

Add to Your List of "Red Letter Days" in July Birthdays of Two Who Deserve Remembrance For Their Gifts to America's "Folk Literature"

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON
(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

JULY has its full quota of birthdays of American notables so that we might honor half a dozen distinguished personages on every one of its 31 days without exhausting the possibilities. Included in such a list would be Presidents John Quincy Adams and Calvin Coolidge; Vice Presidents George M. Clinton, George M. Dallas and Elbridge Gerry; Henry Knox, first secretary of war, and Gideon Welles, secretary of the navy in Lincoln's cabinet; Gen. George H. Thomas, the "Rock of Chickamauga," and Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, the "Wizard of the Confederacy"; such naval heroes as John Paul Jones and David Farragut and Richmond Pearson Hobson; John Ericsson, Elias Howe and Samuel Colt, inventors; and such men of millions as John Jacob Astor, John Wanamaker, John D. Rockefeller and George Eastman.

My theme, however, is not of the deeds nor achievements of these statesmen, soldiers and merchant princes. I sing of a humbler kind of folk—those who compose the songs and poems which become the favorite "pieces" of the common people. And in particular, I tell of a woman and a man whose names are but little known to their fellow-Americans (compared to those cited above) but who once set pen to paper and wrote lines which will be repeated long after their authors are forgotten.



MRS. ROSE H. THORPE

If you have ever recited "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" at school, you should have given it a thought on July 18. For on July 18, 1850, there was born to William Morris and Mary Louisa (Wight) Hartwick near Mishawaka, Ind., a daughter whom they named Rose Alnora. While Rose Alnora was still a pig-tailed, beribboned little girl, the family moved to a farm near Litchfield, Mich. There one day she was at home, supposedly studying her lessons. But her mother noticed that she was busily engaged in writing something on her slate.

"What are you doing?" the mother demanded.

Started by the question and with a guilty feeling that she should be busy "doing her sums" instead of writing romantic verses, Rose Alnora started to erase them. But her mother stopped her, read what she had written—and didn't scold her! Instead she sent the poem to the Detroit Commercial Advertiser and after it appeared in that paper it was reprinted in dozens of others.

Years later it was included in a book of her poems called "Ringed Ballads" and a Boston Transcript reviewer wrote: "The name of Rose Hartwick Thorpe (she was married to Edmund Carson Thorpe, a writer of German dialect recitations, in 1871) is familiar to every reader through that wonderfully popular ballad, 'Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight.'" It requires peculiar genius to write a genuine ballad—something that flows spontaneously from the heart and goes directly to the heart. This gift Mrs. Thorpe possesses to the fullest degree. No poem written by an American author has been so widely copied, nor has achieved so universal a popularity as the one referred to. She has written

CURFEW MUST NOT RING TONIGHT

SLOWLY England's sun was setting o'er the hills far away,
Filling all the land with beauty at the close of one sad day,
And the last rays kissed the forehead of a man and maiden fair,
He with footstep slow and weary, she with sunny, floating hair;
He with bowed head, sad and thoughtful, she with lips all cold and white,
Struggling to keep back the murmur, "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

"Bessie," Bessie's white lips faltered, pointing to the prison old,
With its turrets tall and gloomy, with its walls dark, damp and cold—
"I've a lover in that prison, doomed this very night to die,
At the ringing of the curfew, and no earthly help is nigh.
Cromwell will not come till sunset," and her face grew strangely white
As she breathed the husky whisper, "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

"Bessie," calmly spoke the sexton—and his accents pierced her heart
Like the piercing of an arrow, like a deadly poisoned dart—
"Long, long years I've rung the curfew from that gloomy shadowed tower;
Every evening, just at sunset, it has told the twilight hour;
I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and right,
Now I'm old, I still must do it: "Curfew, girl, must ring tonight!"

Wild her eyes and pale her features, stern and white her thoughtful brow,
And within her secret bosom Bessie made a solemn vow,
She had listened while the judges read, without a tear or sigh,
"At the ringing of the curfew, Basil Underwood must die."
And her breath came fast and faster, and her eyes grew large and bright,
As in undertone she murmured, "Curfew must not ring tonight!"

