

# O. HENRY AND AL. JENNINGS

(Continued from last week.)

**CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN**

"Is the fear of life greater than the fear of death, Al? Here I am ready to leave this pen and I am beset with anxieties lest the world may guess my past."

Porter didn't expect any answer to his question. He was in a sort of ruminating mood, liking to speak his thoughts aloud.

"How hard we work to make a mask to hide the real self from our fellows. You know I sometimes think the world would go forward at a lightning pace if men would meet each other as they are—if they could, even for a short time, put aside pose and hypocrisy."

"Colonel, the wisecracks pray to see themselves as others see them. I would pray rather that others might see us as we see ourselves. How much of the hatred and contempt would melt in that clear stream of understanding. We could be equal to life if we tried hard enough. Do you think we could ever look into the face of death without a tremor?"

"I have seen men take a bullet and laugh with their last gasp. I have hidden out with the gang and every hide of us knew we were probably on our last stretch. None of us were squeamish about it."

**Pains To Set Up Scenery For a Story.**

"But there was uncertainty to give you hope. I am thinking of death that is as certain, say, as

my release. Take, for instance, a condemned man—you know they are lashed with hideous nightmares. You have seen some of them die. Did any go fearlessly?"

"I don't mean gameness or bravado, but with downright absence of alarm? Did any one of them seem to grin in the teeth of death as though they were about to enter upon a sort of adventure?"

"Well, you speak now of the fellows who pay for the drinks at their own funeral. The jail bird ain't that kind of an animal."

"I would like to talk to a man who looked at death. I would like to know what his sensations might be."

"I wonder if that's the reason Christ called Lazarus back—sorter wanted to know what the big jump might be like?"

It occurred to me that Porter was writing a story and wanted to daub the color on true. He never stuck to facts, but he went to no end of pains to set up his scenery aright.

"I can't produce a Lazarus to gratify your curiosity, but there's a fellow due to be bumped off in a week or so. You come over tomorrow and I'll knock you down to the near-stiff."

**Man to Die and Says Charge False.**

"What is he like?" Bill seemed all of a sudden to weaken and his fluent whispering became hesitant and uncertain.

"Don't know. But he'll sit in the chair in about ten days. He sent another fellow over the great

divide some months ago. He says it's a lie and he's innocent just like a babe, you know."

There's nothing very esthetic in the prison soul. Men laugh and jest over death. For weeks we would know when the electric chair was due for a sitting. We would watch the condemned man walking in the yard with a special guard before he was finally locked up in the death cell and fattened for the slaughter.

"I'd change places. If I were there, I'd die for the pleasure of getting myself with a week of square meals." Many a time I have heard raw-boned, hungry-eyed men in the ranges and shops fling out the challenge.

But as the day for the official murder draws near, the whole place seems overhung with mournful gray shadows. One can almost feel it in the corridors—the death-day. It is as though drowned people with wet hair went drooping up and down reaching out chill fingers and putting their icy touch on each man's heart.

We never talked on those days but often in the night, screams, long, frightful and agonizing—screams that trail into broken agonized moans would split the air waking us with creeping foreboding. Some overwrought wretch whose dream tormented him had seen death in his sleep.

There was that gruesome hubbub about the prison now for the Kid was going to be bumped off. They were extra busy in the electrical department—it takes plenty of juice to kill the condemned.

Porter came over to the campus to talk to the man who faced death. "There he is, the soft looking fellow walking with the guard—he'll let you talk to him."

When a man has but seven or eight days of life they give him a few privileges even in a prison. They let him take a turn in the yard—they give him roast beef and chicken to eat. They let him read and write, and sometimes they let him keep his light all night. Darkness is such a dread magnifier of terrors.

Porter went over to talk to the Kid. The three men fell in together and walked up and down for about five or ten minutes. The condemned man put a hand on Bill's arm and seemed childishly pleased to have such company.

When Porter came back to me, his face was a sickish yellow and his short plump hands were closed so tight the nails zored his flesh. He rushed into the postoffice, sat down on a chair and wiped his face. The sweat stood out like heavy white pearls.

