

GILMORE--- A Mountain Sketch By James Larkin Pearson

We never had any "Little Orphan Annie" to live at our house when I was a boy. To that extent I was less fortunate than James Whitcomb Riley. But we had the next best thing. We had Gilmore. Everybody on Beaver Creek knew Gilmore. He was the boy with the club foot. He was a sort of waif. He had a mother and some sisters somewhere back in the Brushies, but there didn't seem to be unity and cohesion in the family. They scattered and drifted around, living in homes here and there; sometimes working for board only, and sometimes getting a small monthly allowance.

In the course of his drifting, the boy Gilmore one day landed on our doorstep. It was springtime and there was farm work to do. I was only ten—too small to be much help with the heavy work. My father needed a boy. So Gilmore stayed. He was a big raw-boned, awkward boy of perhaps sixteen, and as already stated he had a club foot. That foot was the most conspicuous thing about Gilmore, and the thing longest remembered by anyone who saw him.

There was a story behind the club foot, and Gilmore told us the story. He told it many times—so many times that we all knew it by heart. When he was a small baby he was left alone in the house one day while his mother and his older sister were out at work or doing some errand. He was left in a box or crib where it was thought he would be safe. But he crawled out and made his way to the fireplace. There was a fire burning on the hearth. He tumbled into it, falling with one little foot directly in the bed of coals. When his mother returned a few minutes later the foot was hopelessly burned. She gathered it up and bound things to it and did all she could in her ignorant way to save the foot; but it could never be anything more than a club. When the burn finally healed, anything that might have remained of the foot seemed to be doubled back into the ankle, and it was just a red knot on the end of a badly scarred leg.

But the club foot grew as the boy grew, and there had to be a special sort of round shoe made to wear on it. The shoe looked more like an elephant's foot than anything else, and its hard leather bottom made a noise like a maul as he stumped about over the floor.

Gilmore's mother was a typical product of the mountain coves. She was slim and bony and not very strong, with a sort of fatalistic outlook on life. Whatever had to be would be—unless it could be avoided by some of the many charms and omens that she knew. Her baby Gilmore got into the fire because she had neglected some good-luck charm that might have saved him. She knew all the "signs" and all the superstitions, and to her they were gospel truth. To doubt one of the "signs" would be heresy of the worst sort.

So it turned out that Gilmore's mother had taught her clubfooted boy all the folk-lore, all the mountain sayings, all the charms and superstitions that she knew. At the time he came to our house he was as full of them as his skin would hold. I don't think it possible that Riley's "Little Orphan Annie" had anything on Gilmore. He could tell the most realistic stories of ghosts and goblins and spooks and boggers. He knew all the old mountain ballads and all the "lonesome songs," and could sing them in a voice that would make one's hair stand on end.

I was too young at the time to realize the historical value of those things, else I might have saved a treasure-chest full of the choicest folk-lore stuff that is now fast disappearing with the old generation that knew it so well.

And that wasn't all that Gilmore knew. He could do "sleight of hand" tricks. He could "throw his voice." Boy, that was some stunt, and we all held our breath when Gilmore went around to the back side of the house to "call up Uncle Peter." He would speak in his own natural voice and say, "Hello, Uncle Peter." And away down in the deep hollow below the house we would hear Uncle Peter answer. It was a different voice entirely, and it sounded as if it came from away off down in the deep hollow. Gilmore would then proceed to hold an animated conversation with Uncle Peter. He would ask all sorts of questions and Uncle Peter would answer them, and sometimes they would get into a hot dispute about something and have a regular fuss. Then again Gilmore would ask Uncle Peter to come up to the house, and Uncle Peter would start. We could hear his voice getting closer and closer as he came on up the hill. It was a sort of wheezy voice, as I remember, and sounded as if it must be coming out of a barrel. But there was no denying that it sounded far off, though we knew all the time that it was Gilmore himself doing all the talking. We had never heard of Ventriloquism, and I don't suppose Gilmore had either. To him and us it was "throwing the voice."

He had learned it from some gitted tramp or straggler who had passed through and tarried for awhile among the "poor whites" of the neighborhood.

Gilmore tried to teach me how to "throw my voice," but I didn't seem to have sense enough to get onto it. After a whole summer of seeing and hearing him do it, I couldn't get so much as one little grunt out of Uncle Peter. My voice just wouldn't "throw" worth a cent. But I still remember what hard work it seemed to be, even for Gilmore himself. He would stand slightly humped over, with his hand on his stomach, his throat tense, and his Adam's apple sticking out, and the voice (which was a kind of strained stage-whisper) seemed to come from away down in his chest. It seemed to be a terribly hard and exhausting sort of work, and Gilmore couldn't keep it up for more than a minute till he would have to stop and rest.