With quick step she bounded forward sprang within the old church door,
Left the old man threading slowly paths he'd trod so oft before;
Not one moment passed the maiden, but with eye and cheek aglow
Mounted up the gloomy tower, where the bell swung to and fro;
As she climbed the dusty ladder, on which fell no ray of light,
Up and up, her white lips saying, "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

She has reached the topmost ladder, o'er her hangs the great dark bell,
Awhirl is the gloom beneath her like the pathway down to hell;
Lo, the ponderous tongue is swinging, 'tis the hour of curfew now,
And the sight has chilled her bosom, stopped her breath, and paled her brow,
Shall she let it ring? No, never! Flash her eyes with sudden light,
And she springs and grasps it firmly: "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

Out she swung, far out; the city seemed a speck of light below;
She 'twixt heaven and earth suspended as the bell swung to and fro;
And the sexton at the bell-ropes, old and deaf, heard not the bell,
But he thought it still was ringing far young Basil's funeral knell.
Still the maiden clung more firmly, and, with trembling lips and white,
Said, to hush her heart's wild beating, "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

It was o'er; the bell ceased swaying, and the maiden stepped once more
Firmly on the dark old ladder, where for hundred years before
Human foot had not been planted; but the brave deed she had done
Should be told long ages after—often as the setting sun
Should illumine the sky with beauty, aged sires, with heads of white
Long should tell the little children, "Curfew did not ring that night."

O'er the distant hills came Cromwell; Bessie sees him, and her brow
Full of hope and full of gladness, has no anxious traces now.
At his feet she tells her story, shows her hands all bruised and torn,
And her face so sweet and pleading, yet with sorrow pale and worn,
Touched his heart with sudden pity—lit his eye with misty light;
"Go, your lover lives!" said Cromwell: "Curfew shall not ring tonight!"

—Mrs. Rose Hartwick Thorpe

others as perfect in a literary sense and as full of that indescribable rhythmic swing which characterizes "Curfew" and the publisher has brought them together in a form which should make both author and public grateful.

Nor was the reviewer exaggerating when he said that "no poem written by an American author has been so widely copied, nor has achieved so universal a popularity." For "Curfew" has been translated into nearly every language of the world and in the words of another critic, is "universally recognized as a veritable classic." In 1883 Hillsdale college conferred upon its author an honorary M. A. degree because, as the president of the college wrote at the time, "You have written a poem that will never permit the name of its author to die while the English language is spoken."

After the success of "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" Mrs. Thorpe became a regular contributor of short stories and poems to leading magazines and weeklies and from 1881 to 1904 she published no less than a dozen books of poems and stories for young people. For the last 40 years she has lived in San Diego, Calif., and she is living there today at the age of eighty-eight, still keenly interested in the world and modern conditions, although she has not written any poems for 10 years.

Curiously enough, she does not consider "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" as her best work. Instead she favors her poem "Remember the Alamo" or possibly "The Station Agent's Story." But in the hearts of thousands of Americans who went to the "little red schoolhouse" and who used to "speak pieces" on Friday afternoons, "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight" holds a place that is secure.

Two days before you put a red circle around July 18 on your calendar in honor of the author of "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight," you might have marked July 16 in the same way. For on July 16, 1848, was born at Johnsbury, Warren county, New York, Eben Eugene Rexford, son of Jabez and Rebecca (Wilcox) Rexford, destined for future fame as the man who wrote "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

When Eben was seven years old his parents moved to Ellington, Wis. At the age of fourteen young Rexford's writing ability began to assert itself when one of his poems appeared in the New York Weekly. Three years later he received his first payment for literary work from Publisher Frank Leslie of New York. Then he entered Lawrence college at Appleton, Wis., and paid his way by writing for the magazines.

It was while he was a student at Lawrence that he wrote the poem which was to make him famous. He sold "Silver Threads Among the Gold" to Frank Leslie's Chimney Corner for \$3. After keeping a clipping of the verses in his desk for two years, he showed it to a musician named H. P. Danks, who was suddenly inspired to set it to music. That

was in 1878 and it immediately became well known. The invention of the phonograph helped make "Silver Threads Among the Gold" one of our best known "popular ballads" and it reached the height of its fame around 1915 when Richard J. Jose, a leading tenor, insisted on featuring it in many of his programs.

