Between You and Me

"Common sense is the most uncommon kind of sense."

By HAROLD BELL WRIGHT

Back Stairs

"There's many a man done got himself lost tryin' to find a short cut to somewhere. A feller has sure got to be dad-burned certain of the neighborhood when he tries to git in the back way."—Preachin' Bill.

I DENY the truth of that old thread-bare maxim, "Where there's a will there's a way." I refuse to accept the assertion of those knowing ones who declare, "There is no such word as can't."

Why, most of us spend half our lives willing to attain ends that are forever beyond our reach. The rest of the time we are finding out the things which we cannot do.

Some of us never do find out that for us there is no way to certain things though our wills were strong enough to burn us in a slow fire. And between you and me, that is one reason why so many of us fail to arrive anywhere in particular.

For instance, I know a fine man who stands only about four feet, ten. If will-power could do it that lad would stretch to six feet, at least—he might not be satisfied under seven. But my friend knows there is no way, so he very wisely wastes no strength on the proposition but gives all his attention to making the most of his four feet, ten.

All the will-power in the universe would never have enabled me to sing like Caruso. I was not born with Caruso's singing machinery. Because I discovered this in time, I have wasted no ammunition shooting at that target. The world has not lost a singer because there was no singer there to lose; but I have gained a considerable peace of mind. Do you see?

Now, the chief thing which one cannot do is to accomplish anything like satisfying and enduring success by short-cut, underhand, back-stairs methods.

You remember about the fellow who, "Climbeth up some other way." "The same is a thief and a robber."

Yes, I suppose a thief might be a successful thief. One might successfully commit a murder. But you know the kind of success I am discussing. Please don't quibble.

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> Make no mistake, you can't bunco Life indefinitely.

I say, one either walks right up to the front door of the House of Success, rings the bell, and climbs the main stairway to the inner room or, sooner or later, is thrown out for an intruder, a sneak, or a bum.

For instance, no person ever yet climbed to real financial success by the back stairs.

Now, wait a minute!

I do not say that no one ever climbed to large sums of money by the get-rich-quick stairway. But I do say that a fortune so accumulated never in reality belongs to the one who gains it—it still remains the property of those from whom it was taken.

To have financial success that is real, one must actually own that which one possesses. A dollar in your pocket would not necessarily be your dollar; it might be mine. If it were mine the fact that you carried it in your pocket would not make it yours. You might enjoy a certain cheap, uneasy, and momentary thrill by flashing the coin and pretending it was yours. But that would fall far short of what I understand by financial success. And you would soon weary of the attentions you received by such pretense.

When Fear is a guest at the banquet the host does not eat with a hearty appetite. When Dread walks arm in arm with one, Happiness and Contentment are always on the other side of the street. It is a mighty truth that to hold riches which belong to another is not to possess the treasure, but is to be possessed by it.

Yes, "pull" is another back stairway which seems to promise a way into the House of Success. In fact, the almost universal belief that one may quickly and safely sneak up to the inner room by the back stairs of Pull and Influence, is the principal reason why the steps to the front door are never crowded.

The man who, on his way to the main entrance, slips his arm through yours with a cheery, "Going up, brother? Fine! So am I—come along and we will go in together"—well, that is different.

True—One may sometimes gain the second story by the back stairs of Pull. Professional porch climbers accomplish the same end. But no one could, with reason, contend that because the porch climber was in the house he was at home.

One who gains a position by Pull, must of necessity live in uncertainty and be ill at ease—never knowing when the door may be opened to show him out. Such an intruder may snatch a few pieces of silver, or bag a handful of jewels before being forced to vacate, but that is all. To feel comfortably and happily at home in the House of Success, one must be a welcome and an honored guest.

Another thing which cannot be done is to gain a welcome in the House of Success by climbing up the back stairs of Credit.