Gilmore could put beans in his mouth and blow them out through his nostrils or his ears, which seemed to me a very dangerous sort of prank. I never tried to learn that. And Gilmore could make perfectly plain objects disappear and reappear at will. One morning when he got up, the shoe for his club foot was gone. It couldn't be found anywhere. There was the other shoe all right, just where he had put both of them the night before. But the club shoe was gone. He hunted and we all hunted, up-stairs and down, in the garret—everywhere. Maybe the dog had toted it off, so we hunted outside, searching the premises all about. By this time breakfast was ready. We gave up the search and sat down to eat. During the meal, some member of the family happened to glance around to where Gilmore's other shoe was lying on the floor, and there was the club shoe with it, just as innocent as if it had been there all the time. Had it been there, or had it not? If not,

how did it get there? Gilmore seemed as much surprised as the rest of us but we always believed it was one of his tricks.

Among the scores of old songs and ballads that Gilmore knew was one called "The Darby Ram," which I think impressed me more than any of the others. It was one of those things that went on interminably, each verse being changed a little from the previous one. I have often regretted that I didn't think about writing it down and keeping the words. I only remember a few stray lines of it. I hope it has been preserved in some of the collections of folk-lore.

In the years following that summer with us, Gilmore lived in the near-by neighborhood, and I saw him often. Then we drifted away in different directions and I didn't see him any more. But I heard in later years that he had married and raised a family.

And just a few weeks ago—since the above sketch was written—I read in one of the Lenoir papers an account of Gilmore's death. I hope he will sleep well, and not be disturbed by any of the spooks and goblins that he told me about when I was a little boy.

Great men, great men, learned and wise.
Have you any secret from the fat fat skies?
Have you any formula, tried and true.
That nobody understands but you?
Wise men, wise men, steeped in lore.
Have you any key to the magic door?
Have you any pass word, mystic deep.
That I, even I, might learn and keep?
Strong men, strong men, muscled and thewed.
Where do you get your powerful food?
Have you any garden in some hid glen.
That grows good living for mighty men?
Great men, wise men, strong men all.
This is the cry of the weak and small.
Tell me the secret and give me the sign.
And let your power be also mine.
—James Larkin Pearson.

DON'T EVER "STUFF A COLD" By James Larkin Pearson

Sit up. Or sit down. Whichever you please. But be still. And listen. The pastor of this here flock is going to preach you a sermon. It is going to be a sermon that you need to hear and fully understand. It will do you good all the way from the bald spot on your dome to the corn on your big toe.

I will take for my text an old "saying" that you have all heard repeated a thousand times, and I'll just bet your Sunday hat against Aunt Sindy's corset that you have misunderstood it just as everybody else has. It goes like this:

"Stuff a cold and starve a fever."
I don't know who is the author of that verse of home-made and hand-picked scripture, but I have had it thrown in my face wrong end foremost until I am getting pretty doggon tired of it, and right here is where I begin to get even. I guess this little sermon will just about set the world on fire, and I don't care three whoops in glory if it does. I have tried in every moderate and reasonable way to get the doggon world sorter straightened out on that old be-whiskered sample of left-handed wisdom, but without any success that you could notice. Now I am going to turn loose all my big guns in one mighty uproar of earth-shaking verbal thunder, and if this don't bring home the coon-skin, then the coon just wasn't there, nohow.

"Stuff a cold and starve a fever."
Mind you, I am not finding any fault with the old saying itself if properly understood. What I object to is the tarnation fool way in which all the idiotic Solomons of creation insist on reading into it a meaning which it was never intended to have. In other words, they have exactly reversed its meaning and started it galloping off in the wrong direction with about forty-seven pounds of rotten lies tied to its tail.

Now in order to be perfectly fair and honest about it and get this here sermon lined up in regular preacher-fashion, I will have to go back again to the sacred old medical almanac that hangs on a rusty nail over the kitchen mantel. In the prophetic language of Dr. Killen's almanac, in the umpty-steenth verse of the epistle to the Pale Papas of Punishment, we find these inspired words: "Spare the rod and spoil the child."
It is generally believed that the

above words are an actual quotation from the Bible, but all the best Bible-searchers in this neck of the woods have failed to find them.

But let it be scripture or no scripture, it SAYS something, and if you take it literally it looks to me like pretty bum advice for anybody to give or to take—

"Spare the rod and spoil the child."
What in the name of forty blue cows would anybody want to give such advice for? Too many children are spoiled already, without having some gospel gun come around and advocate spoiling more of them.

Personally, the pastor of this here flock is not a believer in the use of the "rod" as a means of changing little imps into star-eyed saints. It usually works the other way. The brat who gets the most beatings from an old Puritan daddy is apt to grow worse under the treatment instead of better. But evidently the pigeon-toed prophet of pugnacity who thunk up that verse of pseudo-scripture must have believed in it. Was he literally telling parents that it was their duty to spoil their children? Surely not. The thought that he was trying to get out of his superannuated old system was this:

"If you spare the rod you will spoil the child."
It was a warning. It was telling parents that they should NOT spoil their children. And I don't suppose there is a person in the world so dumb as to misunderstand that.

