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## The Happiest Person I Ever Knew

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FOR many years I have been watching the pursuit of happiness. What a beating of bushes! what a scurrying hither and thither I have seen! It would appear that most people regard happiness as a kind of wild rabbit, which they must hunt and capture. They pursue it with horses and hounds and ships and high powered cars. They stop at no expense.

Yet I have not known a pursuer to capture Happiness. All of them return to their home disappointed. Often after searching the world for her, they have found the Angel waiting for them on their own doorsteps, and she has welcomed them, and for a day or two they have been filled with the light of her countenance.

"At last," they say, "we have captured her."

Then, suddenly she is gone. "What we need is more money and a bigger house," some of them have said. Or, this has been a too common plea: "If I had another husband, or another wife—someone who really loved me and my great purpose—then I should be able to find Happiness, and I am sure she would stay with me."

All these incidents of the chase I have witnessed and the tragic failures which have followed them. I have come to think that to one who pursues Happiness can ever hope to catch her.

WHEN I was a young man I began to look for those who had solved the great secret. I saw much unhappiness in the big city. I was rather unhappy myself among strangers. A successful business man befriended me. He was a well dressed man cheerful and respected. He gave freely of his time and substance to help the poor. He had a handsome and devoted wife, a luxurious home, and beautiful children.

I said to myself: "Here is a happy man." Then one night he came late to my lodgings, his face pale and drawn, his eyes haggard. And he told me the story of his life:

When he was a young man he had taken a crime upon himself, to save his father, and had served a term in prison. For years he had been paying blackmail to keep his family from disgrace. At last it was going to overwhelm them. He had learned that a certain newspaper had the story in type and would print it next morning. Would I see what I could do? I went to the office of the paper, and the story was killed; but always was like one living under a cloud full of whirlwinds and thunderbolts.

His happiness came and went, all because he was in need of courage, I think. So I concluded that to be happy one must be free of fear; assured that the man one is, not the man one has been, is of vital importance. This poor fellow really has some reason to feel a pride in his dark secret; but the thought of his

wife and children shook him with a mighty trembling when it threatened.

THERE was one man above all others whom I wanted to meet. No other author of my time had so stirred the great depths of human nature. He was an inexhaustible fountain of joy. His jocose spirit had swept over the earth; and as it touched the hearts of men they had been like reeds shaken by the wind. It would have been hard to find a civilized man who had not laughed at the drolleries of Mark Twain.

"He must be the happiest man in the world," I said to myself.

I went to see him, one day, at his home in Hartford. If I remember rightly it was in winter of 1888. He was in a room up-stairs, with a billiard table in the middle of it. I thought him one of the saddest-looking men I had ever met! Of course it was a serious matter to have a timid youngster breaking into the china shop of his meditations. He sat with his feet on a window sill and said that for weeks he had been unable to write anything fit for a better fate than feeding the fireplace. He had fed the fireplace until he

was sick of it. His stuff burnt well. That was all he could say for it.

He was in a beautiful home with a devoted wife and children, yet he did not look or talk like a happy man.

I said to myself: "This is only the mood of an hour," due possibly to my presence. Give him a chance, and I am sure he could be the happiest of men.

Some years later he came to luncheon with me at a little Bohemian club organized by Stephen Crane and Edward Marshall, Willis Hawkins and myself, all editors or special writers on the metropolitan press. He had that same sad look that I had observed in Hartford, even when he had a hot Scotch in his stomach and another in his hand, with a box of his favorite cigars on the tabouret beside him and a genial glow in the fireplace. In a drawing, melancholy tone, he said to me:

"Bacheller, I am always careful about the end of a story. I try to put a double snapper at the end—one to start the effect I am seeking, the other to prolong it. I have just thought of a story, and I don't know how to end it."

"It is a story of a man, born

on a farm, who went to a city and made a success. He never married. He was a middle-aged bachelor. One day he was thinking of the old home and of the pretty girl he had played with and admired in his early school days. She had never married, either. Perhaps it was because she had been fond of him. He decided to return to the scenes of his youth and look her up. He went back to the familiar, rustic neighborhood. Mary, the girl, was away on a visit, but would be returning in a day or two.

