TALES OF POET FIELD

How Eugene Field Secured His Wife's Forgiveness for Buying a Cocker Spaniel.

THE SAINTS AND SINNERS CORNER.

Some of the Stories Gathered From Eugene Field's Friends—His Love for Children—His Curious Collections—Famous Watch Night Party of December 31, 1892.

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Here are some of the stories which I gathered in Chicago from his friends and intimates about Eugene Field, the gifted whimsical poet-journalist, who loved children so much and always entered so heartily into the spirit of the Christmas time.

Field's relations with his children were those rather of a friend than of a father. He had a strong objection to discipline, and was hardly ever known to speak a harsh word to them. He treated them as equals and they seemed to look upon him in the light of a grown child. He entered into all their amusements with almost the

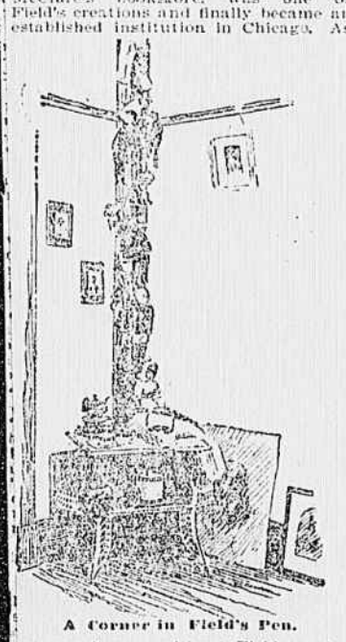
The "Sweet One Darling" of Mr. Field's Fairy Tales.

same zest that they did, and their friends were to be found all over the house. He never went away from home without bringing back some toy or some other trifle. Each child had a pet name and was never called by any other. It was "Pinny, do this, Trotty, do that, or Daisy, do the other thing." He was continually teaching the younger ones little tricks that had something humorous in them, and nothing delighted him more than for one of the little ones to make some quaint remark accompanied with some facial expression most probably taught by him.

On a par with his love of children was his love for animals; apparently he never forgot the helplessness of poor dumb creatures in their relation to the human race. Every thing that crawled or ran or flew had some particular charm for him and his happiness was never absolutely complete unless he had near him a dog, a cat, or a bird, and it was only by the earnest entreaties of his wife that he was prevented from turning his house into a miniature menagerie. On one occasion, having gone down town with twenty dollars to pay some pressing bills, Field saw a beautiful cocker spaniel which he promptly bought with the money and took home, but on his arrival at the house he recognized the fact that Mrs. Field would bring up insurmountable objections to his retaining it. In order to gain her forgiveness and permission to keep the dog, on entering the hall he threw himself flat on his face, and refused to get up until she came and forgave him and granted him permission to add one more to the small troubles of the household. Then he arose and proceeded to race through the house with his new pet.

SAINT'S AND SINNER'S CORNER.

The Saint's and Sinner's Corner, at McClurg's bookstore, was one of Field's creations and finally became an established institution in Chicago. As



A Corner in Field's Pen.

one sees it now without Field to give it importance it does not differ very much from any other corner in a large publishing house. The walls are shelved with volumes in rich bindings, some tables are piled with other volumes, and in the corner stands a desk with a swinging chair very much like any other chair and desk, but here and there are evidences of Field's recent presence. For instance there is a large picture of Gladstone tacked up in one place showing the old man in his study stretched at full length reading an open volume. The original caption beneath has been erased and in its place is written in a spirit of friendly mischief:—"The Right Honorable W. E. Gladstone reading Eugene Field's Hottentot Translations." And on the shelves about are many photographs of Field and cuts of him clipped from the newspapers.

If you ask him, Mr. Millard, the head of the department, will take from the drawers relics of Field now carefully treasured. Among these is a slip of paper bearing some lines in Field's hand that were found one day by a clerk in a costly volume where Field had placed it with no word to any one:—

Swete friend, for Jesus sake forbeare
To buye ye boke thou findest heare,
For that when I doe get ye pelf
I meane to buye ye boke my selfe.
EUGENE FIELD.

Field's eccentricity showed itself in the books he purchased, many of which had no posible bearing upon his work and indeed had small intrinsic value. "My library," he used to say, "is full of books," and there was some truth in this. For example he had hundreds of volumes containing the works of unknown and for the most part, unworthy poets. Nothing pleased him more than to buy some little volume of execrable verse, produced by a poet in Peoria or Coldwater, or any other insignificant place, and these he would range proudly with others and sometimes turn over the pages "just to see how bad they were." He told Mr. Millard one day that things had to be either very good or very bad in order to please him.

