched the papers for any word about the discovery of the car and the body it contained. But, evidently, it has never been brought to the surface.

Is there anything that you can do, Voice of Experience, to give me will power sufficient to keep me away from that dock? I do want to live. I am just afraid I can't fight the temptation which comes over me each time I go there—and, somehow, I just can't keep away from that place.

I'll listen regularly for your answer. Please don't tell me to confess, because, even if I did, I'm sure no one would believe my story. Of course, I can show how my family died. The records prove that. But I can't prove why they died, or why I shouldn't be called guilty for having taken this man's life.

I don't want to ask you to do anything which would endanger you by aiding a criminal. Somehow, though, I don't consider myself a criminal.

I could leave the city; but I couldn't get away from myself. Every night when I lay down to go to sleep,

the whole affair just happens all over again. I see the car hit the plank runway. I see it lurch into the air. I see it hit the water, turn on its side and disappear beneath the surface.

Last night as I stood there on the edge of that dock, I imagined I saw bubbles rising from the very spot where the car took its plunge.

Oh, Voice, I am so afraid. Sometimes I think it would be a relief if they found the car. The uncertainty is driving me mad!

I need your help so badly. Somehow I have confidence that you will help me to win my battle against myself. I will listen eagerly and patiently.

EDGAR.

Although the reading of this letter would have made a very dramatic broadcast, I felt it would be decidedly unwise to make any reference to the contents of this letter on the air. I did, however, talk to the writer in an early broadcast regarding the danger to which he was subjecting himself as to his sanity, through yielding to the temptation to visit that dock. I neither condemned nor condoned his act in the taking of this man's life. I was not his judge. I did explain to him that, unless there was a "corpus delicti" (discovery of the actual corpse), that even though he were to confess his crime to the authorities, he could not be held.

I told him further that, it seemed to me, the entire matter was in the Hands of Providence; that just as many others had evoked the unwritten law with im-

punity, so, perhaps, had he. I urged Edgar to find himself a job and throw himself whole-heartedly into its duties, so as to completely be lost in constructive effort. This, I counselled, would lessen the inclination to re-live the tragic experiences which were continually recurring to him.

This boy followed my advice. He secured a job and has climbed steadily in his work. Seemingly, all sense of false remorse has disappeared and the chap is rapidly regaining his proper sense of balance and his place in society.

After all, in the light of the circumstances, I feel that this is a far more adequate solution of this boy's problem than to have branded him as a criminal, or to have allowed him to end his life in self-destruction.

Perhaps you differ in this opinion. Perhaps you are right and I am wrong. Because I have assumed the rôle of "The Voice of Experience," by no means betokens my belief in my own infallibility. The results, however, seem to have justified my actions in this particular case.



STEALING A TOMBSTONE



## CHAPTER VI

### STEALING A TOMBSTONE

DURING the month of December, 1930, I conducted a regular half-hour evening broadcast over WSM in Nashville, Tenn. While there, I had some unique experiences, not the least of which was the reading of a letter from a girl who was secretly wedded to a man she did not love. She wrote of the return of the man for whom she really cared and asked for my advice. Her letter showed very clearly that she was treading dangerous ground. She was attempting to solve her problem in a way that I felt would be disastrous.

As soon as I could, after receiving her letter, I took it to the radio, read it and plead with her not to do what she was considering, because it might mean one or more deaths. Unfortunately, I read her letter too late for, at the time I was talking to her, she was lying on the slab in the mortuary, the victim of exactly the series of events which I predicted might take place.

The day following this tragic experience, I opened one of the most pitiful letters I have ever received from a child. It came from a lad hundreds of miles away, who had been following my broadcasts. Since I have his original letter, I should like to transcribe it exactly as he wrote it. It reads as follows:



DEAR MISTER:

I been hearin you helpin folks every day and like to listen to you right much; but you ain't never read no letters from kids like me, so may be it's no use me writin. But, gosh, I'm in such awful trouble I don't know what to do. So please, Mister, don't be mad at me for askin you to help cause I ain't got nobody else to go to and you seem so kind like.

You see, it's this way. I'm thirteen and kinda big for my size, but I've sure had things tough long as I can remember. My mother died when I was just a kid right in the room where I'm writin' this letter. And they buried her out in the apple orchard in the buryin ground across the creek. Dad didn't wait no time after mother died, but skinned out and married another woman and beat it out West somewhere. I ain't never seen him since.

The folks that moved in here took me to raise and I stayed here until I was ten years old. They had a lot of sickness and couldn't keep me no longer. So another family down the pike, seein as I could milk cows and do lots of chores, took me to live with them. Gee, they made me work like a dog and were mean to me no end. I can't tell you all the dirt they done me and I guess it was wrong, but I was glad when the bank made them get out, cause they didn't pay the mortgage. I didn't want to go no way. So the folks here where I was born said they would take me for a while till I can find somewheres else to go.

Gee, I was glad to get back to the old place. I know every inch of it. And the first thing I done was to skoot out to the orchard to see my mother's grave. And what

do you think? The other graves were all right—for graves. But my mother's was all sunk in. I don't think nobody had done a thing for it since I left. Course, I couldn't stand for that. So I got the shovel and a wheelbarrow and went out in the barn lot and I got some good rich dirt. And I fixed up my mother's grave just like the grave man done when mother was first buried. It looked slick when I got through with it and I just thought how glad mother would be if she knew what I was doin for her. There was markers at the other graves, but there was nothin to show it was my mother lyin there. So I looks all over the place for a shake or somethin to make a marker out of, so I could print M-O-T-H-E-R on it. But I didn't find nothin.

One day the folks was goin into town to market and they took me with them. I didn't have nothin to do, so I just walked around and the first thing you know, I ran right smack onto a whole yard full of the nicest grave stones you ever see—big ones and little ones, every kind. And right by the walk was a little tiny one, ruff all over except the top which was on a slant and it was smooth as could be, and standin right up were the letters spellin M-O-T-H-E-R. I just stood there and thought how good that would look on my mother's grave, so I went to the man that was hammerin on some stones in the shed and asked him how much that mother stone cost. He said fifteen dollars. If it hada been fifteen cents, I couldn't have bought it. But it was sure tough to walk away and leave that stone there when I wanted it so much.

That night, after I had done my chores and went to bed, I couldn't sleep for thinkin of that stone. And

do you know, I got a idea. I got up and dressed without turnin on no lights, crawled out the window and sneaked out to the barn. I saddled the mare and got a rope and gunny sack and I went to town.

When I got to the place where all them stones were, there was nobody nowheres in sight. And nobody knows but God and me how fast and how hard I worked gettin that stone in the sack and pullin it up over the pummel of my saddle and lashin it there. I prayed awful hard for nobody to come by while I was doin this. And sure enough, nobody did. I took it easy goin back out to the farm cause I didn't want the stone to hurt the horse's side, and, when I got out there, I went out to the orchard. The moon was shinin just a little bit and some of the grave markers made it look awful spooky in there.

I have always been scared to death of ghosts, so, since God answered my prayer and kept folks away while I got the stone for mother, I knelt right down there and prayed for God to keep the ghosts out while I done something for my mother. When I got up, I wasn't scared a bit. I took that stone and I fixed it the nicest you ever see at the head of mother's grave. And I took the mare back to the barn and unsaddled her and quiet-like, I crawled back through the window, took off my things and went to bed. I can't tell you how happy I was, or how quick I went to sleep.

Everythin would have been all right if it wasn't that some dirty skunk snitched on me. And now I'm in an awful mess. The man that owned the stones come out with the sheriff and, cause the stone was set in the

ground, he wouldn't take it back, sayin he had to have his money for it and right away. The folks where I'm stayin give me a good blessin, and said they didn't have no money to pay for it and they wasn't goin to stand good for my stealin. So, the Sheriff said, if I couldn't pay, I've got to go to reform school. But, gee, mister, I wasn't tryin to steal. I just figgered that man had lots of stones and wouldn't miss that one little one, and I know my mother deserves just as good as anybody. I wouldn't take nothin from nobody for myself, and I told the sheriff so. But, heck, he's tough as nails. He ain't got no heart at all. He just said, stealin is stealin, and, if I can't rake up the money, I got to make it up by goin to reform school.

The woman's sister where I stay is awful good, and she got the sheriff to promise to give me a week to rake up the money, but two days is gone and we ain't got nowhere. I been hearin you helpin folks get babies adopted and gettin folks out of messes and I thought maybe you might help a fellow that really needs help awful bad. You sound like if you had a kid, you wouldn't let them send him to reform school just for tryin to do somethin for his mother. But my dad aint like you. He's just all for hissself and even if I knowd where he was, wouldn't do no good to write to him cause even supposin he had the money he wouldn't send it. I aint got no other folks so please, mister, if you got a heart help me out just this oncet. I swear I don't need reformin and I sure don't want them to take me. I promised to do anything the sheriff asked if only he'd give me a chance, but he wouldn't listen to nothin I said. Honest, if you can get this fixed up for me I'll

pay you back somehow if it's the last thing I do and I'll be your true friend for life. I'm gonna lissen every day cause somehow I got faith in you. You wouldn't disappoint me would you?

Your new friend,

BUD.

Needless to say, I got in touch immediately with the sheriff, guaranteed the payment of the fifteen dollars, talked to Bud over the radio, complimented him upon his love for his mother and his desire to pay tribute to her memory, but explained to him that a theft is never justified. I tried to teach him a lesson and, at the same time, show the authorities, who would place this boy in a reform school, what poor judgment, in my opinion, they were exercising in this particular case.

That broadcast was far-reaching in its effect. Not only was local interest aroused in the boy's case, but I had many families from distant parts offer to adopt the boy—with the result that one excellent family was finally chosen and Bud found himself a new home.

His remarkable progress in school, his rapid emotional and spiritual growth, have not only more than compensated me for the interest that I have taken in his case, but have brought real happiness and joy in what was, at the time of the advent of Bud, a childless home.

ABOUT TO BITE THE HAND



## CHAPTER VII

### ABOUT TO BITE THE HAND

#### DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

I have been drawn to the radio every time you are on the air by the sincerity with which you meet the trying problems submitted to you by your many listeners; and much as I enjoy your broadcasts and, in spite of all that I learn from hearing your sympathetic replies to the very human problems submitted to you, I could listen from now to my dying day and I do not believe I would hear you discuss a problem quite like mine. Oh, Voice of Experience, I hate myself, but I guess I'm just weak. Anyway, I must tell you of my difficulty and ask you for some way out.

Two years ago, I lost my mother. Six months ago, Dad remarried a beautiful young woman just a year older than I, and brought her into our home. Dad is a man who is nationally prominent and is called away from home on numerous occasions. In the daytime, he's always away and does not get home for lunch. I have just finished my collegiate work and graduated as a mining engineer. I have a workshop down in our basement and have been working on some problems that I believe will some day bring me fame. Naturally, I'm home all day, even though I'm in the basement; but I've been having lunch every day with my young step-mother. In the evening, Dad is busy several nights a week, and he asked me to take her to a show, which



I have done. Of course, I liked her right from the first and I think she liked me. But I recognize the fact that she is my father's wife. So I try to treat her just as a sister. I could not treat her as my mother because of her youth.

But, Voice of Experience, I'm not apologizing, or making any excuses, or trying to alibi anything. I'm just trying to tell you what a fix I'm in. I wasn't going out with any other girls and, before I knew it, I was looking forward to my evening dates with my own step-mother. Instead of just having lunch with her and spending my time working in the basement, I could hardly wait for Dad to leave in the morning so I could be alone with his wife. Of course, you know what this has led to.

One evening when we came home from the show, we found a note from Dad, saying that he would not be back until way late in the night and, suddenly, I looked at her and she looked at me—and, Voice of Experience, we just melted into each other's arms.

That happened over a week ago. I fought to keep my feet on the ground, as you call it, and have fought ever since. Night before last, I walked the floor for over an hour, wondering what to do. But last night, Dad threw a bombshell when he calmly announced that he was called to Chicago to be gone for two weeks. He smiled and patted me on the shoulder and said that, although he would miss his dear, little wife, he was leaving her in the best hands in the world, and that he knew I would guard over her during his absence.

Guard over her! When Dad made the announce-

ment, my first thought was what a wonderful time we would have during the two weeks he would be gone. Then I think it must have been the voice of my dead mother that whispered in my ear. I even heard my name called. What this strange visitor whispered shook me all over. I did not sleep at all last night. I didn't know what to do. I haven't seen her yet today. She and Dad went out together last night, so I didn't see her then. But, Voice of Experience, two weeks here in the house alone with her! I know she's my father's wife, but what did he mean by marrying a woman so young that she would become a temptation to me?

My father's word is law and, when he goes, he will expect me to show her every attention. I do not dare trust myself. In fact, the rapidity with which things have been developing makes me know that I don't trust her either, with Dad many miles away. But something must be done because he is leaving this week. But what?

I can't see a way out. I know that I can't face the temptation that is coming. If ever you tried to offer anyone sane advice, please offer it to me. I know you never preach to anyone, but whatever you say to me, I will take it like a man. But just don't say, "Use your will power," because when she is around I haven't any will power. But, for God's sake, help me to meet this problem and be a man.

ENGINEER.

(My reply):

Lad, I am going to take you at your word, believing that your recital of your unique situation which is of

your own making, is evidence of your good faith in the matter of finding a sane avenue of escape.

You have heard me say that I never condemn nor criticize an individual no matter what he may confess to me. That goes for you. But that does not mean that I will not condemn an act. Certainly the violation of a father's implicit confidence placed in his son is most reprehensible.

Have you ever heard the expression, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you?" Well, let me sound this note of warning to you, Engineer. If every tooth in your head were of the canine variety and you were to bury those teeth deep into your father's hand; yes, if you were to mangle his hand completely with that full set of incisors, eventually that hand would heal, for the wound would be physical in character. But let's analyze what you are doing.

