

both o' you stretched out amongst the turnips, an' as fur as looks went, there didn't seem to be much difference betwixt you, 'cept that the b'ar had a hole in him you could 'a' rolled a punkin in without much trouble.

"The perceedin's, Benjamin, that follered the goin' off o' the gun was that you've got your right shoulder out o' joint, an' your cheek swelled up big as a hornet's nest, an' blacker than your Sunday-go-to-meetin' hat, an' your one eye shet up tigh as a snuff-box, an' your ginerl system sprung out o' plumb worse than a

knock-kneed hoss—all because you're so terrible sot in your ways."

Benjamin pondered over the question for awhile, and then said: "Mother, you was right. Nine would 'a' been a-plenty!"

Pete having returned by this time with the doctor, I rose to go on my way.

"I'm jest more than obleeged to you," said Mrs. Benjamin, shaking hands with me, "for givin' me the lift with Benjamin. He's powerful sot; but when he finds he's wrong he owns up like a man."

SUNNY SIDE of THE STREET

By MARSHALL P. WILDER



A Sunny Old City

A HOSPITAL is not a place that anyone would visit if he was in search of jollity, yet some of the merriest hours of my life were spent some years ago in one of the surgical institutes of Philadelphia. I was one of about three hundred people of all ages, sizes and dispositions who were under treatment for physical defects. Most of us were practically crippled, a condition which is not generally regarded to be conducive to hilarity; yet many of us had lots of fun, and all of it was made by ourselves. I was one of the luckiest of the lot, for Mother Nature had endowed me with a faculty for finding sunshine everywhere.

Yet part of my treatment was to lie in bed, locked in braces, for hours every day, and each of these hours seemed to be several thousand minutes long. So many other boys were under similar treatment that an attendant named Joe was kept busy in merely taking off our appliances. These were locked, for between pain and the restiveness peculiar to boys we would have removed them ourselves or for one another.

Joe was not a beauty, yet I distinctly remember recalling that his appearance was that of an angel of light, for I best remember him in the act of loosening my braces. Whenever the surgeon in charge was absent, we would beg Joe to unlock us. "Just five minutes—just a minute," and sometimes he would yield, after making us promise solemnly not to tell the doctor. The result recalls the story of the old negro who was seen to hammer his thumb at intervals. When asked why he did it, he replied:

"Kase it feels so good when I stop!"

To keep from thinking of my pain and helplessness, I kept looking about me for something to laugh at, and it was a rare day on which I failed to find it. When there came such a day I had only to close my eyes and look backward a few months or years—I was sure to recall something funny. Then I would laugh. Some other sufferer would ask what was amusing me, and when I told him he would also laugh; some one would hear him, and the story would have to be repeated.

Soon the word got about the building that there was a little fellow in one of the rooms who was always laughing to himself, or making others laugh, so all the boys insisted on being "let in on the ground floor"—which in my case was the fourth floor. I made no objection—was there ever a man so modest that he didn't like listeners when he had anything to say?

So it soon became the custom of all the boys who were not absolutely bound to their beds to congregate in my room, which would have comfortably held not more than a dozen.

Yet daily I had fifty or more around me. The earlier comers filled the chairs, later arrivals sprawled or curled on my bed, still later ones sat on the head-board and the foot-board, the floor accommodated others until it was packed, and the belated ones stowed themselves in the hall, within hearing distance.

'Twas a hard trip for some of them, poor fellows, for there were not enough attendants to carry them all, and three flights of stairs are a hard climb for cripples. So, to prevent unnecessary pain while I was outdoors taking the air, I hung a small American flag over the stair rail opposite my door whenever I was in. This could be seen from any of the lower halls. I learned afterward that it was the custom of royalty and other exalted personages to display a flag when they were "at home," but this did not frighten me—in memory of those hospital days, I always display a flag at my window when I am able to see my friends.

Boys are as fond as Irishmen of fighting for the mere fun of it, so we got a lot of laughing out of fist fights between some of the patients. The most popular contestants were Gott Dewey of Elmira, New-York, and a son of Sheriff Wright of Philadelphia. Both were seriously afflicted, though they seemed not to know it. Wright was a cross-eyed paralytic, while Dewey had St. Vitus dance, and was so badly paralyzed that he had no control over his natural means of locomotion. He could not even talk intelligibly, yet he had an intellect that impressed me deeply, even at that early day. He could cope with the hardest mathematical problem that anyone could offer. He read much, and his taste in literature and everything else was distinct and refined.

