Mrs. Adelia Davis

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Sage Reflection.

Natures that have much heat, and great violent desires and perturbations, are not ripe for action till they have passed the meridian of their years.—Bacon.

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We ought not to be so rash and rigorous in our censures as some are. Charity will judge and hope for the best.—Exchange.

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IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT

By EDGAR W. COOLEY

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A burglar goes to the trouble of blowing a "burglar-proof" safe and is then satisfied to go on his way with a woman's picture instead of the bank funds.

AS HE stepped out of the alley into the street, it began to rain dismally. This pleased him, for it added to the blackness of the night and had a tendency to drive away any late pedestrian.

He was not hampered by luggage. Such tools as he needed—a bar of soap, an airpump, a can of nitroglycerin, some fuse, a jimmy, a dark lantern, a revolver—he carried in his pockets, and, under his coat, a folded grain sack.

Without pausing, without hesitating, he glanced searchingly up and down the street. A smoking oil lamp stood upon a post on the corner of the main street of the village, its feeble rays struggling ineffectively in the mist. No living creature was stirring; no other glimmer visible.

A few strides took him to the side window of a building. The sill was on a level with his head. He tried to raise the sash, but, as he had expected, it was fastened. So he took the jimmy from his pocket, and, slipping its thin edge under the frame, threw all his weight suddenly upon the handle.

With a report like that of a pistol, the lock snapped. For five minutes, perhaps, the burglar crouched in the shadows under the window, watching, listening. But not a sound, save the patter of the rain in the gutter, did he hear; not a moving object did he see.

Then carefully, noiselessly, he pushed up the sash and climbed in. He was in total darkness, but knew exactly where he stood. He could have drawn an accurate, detailed plan of the interior of the building—knew precisely how many feet it was from the window to the safe; from the safe to the front doors; from the window to his car, standing in the alley at the rear.

So, although he could not see his hand before him, he turned confidently to his left and walked six paces. Then he circled to his right around the end of the counter, and took four steps more. Pausing, he reached out his hand and touched the safe.

The burglar moved his hand gleefully over the door and laughed. The bank was not provided with a vault. A good vault costs as much as a building, and this was a small bank in a country town. So the funds were entrusted to the protection of this "burglar-proof" safe. He wondered what the citizens would say about "burglar-proof" safes while gathering up the pieces!

Without losing a moment, he filled the cracks around the door of the safe with soap, leaving one small opening. To this opening he attached his pump and exhausted the air on the inside.

Closing the opening, he cut a piece off the bar of soap, and, rolling it between his palms and molding it with his fingers, soon fashioned it into the shape of a small cup. This he fastened at the bottom of the door and filled with nitroglycerin. Then he attached a fuse.

Ten feet from the safe, a door opened into the rear office of the bank, and in this room the safe-breaker had planned to seek refuge while the explosive was doing its work. Not desiring to tarry unnecessarily in close proximity to a charge of nitroglycerin about to explode, he concluded, before lighting the fuse, to satisfy himself that the door of this inner room was not locked or bolted.

He turned the knob, the door opened readily, and he took one step across the threshold. Then he paused. In the intense darkness he could not see an object; in the perfect silence he could not hear a sound.

But something—premonition, instinct, some indefinable sixth sense—something sent a chill through him, and he trembled as one who suddenly becomes conscious of the presence of unseen spirits. Without the power to move, he stood, staring into the darkness, the perspiration standing in icy drops upon his forehead.

With the desperation that fear inspires, he drew his dark-lantern, slipped back the slide, and threw the searching glare around the room, lighting first the most distant corner. Slowly he moved the lantern, bringing the round spot of brilliant light toward him across the carpet. Suddenly he uttered a low cry and shrank back as the light fell fiercely upon an object almost at his feet.

So near that by stooping the burglar could have touched him, a dead man lay, his waxen face and sightless eyes turned upwards! The carpet where his head and shoulders rested, gleamed scarlet with his blood; the nerveless fingers of his right hand clasped a pistol; in the center of his forehead was a ghastly wound.

With a strange weakness in his knees the burglar bent over the dead man, brushed back his matted hair, took the pistol gently from his fingers and folded his hands across his breast. In the corpse the cracksman recognized Frazer, the bank cashier.

On the desk beside him was the following letter, unsealed:

"Being no longer able to conceal my shortage, to hide the fact that the safe does not contain the amount of money that it should, and being a coward, I have chosen a coward's method of paying my debt. I do not ask for pity. I only ask compassion for my wife."

For a moment the burglar stood undecided, the letter in his hand. Suddenly, breaking the impressive silence, came the loud ringing of a telephone bell. Instantly, involuntarily, the burglar closed the lantern slide, gripped his pistol and crouched behind the desk. Again the bell rang, and mechanically he arose and walked to the telephone. Standing with one foot on each side of the dead cashier, he took down the receiver.

"Hello," he said, imitating the voice of one whose eyes he could feel, but could not see. He was answered by a woman.