Your father had a perfect right to choose a woman of any age for his wife, without consulting you or your frailties and susceptibilities to temptation. The fact that he did choose a young wife and bring her into the home with you, was a tribute (albeit a silent one on his part) to you. It showed implicit faith not only in you, but in his young wife as well.

For days now, you have been on the verge of violating that faith to the full extent of that word. Suppose that you had gone a step further in your improprieties. Suppose that, instead of sanely reasoning this matter out, as you have been doing when alone, you had allowed matters to drift heedlessly, thoughtlessly, in the direction that they were taking. Your father is nobody's

fool and, eventually, by word or deed, one of you (either yourself or his young wife) would have revealed your clandestine affection for each other.

Do you realize what that would mean to your father, knowing his type and temperament as you do? How soon would the wound that you would so inflict upon his emotional and mental natures completely heal?

Do you realize that you have been flirting with possible murder, or suicide, or both? Have you forgotten that a man's wife is his most priceless possession and, when he finds another male trying to lure that wife away, the thin veneer of civilization drops like a mantle from his shoulders and reveals only the primal urge, the innate instinct in the man? Would you test the strength of that instinct in your own father?

You admit that your will power is weak, that your emotions are running away. Even now you are picturing in anticipation the possibilities for yourself and your step-mother in the absence of your father on his trip to Chicago. Certainly, while you are holding a mental vision like that before your mind's eye and caressing the thoughts of what's to be, there can be no sane, conscientious concentration directed toward an avenue of escape. But, if there is an iota of sincerity in your appeal to me, backed up by an ounce of red blood in your body, here's a solution that will work:

- Temptation is acute only when the object of temptation is present. The further removed the object, the less felt the temptation. It will be necessary for you to see your step-mother in private once more. Express

your hearty shame over your actions and assume full responsibility for tempting her, rather than to ask her to share that responsibility with you. Do not ask her—demand of her—that she plead with your father to take her with him to Chicago, saying that she is very anxious to see the city and that she does not want to be away from him as long as two weeks so soon after the marriage ceremony. Your step-mother is not unlike other young women. She will understand perfectly how to wheedle this trip out of your father, without revealing her motives in any way at all.

I am taking it for granted that she will be successful in persuading your father to let her accompany him. The moment that they have left, you pack your duds and go away for a vacation. Use the pretext, if you wish, of seeking a fertile field for research. I assume that your father is financing you. Then the small additional expense can be easily borne. And I want you to do some research work while you are gone, but not in the field of mine engineering. I want you to lose yourself in a social whirl, somewhere, somehow. The way to forget an onerous situation is to fill the hours completely with some tasteful occupation or avocation. And, if you are the average boy that I think you are, you will not find distasteful the company of young women other than the one you are determined to forget.

Under no pretext whatsoever return to your paternal roof until you have become a complete master of yourself. If you must absent yourself from home for months or years, it is imperative. If peace of mind and sense of filial obligation are worth anything at all to you, you

will not only be willing to make this sacrifice, but will welcome it.

Personally, I think you have been swept off your feet by infatuation of a temporary character. At least, I hope so. In this event, you will find yourself able to return home much earlier than you think. Do not forget, however, that neither by word nor deed can either you or your step-mother afford, now or ever, to give your father an inkling of the dangerous precipice upon which he has just stood—in fact, still stands.

You call my solution drastic. But is not the situation one that demands drastic action? I can assure you of this. It will fail only if you fail. Its full measure of success depends upon how firmly you can keep your feet planted on the ground. Success to you! And some day, I hope to receive from you another letter which will be in an entirely different vein.

Two years elapsed before I heard another word from my friend, the engineer, and then, like a bolt from a clear sky, I received the following letter, which is self-explanatory:

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

I can't tell you how good it was to hear your voice over the radio again. The last time I heard you was over your series on . . . in . . . some two years ago. In all probability, you have forgotten both me and my problem, but at the time, your answer was like a life-line thrown to a drowning man. With the thousands of letters that you are getting each week, I do not flatter

myself that you even recall the circumstances of my question, but I am taking a chance on repeating them to you so as to let you know what the outcome was because I hope you will be interested.

Do you remember a boy who wrote and told you that his father had married a young woman and brought her into his home, and this young man had fallen in love with his step-mother and she, in turn, was falling in love with the son of her husband? That young man plead with you to offer him some means of escape. By any chance do you remember the reply that you gave?

Well, I followed your advice to the letter. And it worked out splendidly. My father does not know to this day how nearly his own son came to betraying his father's wife. But your kind, sane advice, which I heard you give to others, gave me the confidence to rely upon your advice to me. That is the reason I followed it. And that is the reason all of us are happy today. I made my young step-mother go away with my father as you suggested. When they had returned, I had gone elsewhere.

Providence seemed to have a hand in my going and, within less than two weeks, I met the most wonderful girl in the world and I was fortunate enough in fooling her to think I was just about the right man for her. Just six months after you gave me my advice over the air, we were married and, just two weeks ago, wife and I left our home here and met my father and his wife in Philadelphia for a short visit, when we had the honor of introducing them to our first-born son.

To say I'm thankful is putting it too mildly. Had I

gone on in my mad infatuation for my step-mother, three lives that I know of would have been wrecked. As it is today, thanks to your kindly advice, there are five lives that are extremely happy.

I know you never see anyone personally, but may I have the honor, sometime while you are here in this territory, of just meeting you personally and shaking hands with you? It will mean so much to me to thank you in person.

(And the signature of this mining engineer)

Needless to say, I granted his request and the sincerity of his thanks, the pride he displayed in his babe, the mutual love and admiration evident between this engineer and his pretty young wife, gave me more satisfaction than I can possibly convey in cold print.





FORGIVING THE WOMAN



## CHAPTER VIII

### FORGIVING THE WOMAN

THERE have been so many ribald jokes told about "the traveling salesman" and so many fictitious yarns in which the salesman has been given the worst of it, that I am glad to come to the defense of at least a part of this vast army of nomads by relating my experience with one "Knight of the Suitcase," which I think many of you will find interesting as a love story and profitable as an example.

I was broadcasting over WWNC, Asheville, N. C., when I received the following letter:

DEAR FRIEND OF HUMANITY:

May I place the happiness and, probably, the destiny of three individuals in the palm of your hand? Two of the persons referred to follow your broadcasts regularly and I assure you that I have every confidence that your solution of our problem will make me the happiest man in the land and give me the opportunity to serve two lives that I am convinced have been placed in my keeping by Divine Providence.

It is necessary for me to begin at the beginning in order that you may the better understand why it seems necessary to present this problem to you.

A year and a half ago, my firm had sent me on a special mission to California. It was my first trip to this land of sunshine and romance, so I finished my work as fast as I could in order to spend my evening hours sight-seeing.

One night, about eleven o'clock, after several dances at a popular pavilion located right on the coast, I started strolling along the pier, which extended out over the water. I had just come to the conclusion that I had the pier all to myself, when I heard, a few steps ahead of me, half-subdued feminine sobs. I quickened my steps and came upon a young woman in the act of throwing herself over the banister of the pier. She had discarded her coat and to the lapel of the coat had pinned a sealed envelope.

I was severely bawled out for coming between this girl and self-destruction, but I took her tongue-lashing quietly and, realizing that there was some terrible tragedy that had temporarily unbalanced her mind, I allowed her to exhaust herself as she hurled invectives at me.

Having been a successful salesman for some years, my training in psychology stood me in good stead and I finally got her quieted and, speaking in low tones, gradually sold her on the idea that I was not trying to act in the capacity of an interferer, but would appreciate the opportunity of becoming her friend.

Between sobs that bordered on convulsions, I dragged from her the story of the events which made her feel that the only way out was the taking of her own life. Her story was one that is probably not new to you:

She was a young school teacher engaged in kindergarten work. She had become involved with her principal, a married man, and when she found herself an expectant mother, he denied all responsibility and even threatened to expose her to the school board as a black-mailer if she attempted to involve him in her trouble.

Although mentally equipped to handle her school work, she certainly showed that she knew little about life and, knowing of no avenue of escape from public knowledge of her shame, she decided that, rather than face the issue, she would take what she considered an easy way out.

I have never had much time for lady-friends and, probably unlike the typical salesman, have lived a pretty continent life. You can, undoubtedly, understand then how her story bowled me over. Even in the semi-darkness I could tell that she was endowed with both a pretty face and a pleasing figure, and these, probably, had something to do with the height to which my sympathy was aroused. At least, I will admit being that human.

To make the story as brief as possible, I finally wormed my way completely into her confidence. I explained to her that the world was wide and that, although she didn't have the necessary finances to take her to distant parts and see her through her critical period, that, actuated by wholly unselfish motives, I would consider it a privilege to come to her assistance. I told her I was leaving for the midwest, where my headquarters were located, within just a few days. I succeeded in persuading her to resign her position on

the grounds that her mother was very ill and needed her. Three days later she accompanied me on my eastward journey.

Upon my arrival home, I introduced her to my sister, several years my junior, explaining that she had just suffered the tragic loss of her husband and that she expected in a few months to become a mother. Never once was there any occasion for my sister's having to doubt this story. The girl was a better actress than I ever supposed she could be and her keen memory served her well in not getting our stories mixed up. In due time I made arrangements at a local maternity hospital, where she became the mother of a darling little girl.

After she had completed her convalescence, I established her and the baby in a little apartment not far from our offices, and I went there regularly for my lunch. I should probably have told you that long before this I had declared my love for her and, when she was completely recovered (and I think you will understand this and not hold it against her), she intimated to me that she wished to make the only payment that she knew how to make for my kindness and financial assistance.

I am not criticizing her for this, because I felt and still feel that it would have been a sacrifice on her part, which she wanted to make in order not to feel under such obligation to me. Nor am I patting myself on the back as a saint when I tell you that I would not accept her proposition. When the tears came to her eyes and she told me that she didn't know there were such men as me in the world, I tell you I was amply repaid, not

only for all that she had cost me, but also for any momentary pleasures that I might be denying myself through refusing her offer.

And now, my reason for writing to you: I have been transferred to eastern territory. For a little while I left her and the baby in the midwest, but I couldn't stand the separation. So, when I wrote and asked her if she would let me bring her east and settle her where she could be near me again, I think she was as pleased to come as I was to have her.

For three months now, I have been proposing marriage to her regularly. Just as consistently, she has refused me. She not only tells me that she loves me, but she shows it in every way that a woman possibly could outside of wifehood. Only one thing deters her from accepting me—the tragedy that brought her into my life. She knows that I love that baby as though it were my very own. She knows, too, that there can never be another woman in the world for me. But she insists on parading her unworthiness and constantly expresses a fear that, if we were to get married, someday I might hold her pre-marital experience against her and come to feel unkindly toward her baby. She says that a man who would do what I have for a stranger, is worthy of a wife whose whole life has been above suspicion. Argue as I will, I cannot make her realize that to me there is no taint in connection with her and that the only repayment that I wish for all that I have done is for her to give me the right to legally protect and care for her and her baby.

It took considerable persuasion for me to get her consent to write this whole story to you, even though she



has confidence that you will not betray us to anyone. Now that I have gained her consent, she has expressed a willingness to abide by your decision in the event that you advise that we get married. On the other hand, I have promised her that, if you vote with her, I shall not attempt to press my suit any further, but will go on just as I have, loving, caring, sustaining, even though I feel that I have really deserved the happiness that I so much seek as compensation for my interest in her case.

I have tried to give you the salient facts without too much embellishment in my own defense, and certainly with no thought of criticizing her. I only ask that, if you feel that marriage would really solve our problem for us, as I have every reason to believe it would, that you plead with her in my behalf, as I have heard you plead in the defense of others. "God grant you the eloquence to convert her to my point of view," is the wish and prayer of—

"JUST A TRAVELING SALESMAN."

Any broadminded reader must know what my answer was without my repeating it. Nor was my reply the only one that this young couple received. Immediately after I had read this unusual story before the microphone of WWNC, I received a number of letters from men and women, every one of whom urged this girl not to pass up the opportunity of a lifetime for a happy home. Numbered among these letters that I received, were two written by wives who had come into marriage under somewhat similar circumstances and both of them stressed that, if she didn't want to seem an ingrate,

and since love was mutual between them, marriage was the only solution.

In my reply I tried to show her that a man, who would do what this man had done for her on a purely platonic basis, certainly could not develop into a type that would throw up her past to her at some future date. Naturally, I urged them to marry as expeditiously as possible and wished them both happiness and prosperity in the event that they took my advice.

More than two weeks went by before I had any further word; and then, in a morning's mail, I received a letter signed by both of them.

Had there been nothing said between their greetings and their signature, the letter would still have been complete, because it was signed, "Mr. and Mrs. — and little daughter."



TRIANGLE OR QUADRANGLE, WHICH?



## CHAPTER IX

### TRIANGLE OR QUADRANGLE, WHICH?

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

I have had a hard time getting up enough courage to write you this letter, and I am begging you to answer it on Saturday of this week, because I have finally persuaded the man involved to listen in with me Saturday for your reply.

For five years I have been very active in church work, serving on many committees and taking a keen pleasure in doing a great deal of routine work so necessary in every church organization. This has necessitated many conferences with our pastor. At first, he was just quite appreciative of my efforts and, because of my youth, at that time, I had thrown a halo around him that made him something more than just a human being. He was married. I knew his wife. I knew, too, that she was not a church woman and would take no active part in church work. It was common knowledge among the members of our congregation that our pastor was stolidly bearing the burden of his wife's utter disregard of the duties commonly accepted by a pastor's wife. Although at the Ladies' Aid and other gatherings (which she never attended), all of us sympathized deeply with our minister, none of us ever broached the subject of his wife to him.

A little more than three years ago, I had just returned from doing some charitable work among our

poor, and stopped by the pastor's study to report the result of my visits. Among other families that we were helping was a crippled man and his two children, whose wife had run through all he had and then left him strapped financially.