No, I am not referring to the various methods of paying one's bills from another's bank account. Many people have been fairly successful in having things charged to some one else. But, after all, when you think about it, paying a bill is only an incident in life. I am speaking of life as a whole. I am saying that one cannot accept all the good things which Life offers and have them charged as one would buy a pound of sugar or a new hat, and then dodge the bill forever.

You see, I rather suspect that there is too much watered stock in the average citizen's respectability. I think that is why some of us do not invest more heavily in humanity. When we learn to make common, every-day living worth one hundred cents on the dollar, more of us will believe that there is something in the business.

One who is credited with honesty may sell a phony jewel now and then, but one cannot continue selling glass diamonds and maintain a rating of A-1. However willing we may be to hand out fake living to our fellow-countrymen, there is no way to keep it up indefinitely.

Some even reach the point where they spend the greater part of their religious strength asking for blessings on credit. They beseech the Almighty for things which they know they do not deserve, have no right to expect, and would not rightly use if they got. The rest of the church hour is spent by the preacher giving them advice which he knows they will not follow, and asking them for money he knows they will not give.

Think it over.

The person who has nothing invested in Life gets all the returns due him—which are not much. And, as you no doubt have noticed, it is the person who holds no shares in Life who complains most about scanty dividends.

There are some things, you know, which grown-up men do not try to do. Of course, though, some men and a few women never grow up.

A long time ago when we were boys we crawled under the canvas and enjoyed the circus quite as much as if we had paid the half-dollar. But we cannot see Sells Brothers that way now—not if we have grown up. The man who expects to enjoy the realities of life by crawling under the canvas is, to put it mildly, large for his age.

Most of us judge the world by ourselves. The trouble is, we guess wrong as to our own value. We mistake Credit for Capital.

There are too many of these five dollar millionaires—people whose idea of living is to put up a twenty-thousand dollar appearance on an eight-dollar salary. They want Credit, you see, for something which does not exist.

When a man acquires the habit of thinking that the whole scheme of things would go bankrupt if it were not for the nickel's worth which he contributes once in a while, he is trying to live on credit to which he is not entitled. Sooner or later he is sure to overdraw his account.

And have you never heard people pretending to give God the glory when they were in reality only making a loud noise on their own horns? Have you never met the fellow who claims credit for large charities when he is in reality only getting rid of a smooth nickel which he failed to pass on the street car conductor? Well, these are some more of the people who are trying to sneak into the House of Success by way of the back stairs of Credit.

Another of the back stairs kind are the folk who demand fifty dollars' worth of attention for every fifty cents' worth of courtesy. Such short-change artists are bound to hold hazy ideas as to credit.

The one who offers something for nothing is usually a liar. The one who seeks to take advantage of such an offer is at heart either a sharper or a fool—or both.

A person whose living costs nothing, lives just that way. Generally speaking, things cost all they are worth—sometimes more. Free shows are usually worth the price of admission.

Some of us seem always to acknowledge our indebtedness to our fellow-humans with mental reservations. Pay day comes around and when our reservations are subtracted there is nothing left for those we owe but a current expense deficit.

Make no mistake, you can't bunco Life indefinitely.

And never mind if the world sometimes forgets to give the credit which is your due. Be thankful that you are not charged with all that you owe.

No one ever yet gained the inner room in the House of Success by way of the back stairs. The front door is never barred. Better go in that way, or stay out.

Thanksgiving

For the bounteous harvests thanks may be given.

For the purpose of our day thanks may be given.

Our abundance is amazing. Our grain and oil and gold run into billions. The physical impossibilities of yesterday are the accepted facts of today. We sail under the water and into the air in ships.

In a material sense we have wrought prodigiously. A billion-dollar trust is an ephemeral thing compared with the creed of democracy. Like a wizard's flux, that creed has resolved unnumbered men of scores of conflicting races into the type of manhood hallmarked American.

Idea of Thanksgiving Inherent in All Ages

This week brings the day we dedicate to turkey, cranberry sauce, football, and the giving of thanks. Perhaps the matter of giving thanks has been permitted to slip a little into the background. It may be what historians would call a trend of the times.