**Hanging for Little Ignorant Fellow.**

"Guess you got the scare, all right Bill? Get a close enough squint at the old Scythe Dancer?" He looked as though he had seen an unholy ghost.

"Al, go on and talk to the boy. Be quick. This is too monstrous. I thought he was a man. It is but a child. He has no fear. He can't seem to realize that they mean to kill him. He hasn't looked at death. He's too young. Something should be done about it."

I had not talked to the fellow. I knew he was up for murder. I thought he was about 25.

"Colonel, did you see the way he put his hand on my arm? Why, he's only a little, ignorant fellow—he's but 17. He says he didn't do it. He's sure something will happen to save him."

"Good God, colonel, can a man believe in a good world when cold blooded murders like this are deliberately perpetrated? The lad may be innocent. Al—he has gentle, blue eyes—I've seen eyes like them in a little friend of mine. It's a damn shame to murder him."

As the warden's secretary I had to attend and make a record of the executions. A soft youngster of 17 would make an ugly job for me.

I knew the facts in this case. The evidence was strong against the kid. He and a boy friend had gone down to the Sciota river one Sunday afternoon to take a swim.

**It's True, Says Boy, But Not All.**

The Kid came back alone—the other boy was missing. Three weeks later a boy was found buried in the mud far up the river. It was decomposed beyond the possibility of recognition. The face had been eaten away.

The parents of the missing boy had been haunting the morgue. They looked at the remains, found a birthmark on the decomposed body, and established the identity of their son. The Kid was arrested. Witnesses clamored the courtroom. They had seen two boys on the Sciota and the Kid was pointed out as one of them.

The boys had been quarreling. Suddenly the Kid had grabbed his companion by the arm, dragged him down to the river, shouting: "I'll drown you for this!" Two men and a woman had heard the threat. The Kid was condemned on their evidence.

"Yes, sir, that's true," the youngster looked at me with his gentle eyes and put his hand on my arm as he had on Porter's.

"That's true, all right—but that ain't all."

(Continued next week.)

who are encouraging this sentiment.

Between the most moderate and the most extreme nationalists there is one point of agreement, that the decision of the Irish people themselves must be supreme. Submission of their attitude to the electors and the endorsement of that attitude by the country's voters, is the basis on which Sinn Feiners rest their case. They say that endorsement must stand.

There is a considerable section of the populace, however, who believe the time has arrived for a fresh consultation of the popular will. The suggestion is made that a formal referendum should be taken as to whether the people still adhere to the uncompromising republican policy, or are willing to give the new home rule act a trial.

Sir Edward Carson, for Ulster, has accepted, but Sinn Fein has refused the act. In neither case have the people themselves been consulted as to what they think of it.

There is even among Sinn Feiners a number who believe that it would be good tactics to accept the act as far as it goes, secure the election of Sinn Feiners to the southern parliament and obtain as much control of the Irish government as possible in the same way as they have obtained control of most of the local authorities. They would then use their new position as the basis for a fresh advance.

The argument is heard that de Valera and Arthur Griffith could do more for the cause in executive office than in jail, but that is not

the dominant Sinn Fein view—at any rate among the "responsible" leaders of the movement. Hence the suggestion to consult the rank and file.

**COULDN'T FOOL THE JUDGE**

An old bailiff in Scotland—where no legal knowledge or acquaintance with court procedure is required of the bailies who preside at the police courts—had a very short way with motorists. A country gentleman was charged with furious driving. "You have heard the charge against you," said the bailie. "Are you guilty or not guilty?" "Not guilty." "Not guilty!" exclaimed the bailie. "What's the good o' leein? I seen ye myself. Twenty shillings or thirty days."—Manchester Guardian.

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**RELIEF IS SOUGHT FROM IRISH CHAOS**

General Sentiment Favors Any Settlement To Restore Peace

DULIN, Feb. 7.—There is a great weight of general sentiment throughout the country in favor of any settlement which will end the present chaos. Irish Catholic bishops are foremost among those

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