While we were discussing this home, I noticed a peculiar expression come over the pastor's face and then, for the first time, he began telling me about his own burden and the heavy heart that he carried because of the disinterest of his wife in him and his work. How his confession to me and my sympathy for him gradually grew into an intimate relationship, is too long a story to repeat, but I am sure it would not be a new one to you. I, therefore, depend upon your understanding to fill in the details.

A young banker in our church has fallen deeply in love with me but, because of my love for our minister, I have not been able to reciprocate. I have let him take me to church functions; but, frankly, I merely used him as a means to be near my lover. He is a fine fellow and a man that any girl could be justly proud to call her husband. I suppose, were it not for the presence of our pastor, I could learn to love this other man. For months now, he has been begging me to marry him and I have refused. He has accused me of being interested in someone else. Until recently, however, he had no suspicion as to who it was. About two months ago, after a church supper, I was indiscreet enough to kiss my pastor-lover good-night in a dark hallway where neither of us thought we could possibly be observed. But that kiss was seen by the man who is paying me court. At first, he was in a frenzy and was

going to expose us both on the spot. I thought hard and fast in order to keep him from doing so. I finally succeeded in mollifying him by being much more attentive and by deluding him into thinking that I am not seeing the minister at all. I say "in deluding him." In this, I am only partially successful, because he is very suspicious. I have not dared to even intimate to the minister that anyone knows we have been indiscreet and I have had considerable trouble explaining to him why I have not so often come to his study and why I have seemed to avoid him at our public gatherings. I have merely tried to make him see that I was trying to avoid gossip.

Last Saturday afternoon, I had a clandestine meeting with the minister in his study and, when he upbraided me for my coolness, I felt it was best to tell him the truth, which I did. To say that he was scared is putting it mildly. He walked the floor; said that his reputation was at stake; that if this man told what he knew, it would ruin him forever. He fairly begged me to marry the man at once and follow the man's request that I quit my activity in that church entirely, so as to protect his good name. I never saw such a change come over a man. When I explained to him that it was my love for him that made it impossible for me to marry the other man, he fairly shouted at me that this was not a situation in which sentiment could play any part; that his very life-work was at stake, and for that reason, if I cared at all for him, I would most certainly hasten my marriage with the other man in proof of that love.

I have done lots of thinking since last Saturday and the actions of the minister have certainly shaken my



faith in him and in the cause he represents. I will admit that, in contrast, this unusual situation has made my friend stand head and shoulders over the preacher.

When my friend brought me home from church on Sunday night, we talked and argued until way into the wee hours of the morning. Both of us have listened to your broadcasts and we finally agreed to submit the problem to you. He demands immediate marriage, or he will expose the minister as a wolf in sheep's clothing. I maintain that for him to force me into marriage on a threat of that kind would predispose our marriage to failure from the very beginning and I argued for time to think it out, promising not to see the minister at all. I begged that, under no consideration, should he repeat to anyone an unkind word about our pastor. Saturday is the only day we can both listen in at the same radio and, for that reason, I am pleading with you, if at all possible, give this letter your earnest consideration on Saturday of this week.

On behalf of the three so tragically involved, I wish to thank you in advance for that mature judgment which has so characterized your answers to other intricate problems.

Miss X.

One of the reasons that my question-and-answer period over the radio has proved popular is that folks manifest universal interest in the problems which their friends and neighbors are called upon to meet. The more intricate, the more intimate, the more difficult the problem, the more interesting it becomes to us, provided the problem is someone else's and not our

own. How ready we are, upon hearing one of these problems, to say, "Why, that's easy. Here's what I'd do." But, when we ourselves are faced with that same problem, it takes on an entirely different complexion and, victimized by our own emotions, the calculating faculties of our brain seem to become stultified and the solution which seemed to fit a similar case in our neighbor, is either not thought of, or, if considered, seems to lack feasibility. That is human nature.

I imagine I can hear some of you right now saying, "Why there's nothing to that problem. Let the girl marry this man that wants her. Let her get out of the church and away from the preacher and the problem will solve itself."

Sounds reasonable on the face of it, doesn't it? But let me assure you that that simple procedure would not solve this problem. Bear this in mind: No life-problem is ever really solved until the parties involved have learned their lesson and profited by the experiences undergone.

In order, then, to reach a sane solution and offer practical advice to the three for whom this woman acted as spokesman in presenting this little cross-section of human drama, which you have just read, let me make clear at the outset that my major interest in answering this letter and offering advice was not my concern over any one of the three, which the letter says were so tragically involved. In my opinion, there was a far greater issue at stake in this peculiar situation than the protec-

tion or happiness of the woman, or of the two men. I shall try and make this clear in just a moment. But first, let us spend a few minutes analyzing the characters in this drama and the motives which prompted them to play their parts as they did.

Here's a clergyman. His home life is anything but satisfactory. He is misunderstood by his wife. His heart is heavy because she offers no cooperation in his church duties. A member of his congregation, a woman, comes into his life and, through mutual interests and constant proximity, offers that sympathy and understanding and helpfulness so lacking in the wife. Then the inevitable clandestine meetings; the amorous expression of the one to the other; the reciprocal fulfillment of repressed emotions. The pastor calls his feeling for this girl "love." The girl accepts it as such. But, is he dominated by love?

Notice, when the girl finally confessed to him that the kiss which they had snatched in the dark had been seen by one of his members, he became hysterical. He begged the girl to comply with the man's request and marry him at once. The girl replies that she cannot marry the other man because she loves him, her minister. In a frenzy, the clergyman fairly thunders at her, "This is no time for love or sentiment!" And, in his anxiety, he attempts to toss this girl, whom he has constantly claimed to love, into the arms of another man.

Is that the action of love? Where in the animal world or in the human kingdom, does the mother, in a mo-

ment of danger, toss her child into the jaws of an enemy to save her own life? Never! Then why does the preacher urge so sudden a consummation of the marriage of the girl he has professed to love, to an outsider? Does he seek the happiness of the girl? Does he seek the protection of her good name? Certainly not! What happens to the girl is beside the question. What about the church which he serves and the protection of that church? The church is not even mentioned. Then what actuated the minister in this frenzied moment? It certainly was not love. It could not have been altruism. There is just one answer: Self-protection—that age-old primal instinct in man and beast.

Oblivious of whether or not the marriage would be for the best interests of the girl he has claimed to love; forgetful of that high trust imposed upon him as a minister of the Gospel; unmindful of the forgotten wife; his sole thought in bringing this tragic situation to a quick conclusion can be summed up in just one word—Selfishness!

Now, let us look at the other man for just a moment. He becomes infatuated with a young woman who attends the same church that he does. He pays her court. He seeks her hand in marriage and, upon receiving a negative reply, like most of the men who are thwarted with a woman's "no," suspects that behind her answer there lurks another man. But who?

Then one night, he discovers for himself. He actually sees the woman of his choice in the arms of another

man, freely participating with him in a clandestine kiss. A moment before, this other man was his pastor. The sight of that kiss eliminates any reverence on his part for the man who is now just a bitter rival for the prize he himself so anxiously seeks.

Immediately, he threatens exposure. Exposure of whom? The preacher. But, can he be exposed alone? Will not equal scandal attach to the girl he claims to love?

Now, what prompted that threatened exposure? Certainly it could not have been his love for the girl. Love protects. Love never hurts its object. Was he heart-broken and, in a moment of temporary insanity, his love turned to hate? Impossible! Those of you who have followed my daily broadcast, as I have analyzed love and defined its many imitators, need no reminder that love had no part in this man's action.

Just as the minister in his crisis was dominated by self-protection, so the lover, in his crisis, was ready to make good his threat—not because of his broken heart, but because of a selfish pride cut to the quick at the sight of a successful rival.

So, with love on his lips, but venom in his soul, this lover would crucify both his sweetheart and his pastor and throw his church into a maelstrom of gossip in order to express another primal passion—not love, but vengeance!

Now, what of the girl in this case, the writer of the letter which prompts this discussion? In the first place,

she admits an intimate relationship covering a period of years with her own pastor, knowing that he was married. According to her own statement, she spent many hours in the privacy of his study in an intimacy which, if known, would rock the very foundation of the church which she claims to serve. Her excuse? She loved the clergyman.

Again, I challenge her interpretation of the term "love." So many of us delude ourselves into thinking that a physical magnetism, an animal attraction, so easily aroused in any male when in the presence of an attractive female, and so quickly reciprocated on her part when appeal is made to her emotional nature, is an evidence of love.

Let's call it by its right name: HUMAN PASSION. Do not forget, love is a spiritual emotion which cannot express itself on a physical plane. Passion is an age-old attraction which has usurped the garments of love and masqueraded in her stead.

Let's be fair now. You have read the evidence contained in this letter. Would you say that this girl manifested the unselfish characteristic, so evident in love, in her clandestine engagements with the minister, when utter disregard was shown for the sanctity of the minister's home and the dangers involved for the church which they both claim to serve?

I think you will agree that a selfish desire for the companionship of her pastor and of the enjoyment of

the emotions, which he aroused in her, regardless of religious edicts or social customs, rather than an unselfish devotion, manifested itself in this girl's attitude toward her religious leader.

So, this problem brings us a clergyman consumed with fear, as well as a desire for self-protection, seeking a solution which will satisfy his part in this equation. The other man, under the guise of love, is unwittingly threatening blackmail, his price being the woman in the case. The only solution which will satisfy him is the realization of his selfish demand. The woman, just as human as the men, is pleading for a solution of what she terms a triangle which, on the very face of it (when we include the forgotten wife), is a quadrangle, and, because of the clergyman's influence in the church, could very easily become polyangular, if even a whisper of scandal reached the rest of his congregation.

Before offering what I considered the only logical solution to this problem, may I digress just a little to say that I have all the respect in the world for a minister, be he a rabbi, a priest or a pastor who is a MAN first, and who uses the ministry to express his life?

In the letter just read, this young woman has explained that in her youth, she had thrown a halo around the head of her pastor. Is it not true that, throughout the length and breadth of the land, countless thousands have placed their rabbi, their priest or their pastor upon a high pedestal? And rightly so. These men become intermediaries between the carnal in us and the

incarnal in Him whose emissaries they are. The cloth which they don lifts them out of the ranks of the common people and places them in the rôle of shepherds. By this voluntary action on their part, they take on a significance, intangible but real, whereby they are no longer masters of their own destiny, but belong, by virtue of their calling, not only to the religious faith which they profess, but to the flocks over which they preside.

In idealizing our ministers, most of us are forgetful of the fact that, after all, they are human beings even as you and I, susceptible to the same temptations which beset the pathway of the lowliest members of the church. How many times these ministers are compelled to go through a Garden of Gethsemane; but, unlike the Lowly Nazarene, a few are insufficiently inspired to come out unscathed.

You see, you and I are just ordinary, everyday folks. Everybody recognizes the fact that we are human enough to be tempted and to fall. No one expects too much of us. Hence, if you and I were to get into a jam and society found out about it, very little would be thought; not much would be said. But don't forget this: Outside the pale of the church is a great army of witnesses composed of atheists, agnostics and higher critics. Just let a pastor, a priest or a rabbi be implicated in the mildest scandal, and these disbelievers make that scandal reek to the high heavens and point at the blemished one a finger of scorn with the cry,



"Hypocrite! That's Christianity for you! There's your Judaism!" And, by their derision, these self-constituted judges keep many a soul from becoming aligned with the people of God.

I believe you see the reason for my digression, for, in my opinion, any solution of this problem must involve, first, the protection of the church to which these three belong; and, second, the interests of the individuals involved. So my advice was this:

There should be one more clandestine meeting in the study of this pastor. But this time, three should be present—the three in whose hands lay the solution of this problem. Granted that, under existing conditions, it could be no love feast; however, quoting the words of the pastor, "This is no time for sentiment," but it certainly was time for united action, involving self-abnegation on the part of the girl, complete submersion of the vengeance that had dominated the man, and contriteness instead of fear on the part of the pastor.

The past was dead and could not be recalled. So, in the presence of these three individuals closeted in the study, there lay a skeleton. That skeleton had to be buried, and with no outside witnesses. It must be buried so deep that its ghost would never walk. The tongues of these three people must be silenced forever.

The minister had much at stake. Let him, I recommended, pledge himself in the presence of the other two that the past was buried and that, in the future,

his relationship with this girl, if their paths were ever to recross, would be above reproach. In response to this pledge on his part, both the man and the woman must give their word that, unmindful of the minister himself, but in the interest of the cause which he represented, their lips would remain sealed. At the termination of this conference in the study and, upon the departure of the man and the woman, another meeting was necessary.

You will recall the fact that in the latter part of this woman's letter, she said, "I have done lots of thinking since last Saturday, and the actions of the minister have certainly shaken my faith in him. I admit that, in contrast, the actions of my pastor have made my friend stand head and shoulders over the preacher."

But despite the fact of the lowered condition of the pastor in the girl's estimation, marriage with the man, enhanced by contrast, was out of the question right then, because he had demanded her in exchange for his silence. If then she married this man, in order to satisfy that demand, can you not see that her life would have to be absolutely unblemished, and, in addition to her being perfection personified, she would be compelled to humor her husband's every whim in order to avoid, in a moment of anger at some future date, his resurrecting this bit of scandal and wreaking a belated vengeance?

No marriage could ever succeed if consummated to satisfy a threat. But, remember, we buried that threat

in the pastor's study along with other selfish ambitions.

So, my suggestion was that letting bygones be bygones, this man and woman should enter into an agreement with each other that they start from scratch and, letting bygones be bygones, determine whether or not each found in the other harmoniously reciprocal reactions which would seem to indicate a compatible marriage that, after a period of probation, then, and then only, should the altar be approached and the final solution of this problem be reached.

Fortunately, all three of the parties involved heard my broadcast and accepted in the constructive spirit in which it was given both the criticism and advice which I offered. The advice was followed. Three months later the pastor resigned and accepted a call in a mid-western city and I have had several nice letters from him since we became acquainted through this peculiar circumstance. A little more than seven months after this broadcast, I received the invitation to attend the wedding of the other two.