"He tramped over the trails he had known as a boy. In his brother's top-buggy he traveled the familiar roads; and one day when he was driving on a lonely highway, he saw the beloved brook and the old swimming hole.

"It was hard by the wayside, a little beyond a point where the old road came out of a strip of woods. He was hot and dusty. What would be the matter with having a swim in that deep, clear pool? There was almost no travel on that back country road. Why shouldn't he do it? He was in a land where there were no bathhouses. The temptation was too much for him

He hitched the horse, took off his clothes, and dove in with the reckless abandon of a boy. When he came out, he dried himself with his hands in the old way in the old way. He got on his undershirt and his overshirt and his collar and necktie. And just then he heard a team coming and voices back in the woods.

"He had not time to put on his trousers. So he jumped into the buggy, drew up the lap robe, and sat there waiting for the team to pass. In a minute he saw, to his dismay, Mary, the girl of his dreams, and other members of her family coming in a double wagon.

"Hello, Mary! he called, as they came closer.

"Hello, Bill! Where are you stopping?"

"Over at my brother's."

"She got out of the wagon and came to greet him. To him she looked as charming as she had in the old days. Suddenly she asked, 'May I get in and ride with you?'"

"Now, my question is: How is he going to answer her? What can he say, with her standing eagerly at the side of

the buggy and looking up into his face?"

"Perhaps," I suggested, "he would say, 'Yes if you will let me have all the "lap robe"'"

"But how about the trousers?" Mark Twain demurred. "That is a valuable pair of trousers lying beside the brook, and they are bound to increase in value as the day proceeds."

We who sat around him were roaring with laughter, but the sad look with which he had begun the story was still on his face. There was a melancholy note in his voice even when he had arrived at the ludicrous plight of poor Bill, for whom his great ingenuity could find no relief. Was he a consummate actor? Or was there behind his humor a background of melancholy never quite concealed?

Well, undoubtedly was a great actor, but the note of melancholy was no part of his acting. It was a part of him. It was real, as I was to learn later.

The next time I saw him he was in bed at his home on Fifth Avenue. I imagine it was the ex-bed of some old king or emperor. It was an immense thing of richly carved mahogany. He was propped up on pillows, with his meerschaum pipe in mouth.

"Bacheller I have been thinking of my nose," he said. "I hate the damn thing. It turns down so. It goes too far. It irritates me."

These were characteristic sentences. They carried the note of self-inspection that was, I think, the keynote of his character. Intellectually he was a gigantic, full furnished man. In his own heart were the loves and passions and frailties of the great multitude of his brothers. Added thereto was a genius for self-expression the world had rarely seen. Mark Twain was his piece of soil, and he worked it well. He was kind and just and noble-hearted.

But he lacked one thing, the spiritual eye, which Lincoln had and which, it seems to me, added to his great humanity the unlimited strength and vision and patience of a god. It was the bridge of faith between Lincoln's heart and the Great Source of Power across which angels came to bring him comfort in his days of need. In spite of his sorrows, Lincoln was a profoundly happy man and the greatest dispenser of comfort and happiness the world had seen since the tragedy of the green hill of old.

Mark Twain's great need was that bridge of faith to lift his spirit above the blind wall of fatalism which enclosed his life and beside which he fell at last bruised and broken. In the view of this incomparable humorist, birth was a misfortune and life pathetic doom of inescapable miseries. He was one of the unhappiest of men.

I had heard much of Mr. Andrew Carnegie. There were not more than three men who had greater wealth. He lived in palaces. He enjoyed the friendship of world leaders. He had studied the art of converting his riches into human welfare. His fame had traveled to the ends of the earth. I imagined that he must be the happy man I sought. When my wife and I were invited to visit his home in Scotland we journeyed up the Caledonian and Crinan canals to Inverness. Continued on Page 4.