After Rexford's school days were over he settled at Shiocton, Wis., to make literature his profession. He became a contributor of prose and verse to all the leading periodicals of the time and since he was also an authority on flowers he was for 10 years floricultural editor of the Ladies' Home Journal. Among his published books were "Home Floriculture," "A Work About Bulbs," "Flowers: How to Grow Them," "Grandmother's Garden," an illustrated poem; "Brother and Lover," a poem of the Civil war; and a collection of miscellaneous poems.

Besides the song which made him most widely known, Rexford also wrote these songs which were once very popular: "Only a Pansy Blossom," "Sing a Song to Me" and a Latin version of "Jesus Lover of My Soul." He



EBEN E. REXFORD

was also a composer of many church hymns. During his lifetime he is said to have written more than 700 poems, many of them for children. Harry Golding, English author, in compiling a collection of what he called the best children's verses in the English language, selected three of Rexford's. The only other American poets thus honored were Eugene Field and James Whitcomb Riley.

Rexford died of typhoid fever in a hospital in Green Bay, Wis., October 16, 1916. Several years ago a large granite memorial was dedicated on the lawn of the Congregational church in Shiocton which he helped build. A bronze tablet on the memorial gives the outstanding events in his career and concludes with the words "To Everyone God Gives a Share of Work, to Do Some Time, Somewhere"—a quotation from one of his poems.



On a July day 75 years ago there died in New York city the author of another poem which you may have recited on a Friday afternoon in the little red schoolhouse. Or have you forgotten it? It is:

WOODMAN, SPARE THAT TREE

Woodman, spare that tree!
Touch not a single bough!
In youth it sheltered me,
And I'll protect it now.
'Twas my forefather's hand
That placed it near his cot;
There, woodman, let it stand,
Thy ax shall harm it not!

That old familiar tree,
Whose glory and renown
Are spread o'er land and sea,
And wouldst thou hew it down?
Woodman, forbear thy stroke!
Cut not its earthbound ties;
O, spare that aged oak,
Now towering to the skies!

When but an idle boy
I sought its graceful shade;
In all their gushing joy
Here, too, my sisters played,
My mother kissed me here;
My father pressed my hand—
Forgive my foolish tear,
But let that old oak stand!

My heart strings round thee cling,
Close as thy bark, old friend!
Here shall the wild birds sing,
And still thy branches bend,
Old tree! the storm still brave!
And, woodman, leave the spot;
While I've a hand to save,
Thy ax shall harm it not!

The man who wrote that poem was George P. Morris, who was born in Philadelphia October 10, 1802. Early in his youth, he moved to New York and at the age of fifteen began contributing to the columns of the New York papers.

One of his acquaintances in New York was a man, 17 years his elder, who was already noted as a poet and editor but who was destined for even greater fame in later years—Samuel Woodworth, who wrote the song "The Old Oaken Bucket." In 1823 Morris and Woodworth established a new magazine, the New York Mirror and Ladies Literary Gazette. Later Morris associated with him in this venture another well-known poet, Nathaniel P. Willis, Hiram Fuller, a journalist, and Theodore S. Fay, a novelist, who continued the magazine until 1842.

Meanwhile, he was establishing a reputation as an author, as well as an editor, for he was a graceful writer of both prose and poetry, many of the latter being set to music. One critic dubbed him "The Song Writer of America" and his colleague, Willis, once declared that at any time he could get \$50 for one of Morris' songs, unread, when no other song writer could sell one to the same buyer for a shilling. With Willis he also edited a volume of "American Melodies." Among the songs which he wrote that became very popular in Nineteenth century America were "Near the Lake Where Drooped the Willow," "We Were Boys Together," "Land Ho!," "Long Time Ago," "Where Hudson's Wave," "My Mother's Bible," "Whip-poor-Will!" (Remember how teacher let you whistle the chorus when you sang that song in school?)

But his greatest fame rests upon the poem "Woodman, Spare That Tree," which was later set to music and also became a popular song. The incident which inspired this poem was the following: Morris and a friend were walking through the woods in the neighborhood of Bloomingdale, N. Y., when his friend pointed out an old elm tree, under which he had played when a boy.

