

THE REAL CHOIR BOY

NEITHER AN ANGEL NOR A DELIBERATE SINNER—JUST A BOY

There are two views of the choir boy—much choir boys as recently rebelled in the Church of the Heavenly Rest. One shows him a turbulent, restive being, a menace to ecclesiastical circles. The other depicts him in spotless robes, his eyes raised heavenward, an open book in his hand and his expression one of angelic purity—too good for this sinful earth.

Neither of these views is absolutely correct. At least, so says Mr. Henry Duncan, who for many years has come, as organist and choirmaster, into close contact with the boys who form the large choir at the Heavenly Rest Church. And Mr. Duncan probably knows as much about the chorister as any man in the country.

He brushes aside with one sweep of his energetic arm the impression that the boys under his care or those whom he has launched into wider circles are either rioters or angels.

"They are just boys—plain, American boys."

"And I want to say this about the American boy," he continued. "He is all right. He is a manly, straight, square little fellow. If you only know how to reach him."

"How do you reach him?"

The conversation took place in the choir of the church. Mr. Duncan slid along the bench as if he were about to play a fugue.

"Well, I will tell you this story, perhaps that will explain as well as anything else. A while ago a small boy came to me and said that he wanted to come into the choir. I asked him a few questions and discovered that he had come from the choir of another church.



"CARRY CHUCKIN' A BLUFF."

"Why did you leave your church?" I asked him.

"I couldn't get on with the choirmaster. 'I wheeled around and looked at him. 'Perhaps you think I can sing. You can't get on with your own choirmaster, you can't come here and try your tricks. Not on your life.'"

"The small boy looked me straight in the eyes.

"I know all about you, Mr. Duncan; my brother sang in your choir. You're rough, but you're no sneak."

"That is what I mean about reaching them. You can be as rough as you like, but don't sneak. Always keep your word, and they will keep their word to you. I've found it so."

"There is another thing that a man must do if he has dealings with boys in the mass, whether in church or elsewhere. He must shift his own point of view and look at life from theirs. He must go back to his own childhood and remember how matters appeared to him. Haven't I make the boys look at things as he does—that is, possibly; but if he is the right sort he can certainly remember how it seemed when he was a kid. Most men carry their boyhood with them late into life—all men should."

"And now I'll express a little of my suppressed wrath. When this controversy about the choir boy, which was really nothing at all as agitating as it is made out to be, I saw a letter in one of the dailies signed 'Episcopal Clergyman,' saying that most of the choir boys in the city were of the very lowest classes, the scum of the earth, that most of them were East Siders and absolutely unfitted by training and environment to be in the vested choir of a sacred edifice. That was the gist of the letter.

"Now, isn't that a beautiful letter for a clergyman to write? Supposing the boys do come from the scum of the earth, so much the better. I am not a sentimentalist, but if I remember, Christ's associates were poor and without caste. Why shouldn't the boys from the East Side or any other side come into the choirs? So much the better; it's a good place for them. I wish I had more. I don't want any caste feeling in my choir. I want to deal with Americans while I go, I saw a letter in one of the dailies signed 'Episcopal Clergyman,' saying that most of the choir boys in the city were of the very lowest classes, the scum of the earth, that most of them were East Siders and absolutely unfitted by training and environment to be in the vested choir of a sacred edifice. That was the gist of the letter.

"As a matter of fact the majority of boys in the choirs are gently born, with well bred mothers and fathers; it is true, though, that sometimes we have boys from the East Side. I am always glad when we do."

"The evolution of the choir boy, as I have seen it, is almost always this: first the preparatory class, then the choir, then confirmation. Then, when his voice changes, and he perhaps does not develop another, he joins the Choristers' League and sings in the church among his associates. I have seen that progression hundreds of times. It is so usual that it never occurs to me that it could be anything else, and in a majority of cases the choir boys under my charge are not the sons of church members.

"The influence of the Church on the boy as he sees it from the choir is of inestimable value. It is the power of environment, of habit and of association. If he gets nothing else he gets that, and what matter if he does lose his voice after a while? What is that in comparison with what he has gained?"