Evidently one more unusual problem had been brought to a successful solution.

HER SISTER'S BABY



## CHAPTER X

### HER SISTER'S BABY

HERE is a problem, the ultimate solution of which pleased me as much as any I have ever engineered in my broadcasting experience:

#### DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

Four years ago my mother and father were killed in an accident. Father was killed outright, but mother regained consciousness for a brief spell. She realized, however, she was doomed to go. There were just two of us girls. At that time, I was eighteen and my sister just turned fifteen. My mother exacted from me a death-bed promise that I would take her place as mother to my younger sister and shield and protect her as any mother should.

This duty I tried to discharge, although sister, lovable little girl that she was, had been somewhat willful and, like most girls, was pleasure-loving.

When sis was only sixteen, it was necessary for me to go away with her to hide her shame from the citizens of our little town. To this day none of them have learned anything about that tragic experience. In the institution where her baby was born, sister died. Immediately I adopted the little one as my own. Being single, I could not bring it home with me. For the reason that I did not want any disgrace attached to the

memory of my dead sister, I put the baby in the hands of a woman who was recommended to me and who has been goodness itself to the child. I have called her regularly long distance, have kept in constant touch with her by mail, sending her money from the insurance which I receive. That baby, as you can well understand, Voice of Experience, is very, very dear to me.

Seven months ago I married a fine young chap I not only loved, but almost worshipped. Three weeks ago a letter came for me from the woman who is caring for the baby, telling me of the child's illness. In the letter she referred to the child as my baby.

Now my husband was at work when this letter came in the morning mail, so I called him up and told him it was necessary for me to rush to the bedside of my niece. It is my niece by rights. He expressed sincere sympathy and told me to go ahead, that he'd get along till I got back.

In my anxiety to get away, I forgot the letter. I had left it on the bureau in our bedroom. Fortunately, the baby was better when I arrived and the next day I called my husband by telephone to tell him I would be home the following day.

I got no answer. I repeated my calls, but still I received no reply. So I rushed home with all speed.

When I unlocked the house and went in, I found our bedroom in complete disorder. His things were gone. On the bureau was lying the letter from this woman referring to "my baby." By its side there was a note in my husband's handwriting. It said:

"This shock is more than I can bear. You cannot blame me for leaving you. You know my views and the impossibility of my forgiving you. Your duty lies with your child. Under the circumstances, you and I have nothing to discuss. Goodbye."

Oh, Voice of Experience, I did not sleep a wink that whole night. I cried for hours. The next day I called him up where he works and he refused to talk to me. I have tried to see him. I wrote him the whole, pitiful story, even though I felt I was terribly guilty in revealing the shame of my sister. I felt I had to do this in self-defense. My letter was mailed back to me by him unopened. Then I sent him a registered letter. It, too, was returned.

Please, Voice of Experience, he used to listen regularly with me to your night broadcasts and I know of no other way, without letting others know about my sister, to give him the true facts in the case.

You see, I can prove at the hospital that I am innocent, but I would only want to prove that innocence just to him. I don't want others to know about my sister. I don't blame him, believing as he does that I am guilty. But please, Voice of Experience, won't you help me to get back what is rightfully mine? I want him and I know that he needs me. So, if you would just tell him in your broadcast that, if he will give me a chance to explain, I know everything will be all right. We were so happy before this happened. We can be happy again.

Remember, he doesn't hear your daytime broadcasts,



so please answer Tuesday night and I will pray and pray that he will be listening.

I am sending this registered special delivery so as to make sure you get it quicker. You have done so much for others. Won't you do this for me?

BROKEN-HEARTED.

P.S.—I might tell you in confidence that his name is “—.” I have learned that he is boarding at the following address: —. I tell you this in case you want to write to him.

My answer to this writer, as transcribed by my stenotypist, reads:

Bless your little heart, friend, of course I am glad to help you; but there are one or two things I want to say to you before I talk to your husband.

In the first place, may I congratulate you upon an unshaken faith in the efficacy of prayer when certainly you have every reason to believe yourself the victim of providential injustice?

After having done all that you have done for your sister and for her baby, through that dominant mother-love you have expressed, to incur the loss of your husband certainly would be enough to justify most people in the complete loss of faith. So, once again, I commend you.

I am so glad that you gave me your husband's address, for it provided me a chance to send him a wire and urge him to listen to this broadcast. I have reason to believe he is listening right now (that is, unless

he has heard enough already to make him grab his hat and start on the run to make amends to you).

In the event he is still listening, may I say to that husband: My boy, if after the recital you have just heard of the incidents leading up to your misunderstanding and your sudden exit, you do not rush home with all speed, take that little woman in your arms and then, metaphorically, get down on your knees and thank God for giving you a one hundred per cent woman for a wife, then I am frank to tell you that you don't deserve her.

I am not condemning you for running away; but I certainly would condemn you now if you stay away; and rather than detain you, let me just say: Get going and God bless you both.

Just a minute before you go! I am mighty glad to have used a part of my broadcast in an attempt to reunite you two. May I make one further suggestion?

Now that you know about the baby and you know of the mother-love that your wife has for it, don't you think the logical thing to do would be to bring that child into her home at once—just as a little Christmas gift to her?

I don't think you could buy anything for her that would please her more. It is just a suggestion; but I hope you act on it.

And, don't forget, I am anxious to receive a letter from you two after your reunion.

Two days later, I received another special delivery,

registered letter; but this time from the husband. A beautiful postscript of thanks was included from the wife. The husband's letter was characteristically brief. It told simply how he had raced back home immediately after my broadcast, what a happy reunion had followed, and closed by saying that they were on the Sunday following going after the baby. He concluded with the remark that his Christmas present to her would be the baby's adoption as his own.

About ten days afterward, I was the recipient of a kodak picture of this husband, wife and baby, taken in front of their little cottage. On the back of the picture there was the following inscription:

“With undying gratitude to the man who made this picture possible.”

Needless to say, that little picture is filed among my treasured souvenirs.

A TRAGIC ANNIVERSARY



## CHAPTER XI

### A TRAGIC ANNIVERSARY

ALMOST all boys and girls, as they reach their late teens, look forward to their twenty-first birthday with great anticipation. I doubt if any one of my readers, who has attained his majority, was called upon to anticipate this eventful day with the mingled feelings which were the lot of the young girl who wrote me the following unusual letter:

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

TWO weeks from today will be my birthday and on that day I will have reached my majority of twenty-one years. Instead, however, of being a happy occasion, it will be the most tragic birthday a girl could possibly expect to spend. On that day, my foster-father is going to pay the supreme penalty to the State for his crime. May I share my story with you? There is no one else to whom I can go. Then I ask your advice at your earliest opportunity. I am sending this special delivery because time is short.

When I was a tiny babe, my mother left me with my foster-father's mother and went away. I have never seen my mother to this day; that is, not to know that she was my mother. I grew up in the home of his mother. He provided liberally for my education, even sending me to an exclusive girls' school after I had

finished high school. I never knew much about dad's business although I did hear rumors from time to time that he got his money from shady operations and was connected with gamblers. When I confronted him with this information, however, he laughed it off and said it came from some of his enemies and that they were trying to do him harm. He was so good to me in every way that I believe if I had known the whole truth about him all along, it could never have made any difference in my affection for him. He was so really interested in making a lady out of me, as he called it, and in wanting me to have the best of companions.

A little over a year now, I have been engaged to be married to a fine, young professional man who has a brilliant future before him. He comes from a fine family and I enjoy the close association with his two sisters who have made me one of them. I think no girl could be more boundlessly happy than when he and I, together, announced our engagement at a dinner in their home.

And then the blow came! I picked up the morning newspaper one day and there was a picture of my foster-father and headlines fairly screaming at me that he was accused of murder. I forgot everything except that he needed me. I rushed to him in a taxicab. He was furious with me for having come and said that all he had done for me and spent on me had been given because he wanted me to be somebody and that nobody would understand, least of all the people that were to be my new family, if they learned that he was my father.

That was the only time I have ever seen tears in his

eyes. He begged me, when in company, just to forget that he existed, but when alone always to think kindly of him and to know that his chief aim was to do something for me. He made me promise not to let anyone know of our connection.

With a broken heart, I slipped away. Although I have followed his case closely, I have kept my promise and have never seen him since. I am still living with his mother, but she has re-married, so her name is not the same as his and, as far as I know, no one has a suspicion that I bear any relationship to him.

Can you understand how hard this has been for me, just to sit idly by and watch each day bring him nearer to his final reckoning? When I learned that they had chosen my birthday for dad to pay the supreme penalty, I fainted.

My fiancé senses that there is something wrong and has advised me to go and see a doctor, because he says I am losing my pep. But I have tried to act gay and light-hearted around him in order to allay his suspicions. I am afraid at times I have not been as successful as I'd like to have been. I haven't seen him quite as often as usual, but it is so hard to have to play a game.

You see, I am torn between love and duty and that is the reason I have written you this long letter. I wanted you to understand everything and be able to advise me. I know there is nothing I can do to save Dad, but I know they will dispose of his body in Potter's Field and I can't stand the thought of remaining silent and allowing the man that has done so much for me to



come to such an end. His stepfather is not in sympathy and has kept his own mother's lips sealed to avoid scandal. I guess I am the only one to claim his body and, probably, that is what I should do.

But, oh, Voice of Experience, it would almost kill me to give up my fiancé, and I know if I do my duty to my Dad, it would not be a matter of giving my fiancé up, but of him and his family giving me up.

What am I to do? Please advise me soon as I want to do what is right and time is short. God help you to answer me correctly. I am sending my name and giving you my address, because somehow I trust you implicitly and believe that you will show me just what to do. I promise to follow your advice.

(And then the girl's signature and address)

In all probability many of my readers heard my reply to this pitiful appeal, which was as follows:

I wonder if my audience realizes how grave a responsibility I attempt to discharge when letters such as I have just read come to me, not occasionally, but daily; no, not the same problem, but, nevertheless, issues just as grave for the individual who submits them as is the terrible dilemma from which this girl has asked me to help her to extricate herself.

Before answering her, I want to say, "Amen!", to the short petition she made when she said, "God help you, Voice of Experience, to answer me correctly."

My sincere compliments to you, little lady, for your

willingness even in your hour of anticipated bereavement to set aside your personal desires in your zeal to do your duty by your foster-father. Your attitude, I believe, will make it simple for me to help you. Let us see then for just a moment what kind of help is going to serve all purposes best.

Suppose that you allow your sense of duty to cause you to turn your back on the wonderful future that lies just ahead of you in order that you may transfer from one point to another the final resting place of the man to whom you are indebted. That body of his, which you would save from Potter's Field, will no longer be your Dad. It will be merely the discarded physical dwelling place in which he resided during his earthly experience. That tenement will have no feeling; and, like all others, will eventually return to its elemental constituencies, no matter whether in Potter's Field or enshrined in a mausoleum. In other words, you would allow your sense of duty to wreck the happiness of two or more living human beings in order that you might openly pay your respects to one who could in no wise benefit from your action.

I might add that, as far as I have been able to afford it, I have helped to keep indigent dead out of Potter's Field, but solely because of the effect on the morale of those left behind. For that reason, I am deeply interested in helping you, too. I realize the danger of a false sense of guilt, with the attendant remorse which might haunt you throughout your life, were you to literally follow your father's instructions and ignore his passing entirely.

Now, we'll agree that you are the only one that would

claim his body and, thereby, prevent it from going to Potter's Field. But, do you not see that this act of seeming duty, the publicity which would be attendant upon your action, would not only acquaint your intended and his family, but the whole world, of your relationship to this man? While there are millions of fine folks in this old universe, there are a lot of killjoys who have a happy faculty of bobbing up at the wrong time and, through malicious gossip, destroying the happiness of others in whom they have no reason whatsoever to have any interest.

Now, my little friend, arrangements can be made for a proper burial of your father without your personally claiming his body. If you will go to your minister, or rabbi, or priest, as the case may be, confide your story in him, just as you have in me, he can make all the necessary arrangements without disclosing your identity or your interest and, thereby, accomplish just as much as you would if you were to jeopardize your future through publicly claiming your father's body.

If you feel reticent about going to your spiritual adviser, you have already come to me with your problem, and I shall be glad to serve you in this capacity, too. If you wish this, just write me another special delivery letter at once and advise me that this is your wish. I will take care of the burial for you—keeping your secret inviolate, and then, after this service is done for you, let me ask that you remember an old adage that might be paraphrased something like this: "There is so much of bad in the best of us, and so much of good in the worst

of us, that it little behooves any of us to think ill of the rest of us."

Although your foster-father may have been a racketeer in the eyes of the world, I can understand that he has proven himself an Angel of Mercy to you. I commend rather than censor you for your feeling of duty and obligation to his memory. But, do you not see that he showed something of the best side of him in doing all he could, as he claimed, to make a "lady" out of you—and from the tone of your letter, I think he has succeeded. Then don't spoil things now. I will be glad to act as your intermediary in this case. But I plead with you, do not allow a false sense of guilt and remorse, in not having openly made known your relationship to this man, to prey on your mind. Dwell, rather, on the thought that you are accomplishing exactly what he had hoped; and, through you, his ambitions will be realized only if you attain that place in society which he dreamed would be yours some day.

See your fiancé more often. Enter into the buoyancy and spirit of the social life in which he is introducing you. Remember that grief over an incident that lies in the past, no matter how tragic the incident may have been, is neither conducive to present peace of mind nor to future happiness.

May I thank you again for placing your confidence in me and, particularly, for your pledge to follow my advice? I believe I have advised wisely. So I shall look forward to another letter from you immediately, and I assure you that, as your representative, I will do

for the memory of your father all that you could do personally, thereby saving you any stigma in the performance of your duty.