Yet, still being a boy, he enjoyed a fight, and as he and Wright were naturally antipathetic by temperament they were always ready for a set-to. These affairs were entirely harmless, for neither could hit straighter than a girl can throw a stone. The result of their efforts was "the humor of the unexpected," and it amused us so greatly that we never noticed the pathetic side of it.

These two boys did me the honor to become fond of me. Why they did it I don't know, unless because I never did anything in particular for Wright. Yet he was always teasing Dewey, who was proud and self-reliant, and insisted upon doing everything for himself. That he might serve himself at table, a little elevator was made for his convenience, and I was mischievous enough to disarrange the machinery so that food intended for his mouth should reach his ear. Yet he loved me dearly, and dashed at me affectionately, though erratically, whenever we met. I was unable to get about without crutches, so I frequently fell. If Dewey was in sight, he would hurry to my assistance, with disastrous results to both of us. Often Wright would offer assistance at the same time, and the two would fall over each other and me and attempt to "fight it out," while I would become helpless with laughter, and the three of us would lie in a heap until some attendant would separ-

ate the warriors and set me on my feet and crutches.

One rule of the institute was that no patients were to leave the building on Sunday—the day on which the physicians and attendants got most liberty. To enforce this rule there was a doorkeeper named Smith. He was a dwarf, hardly four feet high, who on Sunday would curl up in a box under his desk and wish he could have a mouthful or more of whisky, although a little of it would put him sound asleep and leave the door unguarded against anyone who cared to go out. How whisky got into the institute to be used upon Smith I don't know.

I recall a Sunday when we three, Dewey, Wright and I, conceived the idea of going to church. There was a church directly across the street, so we started for it a few moments after throwing a sop of whisky to our Cerberus. We had several mishaps on the way, due to my friends' well-meant but misdirected efforts to assist me, but passers-by kindly put us on our feet again. We got into church early, and passed up the aisle and entered the front pew.

Soon after the service began a young woman on our left compelled our attention by eying us intently—apparently she thought us the newest thing in "The Three Graces" line. Something moved me to nudge Dewey and tell him to stop flirting with that girl. Apparently he thought I was trying to be funny, for he began laughing in his peculiar laugh, which was sputter, with which no one familiar with it could help being amused; so Wright laughed too, after which it was impossible for me to keep quiet. We really were reverent little chaps, so we tried hard to suppress ourselves; but boys will be boys.

Suddenly we three exploded as one. We could hear tittering around us; the minister stopped in the middle of an eloquent period, raised his glasses, and I shall never forget his pained expression of astonishment as he caught sight of us for the first time. Suddenly there appeared a platoon of deacons, two of whom attached themselves to each of us, and we were conducted down the aisle, facing an imposing array of hymn-books, behind which the congregation were endeavoring to hide their own laughter.

The next day the church sent the institute a polite but earnest request that no more cripples be permitted to attend service in that church.

After leaving the institute I lost sight of Dewey, though I

never forgot his hearty way of greeting me whenever he met me, a heartiness which caused him to tumble all over me and compelled me to put out my arm to save him from falling. Five years ago on reaching a Philadelphia church whose members I had been engaged to "entertain," the committee of arrangements met me and said they wished to prepare me for the unusual appearance of their chairman. He had endowed the church, they told me, and was almost idolized by the people for his many noble qualities of head and heart, yet he was a paralytic, and his visage was shocking at first sight.

Suddenly the chairman himself entered the room, and I saw my old friend Gott Dewey. At the same instant he recognized me. He dashed at me in his old way. My arm instinctively caught him as it had done hundreds of times before. The committee, supposing I was frightened, endeavored to separate us, but we weren't easy to handle, so there was a close

mix-up, in which the dear old boy, with tears streaming down his cheeks, endeavored to explain that we were fast friends. Then he told me that he had read my book "People I've Smiled With," and been so greatly amused by it that he had suggested my engagement to entertain his church people, yet he had never imagined I was the Wilbur boy of "The Cripples' Palace."

It took him fifteen minutes to say all this and conquer his emotion. Then he wanted

to go on the platform and tell his people about me, and what old friends we were. I realized that if he was to do it I should never reach the platform myself, so persuaded him to let me tell the story. He consented, but insisted on accompanying me, and tearfully confirmed everything I said. So with him beside me, for "local color," I got along so well that there was not a dry eye in the house. It was an inexpressible relief to me to set everybody laughing afterward for I never needed a "bracing up" more than on that night. Dewey had always longed to be a lawyer,