Well, there is sound precedent for this mingling of football and prayer. The humanities, if you can call them that, have always intruded upon days of devotion.

When Pope Gregory I, a sensible man, sent Augustine to convert the Anglo-Saxons, he directed that some Christian festival be substituted for each heathen feast. But, he instructed his missionaries, much in the pagan manner of celebration must be allowed to remain, "to the end that, whilst some gratifications are outwardly permitted them, they may the more easily consent to the inward consolations of the Grace of God."

By such tolerances we have the Yule log, various diverting Easter customs, and other pleasant practices that in the beginning were not Christian at all.

Thanksgiving, too, has a mixed background. There is nothing distinctively American in its origin. Man has always had the thanksgiving habit.

HARD TO UNDERSTAND

"You say Jack couldn't play the Thanksgiving game because he was back in his studies?"

"Yes! He flunked in economics."

"Huh! Well, he took me out one night and I thought he was the most economical man in the world."

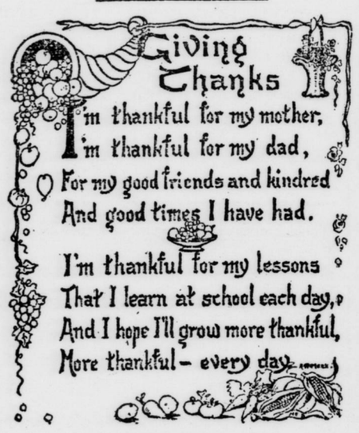
November Fields

November fields lie brown and sere
Beneath a bleak, gray sky.
But time records another year
In centuries gone by
When pilgrims knelt in silent prayer
Of thanks for harvest's yield,
And blessed the soil that was so bare
In a November field.

November fields were red with blood
Beneath dark clouds of war;
Then came a calm o'er Flanders mud—
Stilled was the cannon's roar.
Grim men bowed heads in silent prayer
And sores of hate were healed,
When hope was born from out despair
On a November field.

Service to Humanity

It is much to be desired that in rendering homage for the blessings which have come to us, we should earnestly testify our continued and increasing aim to make our own great fortune a means of helping and serving, as best we can, the cause of all humanity.—Warren G. Harding.



Unnumbered Blessings

Once in a while, it may do us good to be thankful, not so much for the particular fortune that has come to us as individuals, as for the general blessings that are showered down impartially on all of us. Sunshine, moonrise, the feel of rain on one's face; the sight and the scent of earth, green in the spring, dun-coated in the fall; the sound of birds in the morning, the sight of young stock gamboling in pasture—these come even to the poorest. Let us be thankful.—Wallace's Farmer.

HUNGRY?

In the days of yore the Puritan maiden served the Thanksgiving turkey just as millions of modern maidens will do it this year.

Figuring the Nation's Leading Cereal Crops

Let us set out to visualize the gigantic proportions of our crops, that we may the better appreciate the reason for thankful hearts. Start with corn, wheat, and oats, the three leading cereal crops, providing foods for man and beast, prosperity for country and city alike. Manhattan island, on which New York city stands, contains 27 square miles of land surface. Should we empty these three largest grain crops over these 14,038 acres the gathered grain would cover the island to a depth of 120 feet—everything under ten stories would be buried beneath the avalanche of breadstuffs!

Or, let us suppose we lumped it together. Make a bin, if you please, and our three great cereal crops would fill a titantic measure one-half a cubic mile in dimensions. If it were set up on Broadway, this half cubic mile would tower seven times as high as the Woolworth building, and the bin would be twenty city blocks long by ten blocks wide. To grow the wheat alone required a field as large as all of New York state, and the billions of bushels of corn were grown on a field as large as New York, with New England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

And so on right down the column, nature has been most kind to American country folks. Surely, a far different situation confronts us than that which faced the fathers of Thanksgiving. Contrast this against that first harvest, and we should the better appreciate the reason for our thankfulness.—Earl W. Gage, in the Michigan Farmer.