Let me wish for you, then, after your hour of sorrow has passed, a lifetime of happiness, health and prosperity, as a monument to one whom the world discountenanced as a racketeer and made to pay the price of his folly, but who to you was more than just a foster-father.

Two days after I answered this girl on my Monday evening broadcast I received a beautiful letter from her. I wish to quote two paragraphs:

Oh, Voice of Experience, although I listened to your answer to my letter with the tears streaming down my face and my whole body tense because of my mental agony, you will never know just what your reply has done for me. I confess I have not prayed very often; but as soon as you had finished, I knelt right down by my radio and thanked God for your friendship and what it meant to me. I asked him to bless you as you try to help others. Somehow, I think that God will answer that prayer, not because I deserve it, but because you do.

You suggested that I get in touch with my rabbi, priest, or minister. While I happen to have been raised in a Protestant family, honestly, I would not want to talk to our preacher about this and, certainly, I could not ask him to claim Daddy's body for me. So, I am going to take you at your word and impose further on you by asking that you do this for me. Please, as soon

as you have made the final arrangements, won't you just wire me, "Everything O.K.," and I will know that you have done all that I could have and I will feel so much easier. Again, God bless you for doing for me what I could not ask anyone else in the world to do.

Suffice it to say that full arrangements were made in accordance with her instructions, which I have deleted. The body was reclaimed and buried and a third letter received two weeks after my broadcast. It is now tucked away in my files—mute evidence that one more tragic problem has been brought to a most successful conclusion.



COINCIDENCE OR GOD?





## CHAPTER XII

### COINCIDENCE OR GOD?

THE most talked-of case of the thousands that we have helped in our charitable department is No. H5-230.

When the big bags of mail arrive each day, they are taken immediately to the opening room, where bonded men slit them, open them and catalogue them by departments—those simply involving problems going to the reading department; those asking for aid of one kind or another, to the investigation department; those requesting pamphlets or ordering books, to the filling department. Runners call for these letters and deliver them to the different department heads.

Early in March, 1933, one Friday evening, one of these runners picked up a basket of problems and started for the reading room. For some unaccountable reason, one letter slipped out of the basket and fell to the floor in the hallway. A worker in the bookkeeping department happened to be passing, saw the letter, picked it up and took it in to one of my private secretaries.

The latter read the letter and, because it involved death, brought it immediately to my desk. Certainly it seems that Providence must have had a hand in that letter becoming disengaged from the basket in which it would naturally have been conveyed to the readers, who at that time were several days behind with the

mail. Hence, in the ordinary course of events, this letter would not have reached my desk for several days. Just how disastrous this would have been you will shortly understand.

The letter itself was not unlike many others that we receive, because it opened by saying:

DEAR FRIEND:

Please excuse my writing, as I have lost my right arm and have undergone forty-one major operations, so I am not in the best of health.

I lost my father in July, 1929, and then my husband in October, 1930, and now my mother is lying in Kings County Morgue with no prospect of burial because three of the ten days allotted to claim her body have gone by and I have been unable to raise any money.

I have two brothers, but one is in jail and the other brother is a heavy drinker. I stay away from him because he acts crazy toward me when he gets drunk. He still suffers from shell shock after the World War.

I have a sister in a mental institution, the same one where my father died.

Tomorrow my landlord is going to put me out, because I am behind with my rent. I have no friends and nowhere to go.

For God's sake can you do something for me and please, if at all possible, take care of the burial of my mother. I don't want her to have to go to Potter's Field.

(Then the writer's signature and address)

Upon reading the letter, I buzzed for Captain Hodgkins, head of our Investigating Bureau, handed him the letter and asked him to get on the case the first thing the next morning, as it was then past closing time. Just as he was leaving my private office, I called him back. Why, I don't know. I said, "Captain Hodgkins, I wish you'd investigate that case tonight." And he replied that he would start out on it at once. Then, as an afterthought, he said, "I think I'll take Lieutenant Peglow with me."

In this it seemed that Providence had a hand, for Captain Hodgkins has always worked alone and this was the first and only time that he ever took one of his lieutenants with him on the investigation of a charity case.

As Captain Hodgkins and his lieutenant reached the block in which the address of this woman was located, they heard a scream and, turning in the direction from which it came, they realized it was coming from the very house for which they were bound.

They leaped up the front steps, opened the door into the hallway and were greeted with another scream coming from a room situated to their left. As they opened the door, a strange sight greeted them. A woman, almost completely nude, with her remaining undergarments torn to rags, was lying on the floor. Pinned helplessly against the wall, a rookie cop was held in a jiu-jitsu grip by a man much bigger than he, in whose other hand was raised a dirk.

In less time than it takes to recount it, Lieutenant Peglow, a big man himself, threw himself upon the officer's assailant and, with the help of Captain Hodgkins, relieved him of his weapon and also released the policeman.

Captain Hodgkins then learned from the officer that, as he was patrolling his beat, he heard a woman's scream, and that when he entered the place, he neglected to draw his gun. Before he realized what had happened, he was pinned to the wall by this maniac, who, when the officer entered the room, was attempting to ravish the body of this one-armed woman who was lying on the floor.

This fiend proved to be the woman's brother, who was immediately placed under arrest and has since been committed to an asylum.

According to Captain Hodgkins' report, unless he and the lieutenant had arrived just when they did, in all probability this officer would have lost his life. What vengeance this mentally unbalanced giant would have wreaked on his helpless sister is unknown. Certainly, however, in the light of the foregoing evidence, it would seem to me that there must have been some guiding influence somewhere at work in this case to have caused the letter to have become detached from its regular routine journey, to have influenced me in sending an investigator after hours and for the investigator to have taken an assistant for the first time since the department was started.

“Simply coincidental,” you say? Then you are welcome to your opinion. But I still reserve the right to mine.

It may interest some to know that we took care of the burial of the mother, transferred this sick woman to a hospital and have since helped her to become self-sustaining.

Although we have in our investigation files several thousand cases which the captain and his lieutenants have handled, case H5-230, with its startling chain of events, continues to be the most discussed charity case that has ever been handled by our office.



THE FAMILY FIGHT—WHENCE? WHITHER?





## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FAMILY FIGHT—WHENCE? WHITHER?

HAVE you ever lived in a small town or in a suburban district and been given the opportunity of listening in on a regular, old-fashioned family fight? Well, here is one of the best descriptions of one of these embroglios that has ever reached my desk.

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

I am 24, happily married, and have a little girl four years old. Three weeks ago my husband's brother with his wife and child moved to our little city. Before either of our children were born we all lived in another town but didn't get along so very good. When they moved here we decided to let bygones be bygones and Joe and I took the baby over to see them. I should have told you that their child is a boy just a year older than our girl.

We hadn't been in their house a half-hour, just sitting and talking over old times, with the children playing on the floor in front of us, when—well, you know how children are. My little girl playfully got hold of the boy's ear, like she often does her dog and wanted to lead him around the room. Instead of entering into the spirit of play like you'd expect a cousin to do, he jumped up, put his hands against her chest and gave her a vicious shove. She ended by taking an awful bump on the back of her head on the hardwood floor.

Like a flash my husband jumped up, gave his nephew a little slap and told him that that was no way to play with his little cousin.

The minute my husband touched his nephew, his own brother, with a curse, yelled, "You will hit my boy, will you?" Then he punched my husband in the back of his head with his fist.

Naturally, my husband retaliated. Then my sister-in-law picked up a vase and started to butt in. I don't know how I got sucked into the fracas, but I did and the net result is that my husband has a terrible black eye, my face is all scratched up and right then and there hubby and I picked up our baby and we came home.

None of us have spoken since but the trouble is that in my hurry to get away I left my little beaded hand-bag on their davenport. They haven't even offered to return it. I wouldn't mind the loss of the bag, except that it had a ten-dollar bill and some change in it and in these times ten dollars is ten dollars. My husband refuses to go after it. I know they won't send it back and I certainly would be afraid to go after it myself.

Would I be within my rights to ask a police officer to go over and demand my property, or can you tell me a better way by which I can recover my ten dollars?

This problem may sound foolish to you, but if you knew how badly we need this money, you'd realize how urgent it is.

"A VICTIM OF IN-LAWS."

(Answer)

No, my friend, I don't consider this a foolish problem, but in my opinion the problem does not revolve around the recovery of your ten dollars. Let's review this situation for a second.

The two children are playing on the floor and the parents are reviewing old times. You say that your little daughter "playfully" grabbed the little boy by the ear and started to lead him around the floor. Then you say the boy jumped up. So evidently the boy was down when your daughter started to walk off with his ear.

Have you ever had your ear pulled? Then you must realize that this boy was exercising a normal instinct when he attempted a defense against what he probably thought was likely to end in the loss of an ear.

You say that he shoved your little daughter half-way across the room. Must have been a mighty powerful little boy. Now, at this juncture your husband gave the boy a little slap of admonishment, but your husband's brother entered ferociously into the combat. Your sister-in-law, armed with a vase, adds to the general confusion. But you don't know how you were sucked into the *mêlée*.

I wonder if you see what I am driving at? In your description of each participant you have spoken of the "playfulness" of your daughter, the "gentleness" of your husband, the unwilling "victimizing" of yourself. But in describing the combatants, the boy was "fero-

cious"; his father "struck from behind," and the other woman launched herself into the fray "fully armed."

Then you and yours beat a hasty retreat and now in the cold, grey dawn of the morning after, while you are nursing your scratches, your husband a black eye and your little daughter a welt on the head (you did not refer to any damages the other family might have sustained), your chief concern is the recovery of the ten dollars and the few cents left behind when you left in such a hurry.

And we call ourselves civilized!

No, my friend, your great problem does not lie in the recovery of your ten dollars but, rather, in the fact that neither you nor your husband nor the in-laws are emotionally grown-up. In this you are by no means unique. Many a family has been split wide open because a little girl pulled a little boy's ear or a little boy stuck his finger in a little girl's eye. Children are excusable, you know, for expressing anger or wrath by a show of physical violence, but as we mature to the point where we are able to establish a sense of values, then certainly are we inexcusable for utilizing animalistic methods for taking out a selfish revenge.

What your family needs—yes, what the world needs—is emotional development. Less than twenty years ago, my friend, a world war was started on almost as flimsy a pretext as the battle you just described between you and your in-laws.

Your whole letter is a recitation of the innocence of your family and the guilt of all opponents, even though

each impetus, with perhaps your own exception, came from your side of the house. You show utter incapability or unwillingness to accept any responsibility.

How many of us there are who are so emotionally infantile that we are unable to see our own faults or those of our own family, but are quick to discern the slightest infraction on the part of any others. Your letter portrays problems involving malice, hatred, animism, disrupted family relations, selfishness and other very real problems; not to forget a black eye. Yet, your whole concern centralizes in the return of a ten-dollar bill and a few pennies.

Do you see what I am trying to get at? If you showed anxiety about the solving of the real problems contained in your letter and, like the adult that you are, went about a mature way of righting the wrongs which you have portrayed, don't you see that the return of the ten dollars would follow as a matter of course? If you and your husband will retrace your steps, talk things over with the other adults concerned, admit that you acted like children, re-establish your family ties, there is no question in my mind but what the ten dollars will take care of themselves.

I haven't meant to be harsh; but sometimes it is necessary for us to see things in their true light before even a minor problem can be brought to a successful conclusion. I frankly admit that I am far more concerned about the re-establishment of amicable relations between you two families and a better example being set for these two children than I am for the monetary interests involved.

Let me then suggest that you set out immediately in the solution of these real problems and see what happens to the inconsequential one which actuated your writing me as you did in the first place.

Ten days later I received another letter from this woman thanking me for the "mental whipping" which I had administered, but saying that she and her husband in a spirit of friendliness had acted upon my suggestion, had left their little daughter with a neighbor and had gone to visit these in-laws. A most amicable reconciliation took place, and, as I had predicted, the ten dollars and the loose change were returned to the anxious owner. I was glad to note in her letter that the return of the money occupied only a parenthetical position, but that she was greatly pleased over the return of harmony between the two families.

LISTENING IN BESIDE A COFFIN





## CHAPTER XIV

### LISTENING IN BESIDE A COFFIN

UNLESS you have lost all veneration for age and every vestige of reverence for your own mother and father, I think you will find in the following problem, which I handled on Tuesday, February 27, 1934, one of the most pathetic stories that you have ever read. But let the letter from this octogenarian speak for itself:

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

I have just finished listening to your evening broadcast and I doubt if any listener in your vast audience tonight listened with heavier heart or under stranger surroundings than I.

Less than a month ago, my wife, aged eighty-three, and I, eighty-five, were thrilled when you congratulated us on your noon broadcast on our fifty-eighth wedding anniversary. Both of us always listened to your broadcasts. But, day before yesterday, just twenty minutes after you had finished, my wife, who had been confined to her bed for several weeks, breathed her last. Her spirit passed out into that Great Beyond to which you so confidently refer as "our real home."

As I write this letter, all that is left of the woman God gave me for fifty-eight years of happy marriage, lies in her casket just a few feet from me across the room. And it is not strange, Voice of Experience, that I should be alone with my dead. We have been alone most of

our married life. In fact, I married her against the wishes of her parents and of mine also and we started our married life together alone and friendless.

Four children came to bless our union, one of which died shortly after birth. The longer wife and I lived together, the closer we grew. But, somehow, our children just didn't seem to belong in our household, because very early in life, all three of them showed wilfulness and independence. They all married young and, for that matter, married well.

Less than two hours after she died, I sent telegrams to each of the three of them. That night the daughter called me long distance and, almost like a stranger, commiserated me for my loss.

Why, Voice of Experience, I could hardly believe my ears that a daughter would take so lightly the loss of her own mother. She expressed her apologies and said that she was wiring flowers.

Both of my sons wired me and both wires expressed regrets. This means that not one of the three, for whom my wife would have lain down her life, has enough gratitude or affection to lay aside their daily tasks and pay their final respects to their dead mother.