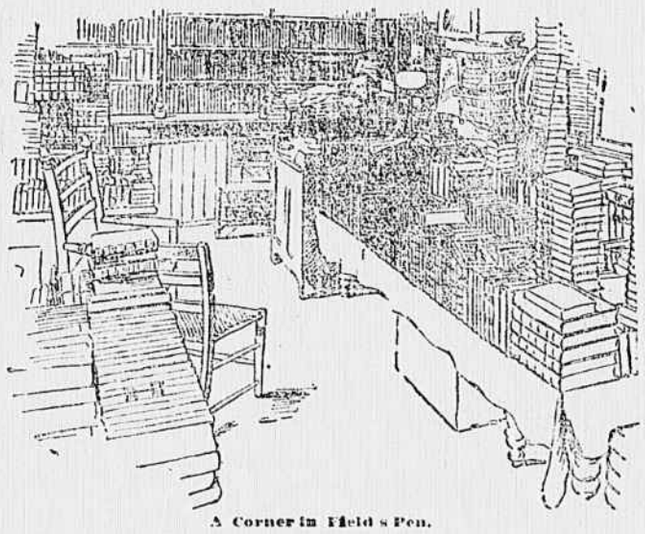
HIS CURIOUS COLLECTIONS.

Nor was it books alone that Field collected. Every conceivable thing that was collectable was included. At the time of his death his "den" at the Sabine Farm was a veritable museum, ranged and hung with curios of all sorts from all parts of the world, collections of autographs, collections of war envelopes, collections of China, collections of watches, souvenirs of distinguished people, like Gladstone's axe, queer old candlesticks, cages of canaries, cases of butterflies, all sorts of dogs, and dolls by the score. On one occasion a friend of statistical mind counted in Field's "den" one hundred and thirty different kinds of dolls and the number of his pipes and cigarette holders would pass enumeration.

Field had a fixed idea that he would live to a green old age, and repeatedly told Mr. Millard that he did not expect to do his best literary work until he was in the neighborhood of sixty. Possibly it was this deep-rooted conviction that made him patient in the bonds of journalism during the years when success was slowly coming. He was always saying to himself: "Never mind, there is time enough. I know where I shall be in twenty years from now." But he did not know.

One day he came into the corner with the droll, half-earnest look in his eyes that betokened a new idea, and said abruptly: "Millard, I want one of these chairs," pointing to the cane seated chairs that stood about in the corner ready for members of the club.

"What do you want it for?" asked



A Corner in Field's Pen.

Mr. Millard, always interested in Field's vagaries.

"I want it sent to the Sabine Farm. I want to have it there to look at." And then changing his tone he went on: "You see all these good fellows who meet here aren't going to live forever; they'll be dropping off one by one and when they're gone, and I'm an old man I want to be able to look at that chair and say to himself: 'There's the chair Gunsaulus sat in, or Poole, or Stryker.'"

According to this whim of Field's Mr. Millard had the chair sent to the Sabine Farm, and there his friends of the Corner saw it standing empty in the "den" the day following his death when they came there for a last farewell.

THE FAMOUS NIGHT WATCH PARTY.

Then Mr. Millard will tell you about the famous watch night party of December 31st, 1892 when Field got the Saints and Sinners together in the corner at midnight to see the old year out. So many of them were there that the supply of chairs gave out and some had to sit on boxes. Provisions were served, speeches made, and just as the bells were beginning to toll the solemn hour the lights were turned low and Field, rising and speaking in sepulchural tones recited a poem written for the occasion, "Dibdin's Ghost."

After that an album with gilded pages bound in morocco and provided with lock and key, was passed from member to member, each one writing in it some sentiment appropriate to the occasion and nearly all making reference to Field. Among others present was that famous traveler and good fellow, Paul Du Chaillu, who announced in self-pitying tone that he had just returned from lecturing in the town of Coldwater. "Only think, gentlemen," he said, "How glad I mist be to see you after lecturing in Coldwater." Then Du Chaillu wrote in the album:—"On this night a poor wanderer found shelter in a dear corner of Chicago."