Then why in the name of Adam's grandpappy can't people have sense enough to take that other old saying in the same way?—

"Stuff a cold and starve a fever."
They are precisely alike in structure and in meaning. That is, they both mean exactly the opposite of what they SEEM to say. They both belong in a class of old sawed-off sayings that have suffered the tortures of amputation at both ends and "boiling down" until they have become cryptic and somehow self-contradictory in appearance. The one says, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," but everyone agrees that it doesn't mean that. It means just the opposite of what it seems to say. "Stuff a cold and starve a fever" is to be taken in exactly the same way. What it really says is this:

WHISPER IT TO THE WORLD ---- By James Larkin Pearson

There was a time, as I remember, when you could see who should be in the stable door. But you never see any written edge of a horse's head big enough to hold it. Did you ever see a tight head, worked by excitement, that happens a breathless race and all go under the wire together?

Mama, he's mine?
No, he's mine!
I ain't so, he's mine!
Mama will be big enough in two weeks to hitch to a little wagon.

My young! Don't talk about Wall Street nor the Steel Trust nor even Henry Ford himself. They are not in it. They are all pitiful jokers, on their way to the poolhouse. The boy who owns a calf and a little wagon, he it is that rolls in wealth surpassing the dreams of avarice. I know, for I was once a boy, and I once owned a calf and a little truck wagon.

And then, do you know, I saw Flude and Bill at the woodpile. There was a log log and there was a crosscut saw, and it ever truck wheels fell from the end of a log they were falling then.

Maybe not in two weeks, but eventually—and there will be some real hauling done on this old farm.

That is, I might add, if the wicked old real man will stay away. The real man ought to be hung in several languages, anyhow. He who would kill a calf that might pull a boy's wagon—away with the heart-les wretch!

"If you stuff a cold you will make it worse, and it may go into a fever which you will then have to starve."
See the point, honey?
For more than twenty-five years I have been a strong advocate of Fasting as a cure for colds, as well as for many other common ailments of the body. I have used that method of treatment for many years, and I know by personal experience that it DOES work. Nothing under the sun will knock out a "bad cold" half as quick as a good fast of about three or four days. Drink plenty of water and don't eat a bite of anything for a few days and your cold will be gone. But if you go on eating in the usual way, or more than usual, your cold will hang on and on for weeks. You will blow and you will snifle and you will snort. You will cough and you will sneeze and you will groan. Your head will feel like a rotten pumpkin and your mouth will taste too awful for words. And you will not be fit to see anybody for three weeks.

Time and again I've heard them wail:
"Oh, I've got such a terrible cold! I've had it for a month and I can't get rid of it. I've doctored and done everything, and it gets worse."
But they HAVEN'T done everything. They haven't done the one thing that they should have had sense enough to do at the very first. They haven't FASTED.
"Oh, I'd starve to death," you say.

No, you wouldn't, honey. Not a bit of danger. The chances are you are over-fed and have enough surplus fat to live on for a month and be all the better off for getting it used up. That's the reason, and just about the only reason, why people take colds. They have stuffed their innards with all sorts of unsuitable food combinations that their eliminative machinery can't handle, and the result is an accumulation of toxic poisoning which piles up from day to day and would soon cause serious trou-

ble if it didn't find an outlet some way. So it breaks out as a cold, and all the mean, disagreeable symptoms that you hate so bad are really a safety-valve that rids you of the poison before it kills you. Strictly speaking, a cold is not a sickness. You were sick already and didn't know it, and the cold is just a method of getting well. If the cold didn't break out and rid you of the poison there might be a perfectly nice funeral at your house pretty soon and you would be shut up in a box and couldn't see it.

When foods are of the wrong sort or eaten in wrong combinations or in excess quantities, the result is an acid condition in the system which upsets the well-balanced scheme of nature. There gets to be too much acid and not enough alkali. Too much starch, sugar, meats, etc., will produce an over-acid condition. Then you need to cut out the starch, sugar, and meats, and live on fruits and vegetables awhile. Oranges and grapefruit are the very best foods for that purpose. Most people have a crazy notion that because fruits have a fruit acid in them they will produce more acid in the body. That is the exact opposite of the truth. The fruit acids are strictly alkaline in their effect on the body. They counteract the unhealthy acid condition of the system. This is another thing that the public mind is all muddled up about. People who find that they have an acid condition are afraid to eat fruit because they think it will make them worse. I heard a woman say once that if she ate fruit it made her "break out" all over. Well, bless her poor ignorant soul, "breaking out" was just what she needed. That was the poison getting out of her system. The fruit was driving it out. If she would go on eating the fruit a few days the breaking out would stop.

But getting back to FASTING. A fruit and vegetable diet is mighty good to clean out your poisoned and

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