I write you these things as I keep my lonely vigil here with my dead, because, Voice of Experience, without your realizing it, you have become, especially to my wife, a household institution. Never once would she miss one of your broadcasts and, each time as you finished, she would breathe an audible prayer, "God bless our friend, the Voice."

Therefore, I don't feel that I am writing to a stranger, but rather to one who has come to be closer to us than our own children. And so, son, let me explain my reason for taking all of your time in presenting my problem to you.

Even though I am old enough to be your father (and envied your father at Christmas time as you talked so affectionately to him), I have taken to heart many lessons that you have offered to your younger listeners, not the least of which was your constant admonition, "Don't be a quitter!"

After receiving the third message from our children, I took the two wires in my hand and the cold message from my daughter in my heart, and I knelt down beside the casket and asked God to forgive these two thoughtless sons and that inconsiderate daughter.

Before I realized what I was doing, I told God that, now that she was gone, there was nothing in life worth living for. So, I asked Him if it was His will to speedily reunite me with her on the other side.

Tomorrow I lay her to rest alone. But, oh, the emptiness of this house to which I must return! The more I think of it, the more abhorrent life here without her becomes. I have even considered ending it all before she is laid to rest, for then we could be buried together. But I know that's cowardly and, as you have said, is taking into human hands the rights of God.

However, Voice of Experience, I have another plan which, maybe, you will frown on, but I just can't bear the thought of continuing here alone.

I know that resistance at my age is not very strong at best and, if I just refrain from both eating and drinking and, perhaps, expose myself to the elements in this cold weather, it would be but a short time until Nature would take her course and the spark of life, which is only a flicker, would just naturally die out. Then I would be reunited with my darling. In this way, I would not have to resort to self-destruction.

My children don't need me—in fact, are not even interested in my existence. They know that I have more than enough saved by to take care of all earthly needs. So my passing, like that of my wife, would go practically unnoticed.

Certainly a just God would not condemn me nor punish me for refusing to continue life under these conditions. Do you think that He would?

I will post this special delivery early tomorrow. It should reach you Friday. I have so much confidence in your judgment and your friendship, that I pledge you, if you will answer me immediately, to follow your instructions. I feel better even for having written this letter and now look forward with anticipation to receiving your answer.

Yours is the only broadcast I have listened to since wife passed away, and I tuned you in tonight in my loneliness, because I know that, could she have spoken, she would have urged me to do so. You see, you are like home folks and so, my boy, since her lips are sealed and it is impossible for her to offer the little prayer with which she followed each of your broadcasts, let me say for her and for myself, "God bless you, Voice of

Experience." And I am just selfish enough to add, "God guide you in your reply to me."

(And then the man's signature and address)

The air-waves carried this, my answer, to the writer of the foregoing letter:

Immediately upon receipt of your letter, my octogenarian friend, I wired you at considerable length, offering you my sincere sympathy in your loss and urging you not to carry out your plan until I had had the opportunity of talking to you tonight. I also asked you for the privilege (which you have granted me), of reading your letter without its signature on this broadcast, because that letter is so human.

First, let me say that, even in your hour of sadness and loneliness there is much to be thankful for. After all, very few men, comparatively speaking, reach the ripe old age of eighty-five and retain the mental sparkle and alertness that your letter indicates you possess. Still fewer men can look back over fifty-eight years of married harmony and companionship with a dear mate such as you have just lost. Even though these things are in retrospect, nevertheless, they warrant thanksgiving.

I can understand your feeling of sheer loneliness and of "hurt" for the strange action of your children. But, remember, you, yourself, admit that they showed self-confidence and independence very early in life and have continued to prove themselves negligent and unreciprocal to the affections that their mother had showered on

them. The one accord, then, with which they have made excuses should not have come as a shock to you, but merely as substantiation of the fact that they have been completely weaned away from the family nest.

I know that the prospect of the days ahead looks black and loneliness is not a very pleasant thing to contemplate. I congratulate you, however, upon your refusal to entertain the temptation to end it all so that you might immediately join your beloved on the other side. But let us seriously consider the alternate plan to which you refer.

You don't want to take your own life, so you have decided to abstain from the food and water required for maintaining it. May I remind you that a sin of omission is just as grievous as a sin of commission, and that, if you refuse to eat and drink to the point of starving or famishing yourself, you will be just as guilty of suicide as though you deliberately ended that life with your own hand? While there is considerable difference in the method, the result is the same, and I firmly believe would meet with the same punishment, whatever that punishment might be.

I appreciate the honor you did me in allowing me to come in last Tuesday night and keep watch with you for fifteen minutes and break the silence of that death chamber. But let me ask you this question:

Do you think your wife, whose lips you refer to as sealed, were she able to speak to you, would put her approval on the plans you have made for yourself? Certainly not. Then here is my suggestion:

I am quite familiar with the city in which you live. I have a host of friends there who have written me letters; in fact, some from your immediate vicinity. I know a number of shut-ins who are just as lonely as you contemplate being, and they do not live far removed from you.

I have already instructed one of my secretaries to make a list of a few of these names and send them to you. I want you to go and make a friendly call on each one of these. Tell them that I asked you to come and see them. You say that you have more than you can possibly use of worldly goods. Well, many of these friends of mine haven't. So, when you make these visits, just look around you and see if you can't find something that is needed to help make life a little less burdensome to these shut-ins. Then go and make your purchases and, upon a second trip, present what you have bought.

If you will follow this plan for a few days, you will wonder what has happened to your loneliness and will be surprised, even at eighty-five, just how much life can hold in store.

You and your wife devoted yourselves in service to each other. Now that your avenue of service is suddenly taken away, instead of ceasing to serve, just create another avenue of service, and I know you will be amply repaid in that satisfaction and joy that comes from interesting one's self in the welfare of his fellow-man.

You promised me that you would follow my advice. I am humbly grateful for that confidence. I expect



you to keep faith with me. Then, won't you write me and let me know just how the plan works out?

On behalf of my audience, I want to thank you for having permitted me to read your very interesting letter on this broadcast.

The morning following this broadcast, I received a wire from the undertaker who had administered the last rites to this old man's wife. He informed me that my advice, sound as it was, was no longer needed. Several hours before a mere "Voice of Experience" attempted to console and advise, the old man's prayer had been answered by a Higher Power and his spirit had taken flight to join that of his mate.

The doctors pronounced it heart failure. Some, however, will conclude that he died of a broken heart. I like to think that he had simply asked his Father for permission to come home and, with infinite mercy, his Father had granted his request.

FROM A WIND-SWEPT HALLWAY



## CHAPTER XV

### FROM A WIND-SWEPT HALLWAY

ONE evening in the fall of 1932, after an arduous day's work, I was sitting at my desk glancing at the headlines of the "bull-dog edition" of one of New York's newspapers. My eyes were attracted by this caption: "Unwed Mother Deserts Babe in Wind-swept Hallway."

The article which followed told how a little sixteen-year-old girl had become a mother, without the benefit of marriage, in a small wind-swept hallway in Brooklyn, and then fled into hiding. A short while later the baby was discovered and the mother traced to a back room in a near-by tenement. She was apprehended and immediately sent to a hospital in a critical condition in order that she might be recuperated to face the charge of desertion. She had refused to reveal the name of the man in question. She divulged only the fact that he was married. No good purpose, she maintained, could be served by incriminating him.

I read much between the lines of this brief article. The next morning I had my secretary check and find out into what court this girl would be brought. I learned the name of the judge before whom she was to appear for preliminary hearing.

I then wrote a letter to this judge, in which I explained that I did not want to be misunderstood and

that I would certainly do nothing knowingly to interfere with the wheels of justice, nor did I wish to constitute myself as an adviser to the judge in the case.

I explained, however, that because of the girl's poverty, I realized that she would be represented by a court-appointed, young lawyer, who, in all probability, would know nothing of the unusual circumstances through which a woman, particularly an inexperienced, young woman, must go during the hours of motherhood. I told the judge of some of the mental hallucinations that visit a woman at this critical period. I stated that, in my opinion, this girl had not been guilty of wilfully deserting her babe, but had been completely victimized by fear. This fear, and not the desire to desert her offspring, had caused her to leave the child in this hallway. I further expressed the opinion that, if she were given a few days in the hospital before being arraigned, that she would come to herself, her fear would subside and the natural, maternal instincts would express themselves. I predicted that in less than ten days, if her baby were kept away from her, she would experience paroxysms of grief over its enforced absence and would be begging for a reunion.

This judge, like a number of others who have asked me to sit on the bench with them in the New York courts, saw the motive behind my letter and immediately sent his secretary over to see me and to extend an invitation for me to sit on the bench with him in the trial of this case.

I declined the invitation with regrets, but assured the judge of my appreciation of his willingness to cooperate and of his thanks for my having given him a new light on this case.

Just three days after my letter was written, this young mother experienced exactly the reactions I had predicted. Upon the order of the judge, she was given her baby. Instead of having to face an official trial, this humanitarian judge made possible a session in his judicial chambers. The outcome was that instead of this baby having to be placed among strangers and the mother obliged to do time in a detention home, a place was found where the girl could earn a livelihood for herself and babe.

The events of the year and a half which have elapsed since this article attracted my attention have fully compensated me for my interest in the case. I am sure, too, that this judge has been given cause to rejoice over the method he used in the disposition of this girl's case, who had been falsely charged with desertion, when in reality she was suffering from what physicians call *post-partum dementia*.



THAT SECRET FIRST LOVE





## CHAPTER XVI

### THAT SECRET FIRST LOVE

IN July, 1932, after having broadcast over fifty-four independent stations throughout the United States, I started my first series over a major Metropolitan New York station, when I launched my series of eight broadcasts each week over WOR.

In the early Fall of '32, I received a letter from a woman out on Long Island which, when read and answered on the air, caused more comment, I believe, than any other letter I had ever used up to that time. This letter read as follows:

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

I have been intrigued with the sane and conscientious way in which you have handled the many problems to which I have listened and, although I have never in my life written to any broadcaster, nor addressed a personal letter to a strange man, I have confidence that you will be able to advise me unbiasedly regarding a problem that has affected my whole life for the past twenty years. I will try to be as brief as I possibly can, but must give you sufficient details so that you can understand my present concern.

I was born and raised in the metropolis of one of our Southern states. My parents were religious people

who saw to it that I was regular in my attendance at Sunday School and Church.

When I was sixteen years old, I was permitted to have my first beau. He was the son of our former pastor, who had moved with his family to the West. This boy had returned to complete his senior year in a large military school located just outside our city limits. I was at that impressionable age, which I guess every girl passes through, and this boy appealed to me in a most unusual way. He was courtesy, gentility and gentlemanliness personified. He seemed to place me on a pedestal and worship at my shrine. Always displaying a type of thoughtfulness of my wishes, to which I had not been accustomed, surprising me continually with little acts of love and kindness, he was like a Prince Charming come to life. Needless to say, I fell deeply in love with him.

Immediately after his graduation, he returned to the West. Not even when he bade me a final good-bye, did he attempt to kiss me. Although we had seen each other several times a week during his year at the military school, not once had he resorted to the ordinary methods of love-making so common among young people. His love seemed the more genuine, the more real, because of its utter selflessness.

When he went away, the very light seemed to have gone out of my life and for weeks I went around as if in a daze. For a while we corresponded regularly and then his letters grew fewer and farther between. Although I wrote more frequently than he, I did not want to appear unladylike to him by continuing a cor-

respondence which seemed to grow less and less interesting to him. Finally, he went out of my life completely.

Eventually, I began going with other boys, but was not prepared for the treatment which they accorded me. Each boy that I met, in whom I felt that I could become interested, I found myself unconsciously comparing with my first boy-friend, to the detriment of the newcomer.

After reaching young womanhood, I took up nursing; completed my course and, naturally, met during my training and after graduation, many interesting and successful men. I went a few times with many different men, but not many times with any one. I guess I appeared as different to them as they did to me. Almost every one of them seemed interested in me because I was a woman, and none of them could understand my reticence about being "loved," as they called it.

For more than a year now, I have been going with a physician almost my own age and, for the first time, I have found a man that will regard my wishes and still remain interested in me. I have told him all about this girlhood romance of mine and how it has affected me in my attitude toward other men. He claims that marriage would change all of this and that he could make me forget this puppy-love affair of mine. I have been tempted to accept his proposal of marriage, and yet, I think too much of him to make him unhappy. I fear that the ghost of this early sweetheart might haunt our home if we were to attempt to establish one.

You may consider it ridiculous that I should have

remained in love all these years with the memory of a boy that had forgotten me. I admit that I have tried to cure myself, but, really, I have found it impossible. Perhaps marriage would do the trick, as my physician friend claims; but, naturally, he and I are the only ones that know about it and both of us would be biased in our opinions. I wish, therefore, to present the matter to you and ask for your advice. I really want to marry him and I know that he is deeply in love with me. I simply question my own ability to forget the past.

Forgive me for having written more lengthily than I should have and for adding another problem to your already great number; but I assure you that I will appreciate your helping me, if you can.

LENORA.

On the surface this problem presented nothing extremely unusual, but from my reply, I believe that my readers will understand just what a personal interest I took in answering this letter.

For more than a year, I have had a stenotypist take down verbatim everything that I have said on each broadcast. But this letter was answered some time before I had employed this method of transcribing my programs. I should like then to give you as nearly as I can from memory my reply to Lenora's letter.

Answer:

Lenora, I take it that you have sent me this letter,

confident that from my reply you will be able to make up your mind as to whether or not it is advisable for you to marry this young physician. I appreciate that confidence and I really want to give you intelligent advice.

You started your letter by saying that this is the first time you have ever written to a stranger, and immediately you launch into a description of your love affair with the son of your former minister, which took place when you were just sixteen years old. Do you mind if I take you back ten years before this boy became your sweetheart, to the time when his father was the Pastor of the church in which your father was a deacon, and recall to your mind an incident that happened one prayer-meeting night?