CHAMPIONS BOTH

Expressing Our Gratitude

Gratitude must have an object. It must recognize the source of the debt. It must express a feeling toward something exterior to itself. If our favored position and condition are due to our own efforts then we owe nothing, have no reason for gratitude, and there is no object to which thankfulness can be directed. Or if this is a material world and nothing else, if life is merely a mechanical process, there is nothing outside of ourselves to which we should be grateful. And if we are machines, automatons moving about in rigid obedience to physical stimuli, any sense of gratitude to anything, or for anything, is only a mechanical reaction that has neither meaning nor value.—Exchange.

Cause for Thanks

Lord, thou hast given me a cell
Wherein to dwell;
A little house, whose humble roof
Is waterproof.

Lord, I confess, too, when I dine,
The pulse is Thine,
And all those other bits that be
There placed by Thee.

All these, and better, thou dost send
Me, to this end—
That I should render, for my part
A thankful heart.

—Robert Herrick.

HOTEL'S MISTAKE

The departing guest had been given his bill, and shortly afterwards the manager said to the head waiter: "You gave the man in room 29 his bill, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"I didn't forget to charge for anything, did I?" inquired the manager.

"Not that I know of," answered the waiter.

"Strange, very strange," muttered the other; "I can still hear him whistling."—Stray Stories.

Poor Papa

Little Girl—My mamma is awful strict. Is yours?

Little Boy—Orful!

Little Girl—But she lets you go anywhere you want to, and—

Little Boy—O, she ain't strict with me!

Little Girl—Then who is she strict with?

Little Boy—Pa.

REMOVED THE SPOTS

"Does your wife remove spots from your trousers?"

"Yes—five and ten spots as a rule."

The Wiseacre

Head bowed, with not a glance aside,
He passes by—stern-faced, unwinking.
What keeps him so preoccupied?
He thinks he makes you think he's thinking.

They Bite

Bobo—That guy is living on the fat of the land.

Linko—What's he done—robbed a bank?

Bobo—Nothing so crude. He's the manufacturer of a get-thin-quick chewing gum.—Pathfinder.

Just the Word

"I declare," exclaimed Mrs. Tawkins, "that radio is making my husband so indolent! All he does is lie back in his easy chair and listen in from supper to bedtime. He's becominfi absolutely—"

"Radiotiose," put in her caller.

Below Zero

"I got cold feet dancing with Mabel last night."

"How?"

"Whenever she stepped on my foot my toes were 5 below."—Washington Star.

SQUEALED, OF COURSE

Captain—Well, what did that road hog do when you pinched him?

Cop—Squealed, of course.

Trouble

You're gettin' into trouble.
It leaves you feelin' sore.
And even when you're gettin' out,
You're gettin' into more.

Just a Shell

Weste—I hear you've built a new home.

Easte—Yes, but I don't know whether it's going to be a manor, villa, hacienda or igloo—my wife hasn't bought the furniture yet.

Glad Surprise

"You were going 60 miles an hour," said the traffic cop.

"Lead me to the fine," said Mr. Chuggins, proudly. "I didn't think the old fliv could do it!"

Taking Her Pick

Mr.—Will you be long?

Mrs.—No, dear. I'll be ready in a minute.

Mr.—Well, please pick a minute that's not more than 30 minutes away

The Voice With the Smile

First Telephone Operator—What is your favorite poem?

Second Ditto—Well, I like, "Tell Me Not in Mournful Numbers!"

No Mistaken Identity

"Your wife wants you on the phone."

"How do you know it's my wife?"

"She started off, 'Is that you, bum'—and I knew."