While the two men were sitting under the tree, enjoying its shade, a woodchopper came up with his ax and was ready to start cutting the tree down, when Morris' friend offered to pay him \$10 if he would spare it. The woodman accepted the money and signed a bond that the tree should not be harmed during the lifetime of Morris' friend.

The poem which Morris wrote, based upon this incident, became immediately popular when it was published and it was even more popular when it was set to music. Morris' long life of literary activity came to an end on July 6, 1864, in New York city. Most of the things which he wrote are forgotten now—all save one, "Woodman, Spare That Tree." It is still remembered and quoted by thousands of Americans who know most of its lines even though they may never have heard of the George P. Morris, the man who wrote it.

Take Gospel to Tribes by Plane

Toledo Minister Is Named To Unusual Post in New Guinea.

TOLEDO, OHIO.—The Rev. D. S. Yount, Toledo flying pastor, is leaving for Dutch New Guinea, where he will fly to hitherto inaccessible regions in what he believes one of the first attempts of Protestant missions to use aircraft for teaching the Gospel.

"At present because of the rapids in the rivers of Borneo it takes missionaries 60 days by dugout native canoes to make trips which I believe I can accomplish by plane in two hours," the minister said. Yount has resigned as pastor of the Toledo Gospel Chapel here, following his appointment as airplane missionary to New Guinea for the Christian and Missionary alliance.

His appointment represents realization of a 10-year dream. "Ten years ago," he said, "I first thought of the idea of carrying the Word of God to the natives in distant parts by means of the airplane.

Believes Obstacles Overcome. "In many parts of the world it has been virtually impossible in the past to reach natives without lengthy and perilous voyages through the jungle. But the airplane solves the problem."

Yount, in preparation for the carrying out of his idea, read all he could find on aviation.

"Some of my congregation thought it a bit strange, I will admit, having a minister who studied aviation in his spare time. But I knew what I wanted, so I stuck to it."

Three years ago the pastor had completed his preparatory studies, and decided it was time to begin flying.

"The first flight was a great thrill, and so was my solo flight," Yount said. "Since my solo I have been concentrating on becoming sufficiently expert in navigation and piloting to meet any emergency which may arise."

Yount will be chief pilot and will transport missionaries and supplies from the headquarters of the mission at Macassar, Celebes island.

Tribes Long Isolated. Working with him will be Dr. R. A. Jaffrey, chairman of the field missionary work in that section. Most of the work will be with tribes whose first sight of a white man was in the fall of 1937.

"We are curious to know how the natives, who are superstitious, will react when they first see the plane," Yount said.

The plane, built at Wichita, Kan., will be shipped to Macassar. It is equipped with ambulance and first aid supplies and has two-way radio communication.

The flying pastor will take his family with him to Macassar. His wife and their children, Donald, eight; Howard, four; and Marilyn, 18 months; "all are anticipating eagerly the trip," according to Yount.

Legerdemain May Open College Door for Youth

CLEVELAND.—Sixteen-year-old Willard Sporieler, one of the country's youngest professional magicians, hopes to work his way through college by pulling rabbits out of hats and by making things disappear.

"I have been earning money through magic for several years," he said; "ever since a friend of mine in Hammond, Ind., showed me a few elementary tricks. I'm sure it will be easy to work my way through college that way."

Sporieler first became interested in legerdemain in 1930—when he was seven. He has accumulated \$500 worth of equipment and developed new twists to old tricks.

Venerable Parrot Dead, Staunch Cleveland Bird

LEWES, DEL.—Birdy, a Democratic parrot who has rooted for President Grover Cleveland for the past 55 years, is dead.

Birdy was born about the time of Cleveland's first term of office in 1848 and acquired an extensive vocabulary from the political jargon of the times. Although he was a Democrat, the bird was a one-man parrot, for he praised only President Cleveland.

"Hurrah for Cleveland!" he would shout on the slightest provocation. A few years ago Birdy lost his eyesight, and this somewhat dampened his political ardor. But whenever he became ruffled he would always give a rousing "Hurrah for Cleveland!"

Hen Pheasant's Brood Are Plymouth Rocks

YAKIMA, WASH.—It's considered almost normal nowadays for state game departments to use hen chickens to hatch thousands of pheasants for distribution over game fields.

