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BILLYE
 By Marshall P. Wilder

A "Sunny Side of the Street" Sketch

IN one respect entertainers closely resemble preachers: they greatly enjoy listening to the greater members of their own profession.

Consequently I never lost a chance to listen to Bill Nye, and I worship the memory of him as he was: a gentle yet sturdy and persistent humorist of so good a sort that he never could help being humorous, no matter how uncongenial the surroundings. Although he saw hundreds and thousands of chances of hitting other men so hard that the hurt would last forever, he dropped everyone of them and trampled them so hard that they never dared show their faces again. He was an apostle of the Golden Rule, which he exemplified in himself, so there never was a sting in his jokes. Gentle railery was the sweetest thing he ever attempted, and even this he did with so genial a smile and so merry an eye that a word of his friendly chaffing was worth more than a cart-load of formal praise.

I speak of what I know, for he and I were close friends for many years before his untimely death, and he was so solicitous for my welfare and comfort that, as often he had played father and mother to me successfully, he couldn't help going on till he had become my grandfather and grandmother, as well as a number of sisters and cousins and aunts.

I don't believe he ever had an enemy but himself, and he injured himself only by his peculiarities of self-description. Anyone reading his humorous articles would imagine him an under-sized, scrawny, backwoods invalid, with an irritable disposition and an unquenchable thirst for something stronger than water. In reality he was a tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, healthy, genial chap, so in love with the mere fact of living that he took scrupulous care of himself in every way. He was as abstemious as any clergyman who is not a total abstainer, and he never lost his temper except when some deliberate scoundrelism was inflicted upon him. He would go out of his way—a whole day's journey out of the way, with all the railway fares and discomforts—to help a friend out of a sick-bed or other trouble, and he endured all the torments of a busy entertainer's season on the road as cheerfully as if he was the perpetual holder of the record for patience.

People often wondered how he could go on year after year digging the same kind of fun out of the same old vein; but the secret was that he lived right in the center of that vein and merely was digging his way out of it. He had a full assortment of polite commonplaces, and carried them as gracefully as he did his full-dress clothes; but as soon as he got well acquainted with a man—and it didn't take him long to get inside of any decent fellow's waistcoat—he would talk in his characteristic droll manner all day and seven days a week and as much longer as they two traveled together.

As seriously as if he was talking of audiences or hotel tables or railway nuisances, he told me a story of a dog he had owned. It was a dachshund, and Nye described him as two and a half dogs long by one dog high. He had named the animal "Entomologist," because it was a collector of insects. In fact the dog lived up to his name so strenuously that something had to be done. A friend suggested soaking the dog in kerosene, saying: "If it doesn't rid the dog of fleas, it will rid you of the dog."

So kerosene was tried, and the dog passed away. After all was over, Bill felt so badly that he went out for a walk, which did him no good. Returning home with dejected spirits and a sorrowing soul, he was smitten afresh with remorse when he realized that there would be no little dog awaiting him. But yes, surely there was something on the steps. Looking closer, he saw seven hundred

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