"The high, pure tone that is so much admired in the boy's voice is a matter of cultivation. It is not a falsetto tone, but it corresponds to the falsetto tone in the man's voice. The boy's voice at first is harsh, strident, unnatural, as a general thing. It takes two or three months to get it into condition for use in the regular choir."

"In the first place, I teach the boy to distinguish between the false and true tones. The middle register of his voice is particularly hard for him to control. I take a hymn, say 'Sun of My Soul,' which is pitched almost entirely in the middle register.



THE TRAINED SOLEMNITY OF A BOY CHOIR.

I make him sing it just as loud as he can, with the words, and then I call his attention to the kind of tone he is making.

"I make him repeat the hymn in that same voice over and over until he has that character of tone fixed in his mind. Then I take the same hymn and make him sing it all over again to the syllable 'oo' very softly; that syllable sends the voice against the roof of the mouth and the testicles are ought to be placed in the boy's voice to produce that high, transparent tone, the angelic voice, I believe it is called. This is when we call throwing the tone into the head."

"Boys are very imitative; they are like monkeys in that respect. You can argue with a boy until you are black in the face. You can talk to him about how a thing should be done, but it is not until he has seen and heard that he gets the idea and follows it."

"You can talk voice technique until you are tired, but when you explain to a boy that throwing his voice is a true thing, that he is throwing a ball to another boy across a field he understands what you mean and he gets to feel that his voice is a ball that he is tossing to a certain point. In playing ball, a boy doesn't stop to measure distance or height, he just knows by practice unconsciously, and it is so with the voice. After a few months' training he is able to throw that voice just where we want it placed, and he does it just as easily and just as naturally as if it were a ball. The falsetto tone in the man's voice is to explain the pitch to the boy. He understands and imitates."

"He is made to practise faithfully on the various vowel sounds until his tones are in shape. Then comes sight reading; it takes two or three months, with re-

hearsals four times a week, to prepare him for regular work."

"The teaching in the public schools? In all my experience of many years I have yet to find a boy coming to me from the public schools who had anything but a mere theoretical knowledge of music. The teaching there is not practical."

"Mr. Duncan played an imaginary interlude on the desk."

"Let me break right into this technical talk to tell you a little incident that happened to me in my work here—just to show you the choir boy as he sometimes is—not as he is usually pictured."

"Once in a great while you do see a boy in a choir who looks just like the picture of a choir boy, but his name is Casey. Casey was the smallest boy in the choir and he was as beautiful a child as I ever saw—big blue eyes, curls of gold and a rather delicate, ethereal appearance. He never said very much, but was always at rehearsal and church. One night he wasn't there; and when he came in the next

East Side where Casey lived. At the rehearsal, Casey was not there. Casey had moved, but pointed out the place. While I was walking along, up comes Webster. Webster was Casey's chum and a regular Chimey Fadden."

"What's the doin', boss?" he asked as he came along.

"Webster frequently came to rehearsal with Casey. He stopped on the way to speak to me and said, 'I was still feeling pretty sorry for the little chap and so I said, softly, 'Webster, Casey's mother's dead.'"

"Webster walked along a minute then blurted out."

"Casey's always chuckin' bluffs. Don't believe the old woman's dead a bit. I'll go and see her myself. I'll go and see her myself. I was very much displeased and very dignified. Casey's face was still haunting me."

"I don't care, Webster," I said, "whether you believe it or not. The poor woman's dead; she died night before last and Casey's an orphan."

"We got to the place pointed out and I went and rang the bell. Webster waited with a wicked look in his eyes."

"Casey opened the door. She had been washing and was wiping her hands vigorously."

"I didn't exactly know what to say under the circumstances, so I said, 'I thought you were dead, Mr. Casey.'"

"Well, I'm not dead. You would you think I was dead?"

"That is what I mean about reaching them. You can be as rough as you like, but don't sneak. Always keep your word, and they will keep their word to you. I've found it so."

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necessary for Senator Elkins to introduce a resolution calling for it. Otherwise Congress and the country might never have had the pleasure of reading Cridler's report."