But it's unusual when a hen pheasant reverses the operation. Workers found such a family strutting around on a ranch near here. The chicks were Plymouth Rocks. The pheasant apparently had robbed the nest from the hen that laid the eggs.



By L. L. STEVENSON

It was rather early in the evening. A young woman was driving alone west on Fifty-seventh street. As she neared Ninth avenue she slowed because the light was against her. Stopped by the light at Eighth avenue, she reached for her bag, which had been on the seat beside her. It was gone. So were various identifications, a highly important bunch of keys, \$10 in cash, a new compact and all the rest of the equipment a woman carries in a handbag. The bag was new and quite expensive, a birthday present, in fact. Thinking it might have bounced out of the car, she drove back as far as Tenth avenue. She had no luck. Then she recalled that when she had slowed down she thought she heard the door click. So she made a report to the police. So far nothing has happened, not even her identifications and World's fair ticket having been recovered.

They work fast, do those sneak thieves who specialize in stealing from motor cars on the west side in midtown. Usually they are small and eel-like and much the color of shadows. Sometimes they operate in pairs. One, either on pretext of wiping the windshield or by other means, distracts the attention of the driver. That is all that is necessary because if there are two persons in the car, the thieves remain in hiding. While the driver is watching one lad, another either softly opens the door or reaches through a window, gathers up whatever is loose, quietly drops off and disappears. Lone workers creep onto running boards and wait for an opportune time to get in their work. Lone women are favorite victims because women leave purses and handbags on the seat.

Small chance there is for the recovery of any property taken, no matter whether or not it is valueless to the thief. That which is held worthless is merely dropped down a manhole. There is just as little chance of the thieves being captured. At the sight of any one who looks suspicious, whether or not in uniform, they disappear in the darkness or in the old rookeries which are their homes. The only safe way for a woman to drive in certain sections of New York is with both doors locked and windows run up too high for a thief to reach inside.

New York scene reported by May: On Forty-ninth street, two pigeons calmly strolling up to the front door of a swanky restaurant and all but going inside. After they have waited a little while a headwaiter comes out and scatters food at the curb. The pigeons hurry after it and at once begin to enjoy a meal. Not alone, however. A number of their friends, that have been quietly waiting in the background, come forward and join them in the free food.

Getting back to thievery. The other day, a batch of pancakes, apparently cooking on a gas range, was stolen from one of the exhibits of the World's fair. They looked like the kind that are usually eaten with syrup but they weren't. They were made of wax. So if the thief was really hungry, he or she was out of luck. Other thieves have had similar bad fortune. Among the (wax) food products stolen have been sausages, a baked potato, biscuits and cherry pie.

Was just worrying about a last paragraph when J. P. called me up with his voice full of indignation. He is one of the few close friends who was actually born in New York and who has never been away from the city for more than a week except for the year and a half he served in France during the World war. Well, he was standing at Broadway and Forty-third street when a sight-seeing bus barker came up and addressing him as "Stranger," tried to sell him a ticket to see the town. And because of that I won't feel so badly hereafter when they tackle me—which they are always doing.

(Bell Syndicate—WNU Service.)

Britain Will Scrutinize Exercise for Its Women

LONDON.—Does violent exercise have a good or bad effect on women and girls? Britain's national fitness council hopes to be able to answer this question, over which there is so much controversy, when it has completed an investigation now in progress. Famous doctors will sift evidence collected from medical officers, educationists and gymnastic instructors in all parts of the country. The health records of modern athletic young women will be compared with those of their not so active sisters at the start of the century. Many doctors, while favoring such sports as swimming, dancing, rhythmic gymnastics and rowing, believe that competitive athletics for women should be banned.

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Our Intellect
God has placed no limits to the exercise of the intellect He has given us, on this side of the grave.—Bacon.

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Here's good advice for a woman during her change (usually from 35 to 50), who fears she'll lose her appeal to men, who worries about hot flashes, loss of pep, dizzy spells, upset nerves and moody spells. Get more fresh air, 8 hrs. sleep and if you need a good general system tonic take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made especially for women. It helps Nature build up physical resistance, thus helps give more vitality to enjoy life and avoid causing listless nerves and disturbing symptoms that often accompany change of life. WELL WORTH TRYING!

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