Do you remember the time when you were just six and this minister's son, the same age, and you two were sitting in prayer-meeting beside your older sister and her beau, and when prayer-meeting was over and your sister and her friend got up to go out, you turned to the minister's son and said:

"Why don't you take me home?" And, with a shy smile, he answered, "I would if my father would let me." Then you said, "Well, why don't you ask him?"

So, the minister's son trotted up to the pulpit, where his father and your father were engaged in conversation, and said, "Father, Lenora wants me to take her home and I want to. Do you care if I do?" Whereupon, the minister winked at your father and the two of them nodded their heads. So you had your first date with the minister's son that night.

Do you remember that there was a dark alley between your house and his, and after getting you home, he even confessed to you that he was afraid to pass that alley alone? So the two of you stood on your front porch until the preacher came by—and your boy-friend went home with his father.

Do you recall that occasion, Lenora? Well, it must be evident to you by this time that you haven't broken your rule of never writing to strange men, for certainly, if I had not known you quite well, I would not be in possession of this incident in your childhood.

Yes, and I also know the minister's son to whom you refer. I wonder if it has ever occurred to you that, whereas the men that you have met in the years since you have become mature, were very different from this boyhood sweetheart—that, if you were able to have known him personally since he has attained manhood, he might be very different, too, from what he was when you knew him as a boy? Remember, twenty-two years at that time in one's life brings about radical changes and I would almost guarantee you that if, without knowing his identity, you could meet this same boy as he is today and he were in a position to pay court to you, you would find yourself comparing this man with his former boyhood self and the result would be as unfavorable to the man as your other comparisons have been to other suitors.

I have said that I imagine this is true. Let me make that stronger. I know, because I have been closely associated with that preacher's son for many years and I assure you if you were to see him now, there would be

nothing to excite the romantic side of your nature and there would be probably many things in which your physician friend would profit by comparison.

You have told me very little about this physician, except to intimate the selflessness of his love, which certainly portrays much to me between the lines. I commend you for your desire to reciprocate fully by completely eliminating this romantic phantom that has dogged your footsteps for so long. I believe that you can do this and I, for one, should like to be able to help. So, I suggest, Lenora, that you accept his proposal for marriage, set the date of your wedding and notify me just when and where the ceremony is to take place.

You have not said anything of your father's death, but I happened to have heard of his passing some years ago. Consequently, I know that your father will not be present to give you away. I feel that it would be most befitting, in the event that you are willing to follow my advice, that you allow me this honor. Your confidence, as displayed by your letter, encourages me to believe that you would not think me presumptive in offering my services in that capacity.

But, I have still another reason for wishing to do the honors on that occasion. Lenora, you remember you spoke of this minister's son having kept company with you for a whole year and never having kissed you once? I know there's not another boy in the whole world as dumb as that minister's son; and, now that he has come to his senses, he would like to offer a belated kiss as he gives you into the arms of another man as his bride.



Yes, as you have undoubtedly conjectured, believe it or not, the anonymous individual to whom you have written your letter is none other than the bashful boy that paid court to you when you were sixteen years old!

Some of my close friends and associates know the sequel to this letter and its answer—how Lenora and her physician friend were both listening in and as soon as they had recovered from their dumbfoundedness, got in touch with "The Voice of Experience," met him in conference, set the date, and the writer enjoyed the honor which he had sought. From all indications, the year that this couple have spent happily together, indicates that, mayhap, Providence had a hand in guiding the pen of this spinster in submitting her problem to "The Voice of Experience."

NECESSITY—MOTHER OF INVENTION



## CHAPTER XVII

### NECESSITY—MOTHER OF INVENTION

To many of us who are inclined to bemoan any minor blow of Fate, not only should the following letter and its analysis prove interesting reading, but should convey a most practical lesson:

DEAR VOICE OF EXPERIENCE:

You have helped so many, I hope you will consider my case worthy, for I have no one to turn to for assistance. Please let me tell you just a little about myself so you will understand my situation clearly.

Thirteen years ago, when I was ten years of age, I was playing near a mine entrance and came in contact with a high tension wire. I was badly burned so that the doctors found it necessary to amputate both of my arms at the shoulders. After eight months of misery in the hospital, I finally pulled through.

At the age of fifteen, I was placed in an institution for crippled children where I received my education and it was here that I learned to overcome my handicap. I attended sewing classes and with the use of my toes I learned to embroider and to typewrite. I do practically everything for myself now except feeding myself. Finally the institution returned me to my home and, although my folks were not able to care for me properly, we got along fairly well for we lived on a farm

and raised our own vegetables and did without other things which we needed. My father and brother are coal miners and have been out of work for a long time, so I left home last August and came to this state to search for a position of some sort, but so far I have had no luck.

Although I have lost both of my arms, I often think how much worse it would have been if I had lost both of my eyes and could not see God's beautiful world. I still feel as though God had a place for me in the world and I still have the courage to go on through life with a smile, though at times I find it hard to do so.

The friends with whom I am living here are now finding it difficult to keep their own family and I do not want to be a burden to them, so I think it is my duty to return to my home in the South, but do not have the necessary fare.

Do you think, Voice of Experience, that I am asking too much to request you to advance the money for my trip home? When I become self-supporting I will gladly repay you so that you may help some other needy folks.

I hope you will be able to read this letter for I am writing to you with my teeth, so please overlook any mistakes. And may God bless you for the work that you are doing in helping others to find happiness.

Sincerely yours,

A FAITHFUL LISTENER.

Immediately upon receipt of this letter I had this case thoroughly investigated, received splendid reports on

this girl, both as to character and ambition, and counted myself fortunate in being able to finance her expense from Massachusetts back to her home in the South.

A listener living out in the state of Ohio felt compassion for this girl and wrote me, asking if I would entrust the girl's name and home address to her in order that she might extend her an invitation to be her house-guest for a few weeks. The writer also offered to pay the roundtrip transportation for this visit. I immediately got in touch with the little armless girl and told her of the offer and she was happy to accept.

Since returning to the air this Fall, I have received a nice letter, both from the hostess and the visitor, each highly eulogistic in her remarks about the other.

Another listener in the state of Pennsylvania, hearing this letter as I read it on one of my noon broadcasts, wrote me saying:

"I am unable to be of any financial assistance to you in helping the poor little girl who has lost both her arms to get back home. But it just happens that I have a number of very old books—some of them printed more than four hundred years ago on parchment, also bound in parchment. These books are written in Spanish and Italian and are historical and religious in character.

It seemed to me that, instead of allowing these books to lie on the shelves, if I put them in your hands you might be able to sell them to collectors of antiques and use the money which you would secure from the sales to buy this girl a set of artificial arms.

Would you be willing for me to forward you these books and, if so, would you defray the express charges because I really cannot afford this expenditure. Please let me help you to help this girl.

(And the name and address of the writer)

I took advantage of this offer and in due time the books arrived. The day after they reached me, I received a letter from the Library of Congress, saying they had heard me mention these unusual antique books on my broadcast. They requested me to send them immediately full data, including titles, publishers, authors, etc., and that in the event any of the volumes that were being sent me were not included in the Congressional Library, they would be glad to aid me in this cause by purchasing those books which they lacked.

After some correspondence, a request was made that I send certain of these books to the Congressional Library; and even as I pen these lines, there lies on my desk a sizeable check representing the purchase price of the books selected by the librarian.

Through the sale of others of these books (some of which I shall personally purchase for my own library) we hope in the very near future to be able to supply this little armless girl with a practical set of artificial arms.

I am deeply grateful, not only in the case referred to, but in thousands of other cases for the practical assistance and cooperation rendered me in my attempt to serve by those of my listeners who are at heart humanitarians.

Although the sequel to the original story presented me by this "Faithful Listener" is incomplete, I wished to include it in this volume because of its unique character and, since very few individuals have ever seen a specimen of penmanship executed with the teeth, I am reproducing herewith the last page of this little armless girl's original letter to me, also her letter of thanks upon receipt of the money I sent her to take care of her transportation to her home. Although the first reproduction is the original from which a part of the manuscript already used in this chapter is taken, the second letter in the girl's handwriting has not been reproduced herein.

I think that many of us who examine this girl's "tooth writing" (which might be called "dentography") will have to agree that, if this girl's penmanship produced under such unusual conditions were placed alongside of ours, certainly hers would not suffer by comparison.



## II

If I ever become self-sufficient  
based on experience I will gladly  
repay you to that you may need  
some other needy folks. I hope  
you will be able to read these  
letters you & our writing to you  
with my letters so please look  
over the mistakes. I will use  
now hoping to hear from you  
soal soon. My "best" wishes you  
you the splendid wishes you are  
making in helping others to  
be happy.

Sincerely  
a faithful listener

(Do not read name)  
on address.  
==  
==

Please reply soon.  
==  
==

Moss  
March 7, 1934

Dear "Voice of Experience"  
your check for \$15 (Twenty  
five dollars) and wonderful letter  
reached me this morning. You  
have no idea of how happy I was  
to receive them. I can't begin to  
express my many thanks to you  
"Voice of Experience" for your wonderful  
cooperation. I need you and my  
letter to you soon. I understand and  
I sincerely appreciate all of the  
kind words you spoke about me.  
I am going home in a few  
days and I shall surely miss  
having your wonderful kindness.  
Thanks for your returning the  
article from the War by. Once  
again I hope my thanks for the  
\$15 and the wonderful letter. Sincerely  
a faithful listener

( Thanks you )



CHRISTMAS—SON TO FATHER



## CHAPTER XVIII

### CHRISTMAS—SON TO FATHER

ON Christmas Day, 1933, at twelve o'clock noon, I utilized my entire period for a monologue addressed to my elderly father who was lying ill out in Los Angeles. One week later I used my New Year's Day broadcast to read father's most interesting reply. There has been such a demand for a transcript of these two broadcasts that I am glad to include as a part of this volume a verbatim record of what I said to my father and his reply to me:

To me this Christmas Day broadcast is the happiest I have ever given, for, although I have been on this network daily since the 24th of last April and during that time have spoken reverently several times of my aged Father who is lying ill in Los Angeles, this is the first time I have ever used this national network to say a single word to him and to my other loved ones on the Pacific Coast. Though I have sent messages to him and a Christmas wire, I want to say to my family, "A Very Merry Yuletide is my wish."

And, Father, lots of water has run under the mill since I have last seen you. I have given several thousand local broadcasts and now over a national network and particularly here in New York there are many of my friends who have become your friends too.

You see, last winter when I was broadcasting over WOR, I received a wire saying that a double major pelvic operation was necessary for you. Father, at your advanced age, I was worried.

But I went to my radio audience and I told them of your condition, of your life of service, of what you had meant to me, and literally by the thousands my friends got in touch with me and, while you were on the operating table that morning countless thousands were joined in reverent prayer for your recovery, even while your operation was in progress.

Father, I, like yourself, am just old-fashioned enough to believe in the efficacy of those prayers and rejoice that God has spared your life to us.

First, I want to thank you for having chosen for your wife and my mother the sweetest and most unselfish character that I have ever met in all my life. How you ever won her is more than I can see, because Mother never did fib to me and she referred many times to the fact that you courted her for five years and never kissed her once in all that time until after you were married. And they say that the days of miracles are over!

But, seriously, I am just as grateful for the fact that when Mother went down into the Valley of Shadows that I might have the breath of life she introduced us, you and me, as Father and Son. And I can well recall the many times that Mother told me how you two dedicated my life while I was still in the crib to the service of humanity.

Naturally, you being a minister, I could understand

even as a boy how you wanted me to follow in your footsteps.

By the way, do you remember the story you told me when I was a lad about another kind of a father, a gambler and a drunkard who had a fine little chap about my age and you were trudging along through the deep snow with the father and the boy one night and you and the father were ahead breaking the snow for the little boy's feet and the father called back through the storm to his son, "How you coming, lad?" and the child answered, "All right, dad; I'm just putting my tracks in your tracks."

Do you remember how you used that boy's statement in the conversion of his father to the making of better moral tracks for his son to step in?

I have never ceased to be grateful, Father, for the tracks that you made for me to follow in.

There were many things, Father, in my boyhood that I could not understand and one in particular was the great ease and facility with which you handled the switch.

Have you forgotten how many times you told me when I was a lad that no boy's day is complete until he has had a good, sound thrashing from his daddy? Do you remember that I spent more complete days than incomplete ones?

Have you forgotten that even after I was a big boy you and Mother dressed me up in a little Lord Fauntleroy shirtwaist with ruffles on the collar and cuffs, Knickerbocker collar, with curls hanging down my neck to



the bottom of that collar, and then you told me that only a coward would not defend himself if somebody started a fight? You sure made the going tough for me. And some of the boys write me now thinking they have a hard row to hoe! Oh my, oh my! And yet I learned some unusual things.

Then when I was seven Mother was taken ill—pneumonia, typhoid, brain fever, and then coma set in. Do you remember, Father, how you and I used to go to Mother's bedside and tried to get her to recognize us? You taught me then something more than in any dozen whippings you ever gave me. I refer to the night when the doctor came out of Mother's room after a long conference with other physicians. Mother was so low that night that the doctor said to you, "Francis, I don't think your Dolly can last until morning."

Felled as though struck with a hammer, I dropped at your feet and burst into uncontrollable sobs. I know how deeply you were hurt, too, Father, but you reached down and put your hands under my arm pits and pulled me to my feet. My little head came up only as far as your abdomen. I attempted to bury my head against your body but you raised my head and said to me, "Son, this is one of those things that we men have to take standing up."

Although Mother's life was miraculously spared to us, for which I was childishly grateful, I can't tell you, Father, how many times since that occurrence that admonition of yours—"Son, this is one of those things that we men have to take standing up"—has rung in my ears when seemingly insurmountable objects have beset my

pathway. I am still grateful for that lesson. It has helped me to help so many others.

I was about ten when you accepted the pastorate at the First Baptist Church at Henderson, Kentucky, and our little family left Louisville one night with the whole sky red as far as we could see. You remember, the Cooper factory was burning to the ground.