It is a unique document. It tells in plain and simple language the thorny path that one must tread who seeks to impress so strongly his personality upon the rulers of nations that they are made to overcome their disinclination to take part in a universal exposition. The tact, the experience, the address, the knowledge of men, the habit of conducting diplomatic correspondence and of behaving at diplomatic audiences are dwelt upon by Mr. Cridler in the graceful style of which he became a master during his long years of labor in the State Department. If anything that he sets forth seems to be in the nature of blowing his own horn, it must be charged to the peculiar delicacy of the mission which he was intrusted with.

Mr. Cridler's account of his adventures in Russia gives a fair idea of his achievements.

On Nov. 6, 1902, Mr. Cridler was informed of the presence in St. Louis of Robert S. McCormick, United States Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and it was suggested to him that he should wait to await Mr. McCormick's action, before visiting Russia. Mr. Cridler, however, was so delighted to cooperate with Mr. McCormick, who was personally known to me, that he decided to go at once, and before the European Commission was ready to enter the Russian capital until March 16, 1903. And, as he says himself, "It was far from hopeful, yet in my judgment not wholly lost. A fighting chance remained and I determined to accept it and begin work."

Mr. McCormick said that, acting under instructions from the Department of State, he had formally presented the question of Russian participation in the St. Louis Exposition to the Government, and that for the fifth time a positive refusal had been given. Mr. Cridler, however, was not to be discouraged. He was to be strongly fortified before calling on Mr. Witte, who could pronounce the agreeable yes or repeat the unwelcome no. I had already had some acquaintance in St. Petersburg and the diplomatic letters of introduction I brought from Washington, to prompt me to official, social and business interviews.

"I was fortunate, too, in early becoming acquainted, through a mutual friend, with the Minister of Finance, whom I found an approachable, many-sided man. The whole situation in Russia was the most difficult I ever encountered. It required great caution even to approach it."

"Mr. Witte accepted Saturday, March 28, 1903, at 120 for my reception. Mr. McCormick having requested the interview, I went alone, save for an interpreter, Mr. Witte preferring in such matters to speak in his own language. He received me politely but without encouragement. He was apparently disinclined to listen to argument."

Mr. Cridler, notwithstanding the open opposition of the Minister of Finance, insisted on making his argument, and the result of the interview made it plain to him that he would be not only to change the Minister's mind, and thus to strong mea-

ures were required." Therefore he first secured, through Mr. McCormick, a second interview with the Emperor, and then the meeting between him and Mr. Cridler took place at Czarskoe Selo, the Emperor's beautiful country place, about one hour's ride from St. Petersburg. Then Mr. Cridler describes this momentous meeting:

"My reception was cordial in the extreme. His Majesty put me at once at my ease by welcoming me in fluent and choice English. His manner was charming; his whole bearing gave me instant encouragement to tell my story—the object of my visit to Russia and the wish of the President and the people of the United States that the Empire should officially take part."

"I explained the principal features of the exposition, the amount of its endowment, the number of exhibitors, and what each one had decided to do."

"Your Majesty," finally said Mr. Cridler in his terse, determining way, "I would be delighted to have Russia accept." That settled it. His Majesty at once said that the matter should be arranged, and authorized Mr. Cridler to say as much to Mr. Witte.

Having captured the Emperor, it now became Mr. Cridler's duty to capture the Minister. He set to work with still greater alacrity, for the fact that the holiday season set in at that time, and as Mr. Cridler says, there were 170 compulsory holidays every year in Russia, including the fifty-two Sundays. Time dragged on and in May the announcement was made that the Emperor had agreed to the appointment of a commissioner and would take part in the St. Louis Fair."

Mr. Cridler immediately telegraphed the fact to St. Louis, and secured an immediate response conveying the congratulations of President Francis. To get an adequate conception of the magnitude of the feat achieved by Mr. Cridler at St. Petersburg it is necessary only to quote from his own report:

"For many reasons which need not be given, I recall my work in Russia was the hardest I ever encountered. No task anywhere was comparable with it. I had to overcome the prejudice of a high and powerful official, and the restrictions in bringing influence to bear were severe, and scarcely any outside influence was permissible. It required itself into a personal question and required persistent work and the determination not to permit myself to be discouraged, even with the thought that I might be leading a dog's life."