"Oh, Henry!" she cried, "I have just awakened from such a vivid, such an awful dream. I know it is silly, but it frightened me. I dreamed that you were in trouble, in disgrace. And then I awoke and found you had not returned home. Oh, Henry, what is keeping you so late? Come home at once, will you not, dear?"

"Yes," the burglar replied, as one in a daze.

"Do," she continued, and there was anxiety in her voice. "I am so glad, so glad it was only a dream. I would rather see you dead than dishonored, Henry dear."

The cracksman crept back to the desk and seated himself in the dead man's chair, the woman's voice still ringing in his ears.

That voice! It haunted him like a memory of long ago, like an echo of the days of childhood. It stirred, it thrilled him. It aroused that old mad love of his boyhood. Whose voice was it? Undoubtedly the wife of that dead coward lying at his feet. But who had she been before—before she married him?

That voice! Could it be Martha's? Years and years ago, when they were schoolmates, he had loved Martha, worshiping her from afar, for she was a dweller on the avenue, and he a child of the tenements. A vast social gulf divided them, but he loved her in secret, knowing that he scarcely entered her thoughts.

Once he had thrashed a boy for teasing her, and she had smiled at him. He had never forgotten that smile. That was years and years ago, but, though she had long since passed out of his life, he had never loved another. And now—was that voice indeed the voice of Martha?

Again the burglar deliberately opened the side of his lantern and turned the gleam upon the desk. Directly in front of him he saw a picture in the silver frame. It was a photograph of a woman—not a particularly handsome woman—but glorified by a dazzling smile—and he recognized that smile!

From that face he turned reluctantly at last to gaze with scorn at the cold features of the man lying there with the scarlet mark of sin upon his brow. He felt no pity now—nothing but contempt—but Martha's words, "I would rather see you dead than dishonored," rang in his ears.

With a smile he placed the letter—the contemptible letter—in his pocket, picked up Frazer's pistol, replaced the empty shell with a loaded cartridge, and laid the weapon in a drawer. Then he tore the collar of the cashier's coat, ripped one sleeve half its length, and overturned the chairs and scattered them about.

It was nearly daybreak. In a few moments the gray would be creeping up the eastern sky.

Quickly the burglar blew the safe and scattered the gold and silver and banknotes upon the floor. "Now," he said, to himself, "they will find the bank broken, the safe looted, the cashier murdered!" Leaving his soap and dark lantern by the shattered safe, he fled, and two things only did he take—the cashier's letter and the photograph in the silver frame.

Through the rain and darkness he drove away, penniless but not unhappy. A woman's smiling face seemed to thank him. He laughed aloud as he fled through the gray of morning, thinking of a schoolgirl smiling at a ragged urchin.

Not Empty-Headed

Jimmie Jones failed to pass in history because he did not know who the President of the United States is, nor could he name his governor, senator and representative in congress. But—

Jimmie knows who led both the American and National leagues in batting averages last year.

He can recognize the pictures of 45 movie stars.

He can pick as good an All-American team as Walter Camp, and give reasons.

He knows the call letters of every important broadcasting station in the United States.

He can give you the name of practically any car when he sees it coming a block away.

And yet—

Some folks call Jimmie an ignoramus!—Kansas City Star.

Pre-Indian Relic

A remarkable stone wall built in the form of a fortress on the top of a Georgia mountain south of Lookout mountain, Tennessee, is believed to be of pre-Indian origin, as the Cherokee Indians told the first white settlers that a strange white race were in this vicinity before them, says the Dearborn Independent. A walled-up spring is near the opening gate. There is not a civil engineer in America who could improve on its construction as a fortress defense.—Philadelphia Bulletin.

FRIENDS ARE MADE BY USE OF ROADS

There are now in the United States 455,000 miles of surfaced highways. Every ten years the total, including country roads, will be around 800,000 miles, which will constitute a marvelous basic system excelling that of any nation in the world.

We are making rapid progress not only in road building, but also in our understanding of highway financing, taxation and use. It is worth while to realize the fundamental significance of all this activity which in the final analysis is simply an investment in neighboriness.

On the political and social side, neighboriness means mutual understanding and the ability to live together in harmony. It means that the West knows the South and appreciates its problems, and vice versa, writes Roy D. Chapin, chairman of the highway committee of the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce.

On the commercial side, neighboriness means ready facilities for distribution, ease of travel. In short, that the distant point can be reached as well as the nearby point.

We are in a highly fortunate position in that this country has a gridiron of rail lines. This gridiron should be maintained, operated, encouraged on a sound basis. Given this long-haul transportation equipment, the highway system becomes doubly serviceable because it means that every community of 5,000 population is linked not only with a motor-travel system, but is likewise within rapid transit reach of the long-distance railroad service.

It is recognized that the motor-car user gets a more immediate and more definite return from improved highways than any other class of the community.