Then I studied the pipe organ and piano with a great teacher there at the church. Do you remember how you finally persuaded the board of deacons to install electric lights?

I'll never forget that string around the proscenium arch as it was lighted for the first time. It formed a great halo over your head as you preached. At the close of the service the curtains disclosing the baptistry were drawn and you baptized a number of candidates for membership in the church.

Do you remember who the last candidate was? I do. And I shall never forget that scene as I slowly stepped one step at a time down into the water and you had me clasp my hands and then you placed one of your hands over mine and, with your other hand upraised, I heard you say, "My son, in obedience to the command of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and upon a profession of your faith in Him, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

That was a great epoch, Father, in your life and in mine.

Many summers thereafter I travelled with you play-

ing the Billhorn organ for your meetings in tabernacles, in churches, and in tents and how courageously you fought in the cause of Christianity!

Because I was a boy and played rather well, there was always a bunch of girls around me and I admit that I liked the girls and occasionally, when I would walk home with a girl at night after church was over, you set a time when I must be back at our quarters and if I wasn't there you came to get me. Remember?

Well, that wasn't the most pleasing thing in the world, but you didn't have to come after me very often. You know, some girls were less interesting than others. I wonder if you remember the time in Arrowrock, Missouri, where you and I held a meeting and I asked if I could escort a little French girl. Her name was Lalette. Her steady boy-friend had a whole gang of friends. Well, I started home on that night on time, but I didn't arrive because about ten or twelve of those boys detained me. They started a pitched battle and they weren't throwing soft missiles. They were throwing rocks. Although I started home I selected a detour and, finally, when I did get on the main track they were between me and home. But I was hidden behind a hedge when I heard footfalls on the old plank sidewalk.

I knew those footsteps and they never did sound more welcome to me than just then. I even decided it would be better for me to go on home with you and take what I knew would be coming than be chased the rest of the way with rocks. And you gave me the surprise of my life by not whipping me after all.

Let me say in the vernacular of the streets, "Father, them was the happy days."

One September morning I climbed the hill at Liberty, Missouri, to matriculate as a freshman at William Jewell College and when I walked into Dr. Cook's office and told him my mission he laughed, because I was in knee-trousers, and he told me I was in the wrong place, to go on down to the academy, the prep school.

But Uncle Dick Ryder and Dr. Semple and Dr. Kyle said I took to Latin and Greek like a duck takes to water. Then you and I started the translation of the New Testament from the Greek into the English.

Do you remember the hours we spent together in that wonderful study? I have had some great teachers, Father, in my life, not only in William Jewell and the other universities I have attended in my academic and post-graduate work but they all pale into insignificance when compared to the debt that I owe to you not only for having been a father who with a rigid disciplinary program imparted to me the lesson of self-mastery, but also for having added to your duties as a disciplinarian the task you performed so nobly as mental adviser and spiritual counsellor.

I really believe, Father, that there are other ways of punishing a boy or girl more adequate than "peach tree oil," as you used to call it, but, if I had my life to live over again and I had my choice between you and your methods and any other father in the world, I would not hesitate one moment in my choice.

But time is racing. There is so much I'd like to say

and so few minutes in which to say it. The wonderful love-life between you and Mother and the marvelous example that she set to all of us children. I only wish that she were living and I might in the presence of all these unseen witnesses express to her the depths of my gratitude for the great part she played in the molding of my character. But she lived to see all of her children grown and happily prepared for life and now, Father, that you have long since passed the threescore years and ten, I know that as you live over that very active life of yours in the Christian ministry that certainly you must get much consolation. Even though you are not up and active just now, the clean life that you have lived, the wonderful care you have given both your mind and your body, certainly should promise that, God be willing, it won't be long until you will be up and around again, and I know that those who are listening in will join with me on this Christmas Day in wishing that that time may speedily arrive.

To you and my new Mother, to Broadus and Frances, Addie May, Mallie, Macklyn, Gwendolyn and all the rest, I send sincere love and best wishes.

NEW YEAR'S—FATHER TO SON



## CHAPTER XIX

### NEW YEAR'S—FATHER TO SON

Now let me give you a transcription of my New Year's broadcast:

A Happy New Year, everybody!

And my sincere thanks to all those who sent me Season's Greetings and remembrances and especially to those who aided me in spreading Christmas cheer to the friendless.

On Christmas Day I conducted a reverie with my Father and I am glad to have before me now my Father's reply to that broadcast, which reads as follows:

MY DEAR SON:

When you broadcast your message to me across the Continent Christmas Day, I was up and dressed; have been up for three days. I am also recovered from the operation, but am still quite weak. However, I find that I have lost only about ten pounds. My weight has not changed more than ten pounds in forty years.

Son, you spoke of your "aged" Father. I, like you, used to think of one who had passed the age of three-score years and ten as being aged; but I still feel so young and am so well preserved I have changed my mind. One is only as old as he or she feels.



I put it mildly when I say my bosom swelled with pride when I listened to you over the radio. I was moved deeply as you eulogized your sainted Mother. You may well be proud of that Mother of yours, for no boy ever had a nobler, more self-sacrificing and consecrated Christian Mother.

I wish you could know your Stepmother and could have seen how faithfully she has nursed your Father through all these long months. She is as good as gold. I often wonder why God has blessed me with two such noble wives.

You spoke of your childhood, Son. Let me take you back, earlier than perhaps you remember, to an occasion when you greatly surprised me with your reasoning mind. You had just turned four when one day you addressed me:

"Father, how big is God? Is He as big as you?"

"Yes, Son, He's bigger than I," I answered you.

"Is He bigger than a tree?"

"Yes, bigger than a tree."

"Father, is God bigger than the world?"

"Yes, Son, God is bigger than the world."

I thought surely you must be through by this time. But, after a little thought, you came back with:

"Father, if God is bigger than the world and God is in Heaven, how can anybody else get into Heaven?"

You were too young then for me to explain that God is spirit and not matter. This is just one occasion of

the many when you propounded questions far beyond your years.

(Questions far beyond my years, eh? So that's the reason you let my questions go unanswered! I was old enough to ask questions but too young to get replies. Well, Father, let me recall another question or two that I well remember that you didn't answer and for that matter have never answered for me.)

Do you remember when we were living on Second Avenue in Louisville (I guess I was about six then), and we were sitting at the table eating and I was directly opposite you? I suddenly stopped eating and seriously contemplated your Adam's apple, and after a few moments I said, "Father, why is it that when your food starts down your Adam's apple comes up, and then goes back down when you swallow?"

Do you remember what your reply was? Three silent ups and downs of your Adam's apple, that's all!

When I repeated the question you finally vouchsafed the following reply:

"When you're old enough to have an Adam's apple you'll find that out for yourself. You wouldn't understand now."

Well, Father, I've had an Adam's apple for a good many years but I never have found any anatomist that could explain that freak movement of prominent Adam's apples like yours and mine.

Too young to understand, you say? Well, let me remind you of the time only a few months after this that I said to you one day: "Father, when you're sleepy and rub your eyes, where do all the little dots come from that you see dancing in front of you?"

You were sleepy at the time I asked the question. Do you remember what your reply was? I do. You told me that if I didn't get to bed you'd show me how to see stars without rubbing my eyes. So I went to bed!

Now, Father, I am past forty and I haven't had the answer to these last two questions yet. So, if you think I'm old enough, I'd like for you to tell me about the Adam's apple and the dots. I think I've been patient in waiting this long for a reply.

But I'd better get back to your letter:

You spoke of our work in Henderson, Son, and referred to the fact that your Father used to punish you on general principles. Let me relate one of the "general principles" to which you referred and then, as the Voice of Experience, tell me whether or not you deserved the sound thrashing I gave you:

We were living in a house on Alves Street that belonged to Dr. Sallee, who later went to China as a missionary. You and Willie Macklyn had a pet cat that suddenly decided to take fits. I think you will recall that she would get into the pantry and turn somersaults to the top shelf and turn over many times before hitting the floor, and then she would dash in circles, stick her head in the corner and scratch for dear life.

I am sure you remember the occasion when some little friends of yours came to the house and you wanted to show them your cat that had fits. You couldn't find her anywhere upstairs and so you went down in the dark basement—you, Willie Macklyn and your friends, just after we had unpacked a lot of dishes and earthenware, and started looking among the barrels of excelsior for the cat.

Do you remember that you were lighting matches and, evidently, you didn't pay attention to where one of them dropped because suddenly you and the whole gang made a hasty exit from the cellar, leaving behind you several barrels burning in close proximity to cans of kerosene and gasoline?

Do you remember that when your Mother learned of the fire she tried to carry the new piano out of the house single-handed? And then, through no efforts of yours, the fire department arrived and put out the fire and, incidentally, chased a half-drowned cat out of the cellar? Recall that when the excitement was all over your Mother fainted?

Now, Mr. Voice of Experience, after nearly burning the house down, endangering the cat that you were looking for to cremation, causing your Mother to strain herself to the point that she fainted, I admit that I put my whole heart into the matter of administering the proper kind of punishment that I thought was due under the circumstances.

Yet you say that these punishments were given on general principles. If that was general, I'd hate for you to get specific!

But why drag out any more skeletons?

You spoke of travelling with your Father during vacations and playing the piano and organ, but, Son, you didn't refer to the fact that we were using in these Gospel services a hymnal with three hundred and eleven hymns and you would go through a whole evangelistic campaign without opening a song book, playing every number from memory.

Do you recall how we used to allow the members of the congregation to select the song they wanted and how many of them tried to trip you up by calling out the number of a song they thought you couldn't remember? I don't know of a single instance when you failed to immediately start playing the hymn the moment the number was called out.

I remember once that a mother gave you an eight-page piece of sheet music which her daughter had just published. You took it to the hotel with you and two hours later played the whole piece through from memory.

Yes, you loved your music. And you loved the girls, too, and they were foolish about you. I haven't forgotten the capers you played.

(I am going to interrupt you a minute, Father, when you speak of capers, because here is an incident I'll bet you have forgotten, since it didn't mean as much to you as it did to me: Do you remember the summer there at Liberty, Missouri, that I decided I'd like to go for a few days and visit with a nice little girl I had met up in

the Northeastern part of the State the summer before? And when I approached you about the matter you said, no, that you wouldn't go if you were I? Do you recall grandfather was visiting us then and, although he was getting well along in years he hadn't forgotten his days of romance and he said to me, "Grandson, if I were you I'd go see my girl."

(And then you found my suit case with all my clothes in it that I had packed and hidden in my room and you even got the other suit that I was going to wear and put it in the suit case and hid the case away in under one of the eaves of the house—how you ever got it there I don't know!—but when I came in from painting one of the houses that you owned, all prepared to doll up and get going, I found my suit case missing.

(I had a heavy heart as I looked for that suit case. I had secretly written the girl and told her I was coming and that was mighty important for me then to keep my word to her.

(You see, I hadn't yet gotten a sense of values, but, evidently neither had grandfather, because he not only helped me to find the suit case but, you remember, he was sleeping with me and how he helped me out the window and I took a night freight to Kansas City rather than trust going down to one of the passenger trains. Yes, and he even financed the trip. You may recall that I didn't stay very long and got back in time to keep you from getting out of practice with the use of the switch.)

But to quote again from your letter, Father:

Son, you spoke of your Father using the switch and suggesting that there might be a better way to punish children. Long, long ago, my Son, the wisest of men told us, "To spare the rod is to spoil the child." And no one wiser than Solomon has yet arisen to teach us another way.

I have reared six children and I am mighty proud of them all. When I think of the wonderful work you are doing for humanity and I listen daily to your wise advice to troubled souls, I am well pleased with the results of my method in your rearing. If I had it all to do over again I would not make any change.

I never whipped you in a fit of anger and if you remember we made definite appointments for these sessions.

(Remember? How could I forget, Father? My appointment book was always full. And it's a good thing I didn't keep a diary! Do I remember those appointments? And do you remember the ungodly hours you chose for them?

(Let me take you back on the old plantation there in Kentucky to the time when you caught me watching three other boys standing on the fence and jumping into the middle of ripe watermelons that belonged to a neighbor. I didn't jump. All I did was to help eat some of the melons. But you insisted that I was just as guilty as the boys whose heels had made my meal

possible. No, you didn't whip me right away. You got me up at four o'clock the next morning and we went out to the peach orchard together. And when we came back your arm was dead tired. My arms were all right but I decided I didn't care so much for watermelon and my breakfast was one of those things I had to take standing up.

(I suppose you will say, Father, that this is another occasion that doesn't come under the caption of general principles. But pardon me for interrupting your letter.)

No, Son, your Father knew something about boys before ever you were born. Remember, he was the oldest son of sixteen children, half of them boys, and your theories may be all right for those parents that whip their children in anger, but I am very well satisfied with the results that I obtained in your case.

Will you let me express through you to your many friends who remembered me in prayer at the time of my operation the heartfelt gratitude of myself, my wife, your brothers and sisters?

Speaking of prayer, Son, the radio somehow reminds me of prayer. For example, you speak in New York City every day and the instant the word leaves your mouth, although several thousand miles separate us, I am able to hear you instantaneously and just as your earthly Father hears you, so I believe that those of us who are able to tune in on the ear of Jehovah not only make Him hear but as I am replying to your broadcast to me, He in turn answers the prayers of His children—



not perhaps in the way we would have them answered because not always, you know, does a child know what to ask for of its earthly parent and certainly God would not be omniscient if He were to answer the appeals based on ignorance or selfishness of mortals.

But here I'll start preaching again and I'm supposed to be a retired minister. But I do want your many friends to know how deeply grateful I am for their interest in my boy and the members of his family and not only you but your radio audience are carried to the Throne of Grace in my prayers.

To you and all of your listeners I express the Season's Greetings and wish for one and all, under the leadership of the man of action in the White House a very prosperous New Year.

The entire family joins me in love to you.

Affectionately,

FATHER.

—FINIS—