Sad to relate, Mr. Cridler's labor went for naught, after all, because soon after he had kicked the dust and snow of St. Petersburg, the Emperor died. The Emperor died and decided not to carry out the agreement to make an exhibit at St. Louis. So Mr. Cridler related his conquering progress through Europe, Emperor and Ministers went down before him. Whether they stayed down or got up, as Russia did after he left, his report is a masterpiece. The Commissioner went to Bulgaria, and on leaving the capital on the morning of Nov. 4, 1903, there were at the station to see him off Mr. Popoff, the Minister of Public Works, Ways and Communications, who came to say good-by in the Prince's name and in his own; Mr. Elsiehshoff and All Ferrouh Bey, Imperial Ottoman Commissioner at Sofia, formerly Turkish Minister to London; Mr. Cridler got all right and in his report graciously says: "I have no more pleasant recollections of my visit to Bulgaria. This public acknowledgment of the Emperor's death was a heavy burden on my mind, while richly deserved, but an imperfect expression of what I feel."

Then Mr. Cridler went to Abyssinia and Denmark and to Egypt and to France and to Great Britain and to Greece and to Mo-

rocco and to Persia and many pages of the report that the secretaries of the United States Congress until the Elkins resolution compelled him to send it are consumed in telling what he did and what he saw of the old world countries and how they impressed him and how he impressed them."

In Persia he had an interview with the Grand Vizier. The latter thanked him for his explanation of the aims and purposes of the St. Louis exposition, but stated that his Majesty was then travelling in Europe for purposes of pleasure and that he could not seriously consider matters of state. Mr. Cridler says he thanked the Grand Vizier for the courtesy and there the interview ended.

ON A JAPANESE TORPEDO BOAT.

Effect of the Intense Cold and High Nervous Tension.

One of the officers commanding a Japanese torpedo boat or destroyer which took part in the attacks on Port Arthur had some conversation with the Sasebo correspondent of the *Jiji Shimpo*. He declares that this is a most dispiriting war.

Since the 11th of February the cold has been intense and the sea boisterous. One destroyer's crew may be seen to have slept under frozen snow, so thickly did the flakes penetrate to the men's bunkers, and another had its compass frozen, through alcohol was used as a precaution. Nothing but the high spirit of the men enabled them to work through it all; people on shore cannot form any idea of what the suffering means. Yet no one has suffered badly from frost bite. This was because they had the experience of 1894-95 to guide them. Very few caught cold.

The officer attributes this to the fact that they did not expose themselves to variations of temperature, as is the case with men in a big ship, where cabins can be warmed and heat generating processes employed. On a destroyer or a torpedo boat the only source of artificial heat is a brazier, and braziers have two serious drawbacks: one that in a little craft, pitching and rolling badly, live charcoal is a dangerous companion; the other that as all appliances have to be closed to keep out the sea, the fumes of a brazier would be perilous. There was nothing for it, consequently, but to dispense with all heating appliances, and the men, living in a uniformly cold temperature, seen to eat their health better, though they would have done had means of generating artificial heat been accessible.

One great trouble was that the officers hardly ever had a quiet sleep. Their work was always at night, and the strain and anxiety of moving at high speed without sleep, what happened was that they were kept in touch with the other boats, were something that soon became almost unendurable. It was but rarely that an opportunity to sleep was obtained, and only by taking advantage of the strain, and only by taking some one else's place. This was much worse than the actual fighting. Provisions were another question to have good fare on board a torpedo craft. But in very cold weather sailors ever had a quiet sleep. Their work was always at night, and the strain and anxiety of moving at high speed without sleep, what happened was that they were kept in touch with the other boats, were something that soon became almost unendurable. It was but rarely that an opportunity to sleep was obtained, and only by taking advantage of the strain, and only by taking some one else's place. 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