All Cleaned Up for an Interview

By RING LARDNER

To the Editor:

The other wk. I was setting around the home wishing callers would come or something so I would have a excuse to mix up a cocktail when all of a sudden what should ring but the telephone bell so of course I thought at first it must be the wrong No. like usual, but I answered it and the girlie says Bridgeport wants you. So I said yes I suppose they do but I can't live everywheres at once and then another female voice spoke up and she said she was a reporter on the Bridgeport Herald and when could she get a interview.

So I thought for the second time that they must be calling the wrong No. but soon I remembered who I am so I kind of snarled back at her like all the big birds do when you ask them for a interview but I didn't snarl so as she could hear me for the fear she would think it was a sincere snarl and would hang up and end it all, and little by little we got more friendly and she said she would be over the folling Tuesday. So then the both of us hung up on each other and I come back into the parlor with a kind of pale look and the Mrs. said who was that woman and I said she is a reporter on the Bridgeport Herald.

What does she want?

She wants to interview me because I am notorious.

Yes but you been notorious ever since you were kiddish and nobody wanted to interview you till now.

Well I said the N. Y. City papers has started the fashion by interviewing George Maeterlink that can't even parle anglais and this lady is going to show them up by talking to a poet witch can say something back besides oolala and anyway she is coming over here next Tuesday to see me so thats that.

Yes replied the Mrs. but when you used to interview notorietys like Ty Cobb and Jessie Willard for instants, why you done it without going to no bother like seeing them.

So I said shut up and between that day which was a Thursday and the folling Tuesday I took light exercise and read and eat a good deal and things went along about as usual without no marked change till the Monday night when I begin to feel a little dizzy right after the supper and I thought at first it must be something I had eat or something till 1 of the kids happened to make the remark that tomorrow was Tuesday and then it flashed on me that all that stood between the Bridgeport lady and I was a ordinary Monday night in the summer time.

But was it a ordinary Monday night god forbid. I retired early and lay there and tossed and read the story of Joseph Hergesheimer and tossed some more until it must of been fully 9 o'clock when I droped into a light doze witch came to a sudden terminus at 7:30 Tuesday A. M. and it was broad day and I got up and shaved myself and dressed the latter and came down to breakfast. Already the women folks was cleaning up the parlor in honor of the occasion emptying the ash trays, chairs and etc.

They was a sensation when I entered the dining room where the 3 elderest children was working on their prunes.

How do you happen to be up said one.

What have you got a collar on for? Wear is your whiskers?

So I gave them each a nasty look and they shut up and I set down and eat a hearty breakfast of serial, toast and coffee.

Promptly at a ¼ of 12 what should ring the door bell and who was there but the lady from Bridgeport? Nobody. We shook hands and exchanged a few confidents and I led her in the parlor and was just going to call her tension to it being all cleaned up for the occasion when my eye happened to stray under the radiator and there was the mouse trap. Well you could of knock me over with a big rock when I seen it but lucky its latest quarry had been removed but they was no telling when the next little rascal would scamper in and get himself in trouble and probably raise enough he—ll about it to spoil the party. The lady may of wondered why it was I kept stomping my ft. and coughing, and etc. Well it was to warn all vermin that the room was occupe to use a frog expression and don't trespass only at your own risque.

The details of the interview can be read in the Bridgeport Herald but anyway before it was over they was suspicious noises towards the dining room door and a wif of beans and pancakes smote the nostrils and the lady got up and pulled a camera and asked if she could take a picture of whatever kids they were left in the house so I went for one and he was broughten down and didn't know me on acct. of being shaved at that hr. of the day and busted out crying so I kind of choked him a little and he quit and we was all photographed and the Mrs. ast the lady from Bridgeport would she stay at lunch and she said no and walked out on us to some place where the washer woman don't come Tuesday and have to be surfeited with bake beans and pancakes.

So when the lady had left I took the Mrs. in the parlor and showed her a certain article of furniture that laid there under the radiator in plain site and then I went in the dining room and eat a hearty lunch of pancakes and bake beans by myself.