The burden of federal expenditure for highways has not, however, fallen on the general taxpayer at all as yet. The reason for the federal government entering into highway construction, moreover, is given in President Coolidge's message to congress of December 6, 1923, in which he said:

"No expenditure of public money contributes so much to the national wealth as for building good roads."

In view of the enormous extent of this country, totaling 3,000,000 square miles, there is no other public work which is more deserving of our attention.

New California Road Is Now Open to All Traffic

Easterners motoring to California by the southern route can now save considerable time through use of the newly improved highway between Yuma and the Imperial valley, which is now open.

The trip of 65 miles over the sand dunes between Yuma and El Centro, instead of requiring 12 hours to two days to negotiate, and at times even longer, now can be made reasonably in a couple of hours. The new artery, including 15 miles of graveled road and 21 miles of asphalt, is a decided improvement over the old desert road that stretched across the sand hills.

This work has been consistently urged by the Automobile Club of Southern California, which leading motor organization is highly gratified at being able to tell tourists that this southern route to the state line at last has been placed on a par with the trunk lines of the state.

It is felt that this improvement is one that will uphold the statement that the saving in cost of operation to motor vehicle users who travel over an improved highway is more than enough to maintain the highway. This conclusion was announced by the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce following investigations made in North Carolina and other states in connection with the argument that the motor vehicle should pay for all highway maintenance.

Tax in Many States

Thirty-seven of the forty-eight states and the District of Columbia start 1925 with a gasoline tax in force. In several states the tax is 1 cent, in 18 states and the District of Columbia it is 2 cents, in two it is 2½ cents, in nine it is 3 cents and in one state it is 4 cents. Of the remaining 11 states, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa and New Jersey, as well as Kansas, all have gasoline tax measures under consideration. It is probable that most of these measures will be enacted into laws. Massachusetts is the only state that has definitely turned down a gas tax measure by popular vote and it is generally believed that the reason for this defeat is to be found in the apportionment of funds proposed rather than in the fact that it was a gasoline tax.

To Relieve Traffic Jam

The first step toward dual highways to lessen traffic congestion, partially due to heavy movement of trucks, may be taken by Massachusetts, for the state department of public works is planning a $2,000,000 highway, paralleling the state highway from Boston to Worcester. The new highway is to follow closely the present Worcester turnpike. A legislative appropriation will be necessary before work on this much needed improvement can be inaugurated.

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Turquoise's Odd Use.

A Fourteenth-century authority states that turquoise protected horses from the ill effects resulting from drinking cold water when they were overheated. It is said that the Turks often attached these precious stones to the bridles and frontlets of their horses as amulets.

Honor for "Unknown"

The decorations awarded the Unknown Soldier were: Croix de Guerre, France; Legion of Honor, France; gold medal for bravery, Italy; Virtutea Militara, Rumania; war crosses, Czechoslovakia; Virtuti Militari, Poland; Congressional Medal of Honor, United States.

Honesty.

Honesty does not merely mean that you will not lie with your lips or take somebody's money or property. It also means that you will do your very best in everything, do every task to a complete finish, and stamp each job you do with the trademark of your character.—Kiel Kraftsman.

Lute and Guitar.

The lute is a stringed musical instrument of the guitar family. The formal difference between a lute and a guitar is to be found in the back, which in the lute is pear-shaped and in the guitar is flat. The lute is without ribs, which are essential to the framing of the guitar.

Likely.

A Bronx woman gave her young son a nickel for the heathen, and he went and gave it to his father. He must have overheard a breakfast-table chat.—New York American.

World's Largest Picture.

The largest picture ever painted is the "Paradise" of Tintoretto, which hangs in the palace of the doges at Venice. It measures 84 feet by 35 feet.

Famous Greek Statue.

Hermes, one of the masterpieces of Praxiteles, the ancient Greek sculptor, was found May 8, 1877, at Olympia. It is now preserved in the museum there. The figure of the youthful god is shown as the protector of his baby brother, Dionysius. The statue was made about 250 B. C.

Causes for Gratitude.

The people to whom we are the most grateful are those who help raise our standards, who awaken in us good impulses, who enrich us spiritually and morally, and who make us resolve to express ourselves in greater service to others.—Grit.

Papuan Mourning Customs.

In Papua, widows mourn for a deceased husband for more than a year, and it is a custom for them to remove all their clothes and cover themselves with white pipe-clay. The costume consists of a grass skirt.

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The first large diamond discovered in South Africa is said to have been found in the leather bag of a sorcerer. Several authorities state that in the early days in South Africa highly valuable diamonds were frequently the plaything of the Boer children.

In an Age Benighted.

Jam and jellies were not known until the Eighteenth century, when virtues unknown today were ascribed to them, jelly being recommended for a sore throat and jam advised for a cough.

Safe Anchors.

Hope and patience are two sovereign remedies for all—the surest reposals, the softest cushions to lean on in adversity.

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Joanna Southcote, a domestic servant, aroused all England about 1814, with her pretended supernatural gifts and her claim to be the woman mentioned in Apocalypse, chapter 12. She gained over 100,000 followers.

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