"Saints and Sinners, one and all,
We've gathered at our leader's call
Mirth and joy rules o'er the roost:
Field's at his best with 'Dibdin's Ghost.'
"One and all are full of glee
In the 'Corner' of stately Gen'l McC;
Du Chaillu he utterly refuses
To resign Bobby Burns' 'Merry Muses.'"

Following this comes a "Ballad of Thanks to My Friend, Eugene Field," by F. M. Larned, which begins thus:—

I thank you, Field, for "Dibdin's Ghost"
And thank "Perfesser Vere de Blaw,"
For Casey, too, a mountain host,
And his "Red Hoss" restauraw;
For what the little children saw
Who sailed on a silver tide,
For "Heover," with his crippled paw—
And many a hearty laugh beside.
Thanks for "The Bottle and the Bird,"
And the song of the clinking ice,
A sound, they tell me, you have heard
As many times as twice—
Some Denver men saw thrice;
Thanks for the "Hymn of Eventide,"
Thanks for "De Amicitis"—
And many a hearty laugh beside.

In spite of Field's fondness for artists of the stage it was a well-known fact that, whether from restlessness or whatever other cause, he was rarely able to sit through more than an hour of any performance whether dramatic or musical. On one occasion Sol Smith Russell announced it as a great triumph to others of his craft that Field had actually sat through the whole evening while he was playing. One of Field's happiest impromptu verses was written on the fly leaf of a book he presented to Francis Wilson one day while they were together in the Saint's and Sinner's corner. Strangely enough, the verses were entitled:—"The Passing of Eugene," and Mr. Millard, who saw him write them, says that he turned them off with astonishing rapidity, writing down the rhyming words at the end of the line first and then filling in the lines to suit. This is what he wrote:—

THE PASING OF EUGENE.

When Eugene Field was dying
The death all good men die,
Came Francis Wilson flying
As only he can fly.
"My friend before you "peter"
And seek the shining shore
Write me in common metre
Some Autographic lore."
Then Eugene Field smiled sadly
And his eyes grew wan and dim.
But he wrote the verses gladly
His friend required of him.
And having done his duty,
From out its home of clay,
That soul of spotless beauty
To Canaan soared away.
—EUGENE FIELD.

HOW HE GOT HIS SALARY RAISED.

During one period of financial crisis that was especially severe, Field could see no way out of his difficulties except to ask for a raise of salary ,and that was as abhorrent to his fine nature as it would have been to do a mean action. Several days in succession he came to the office resolved to make appeal to Mr. Stone, and each day he went home having failed to nerve himself up to the speaking point. Finally he formed a thoroughly characteristic resolution and for a week was not seen in the office at all. Then one afternoon he marched into Mr. Stone's office followed by four of his little children, the five of them presenting such a pitiable appearance as would have wrung tears from his employer, had his heart and his name been synonymous, which was far from being the case. Father and children were dressed in rags and tatters from head to fot, the children's toes were sticking out bare through holes in their shoes, their faces were unwashed, and their eyes red as if they had been crying. Field himself was in no better plight and there the five stood in front of Mr. Stone, speaking not a word, but looking at him with appealing glances. All this, of course, had been carefully rehearsed by Field during the week of conspiracy and the result was simply overwhelming. At last Field broke the silence, looking at his employer, who was also his best friend, out of those big eyes so full of human kindness, and said:—"Do you think you can see your way, Mr. Stone, to raising my salary?"

Needless to say he got the raise.

"KATHERINE AND EUGENIO."

Field was fond of keeping scrapbooks and some of them contain treasures that in years to come will be beyond price. Herewith is given a page from one of them, at the top being written in Field's hand: "By Edmund Clarence Stedman in N. Y. Tribune. His autograph note."

Under this, in Mr. Stedman's handwriting, is the following squib, commenting on that most ridiculous and amusing poem, "Katherine and Eugenio," which is pasted directly underneath:

"Websted defines sporadic thus:
And then she went for 'Gene!'"
Perhaps he did say 'Katie,'
'With intervals between!

Miss X. was very much put out about the whole affair. "It's all nonsense," she exclaimed; "perfectly idiotic! Sounds like a lot of ducks quacking; that's what I've got to say. * * * I want to inform you that I never called Eugene Field 'Gene' in my life. * * * I never heard such balderdash. It's true we worked together on the same paper for five years, but he was always a perfect gentleman. What on earth would I call him 'Gene' for?"—Report of the row in the American Society of Authors.

Pie years she sate anear him
Within the type-strewn loft;
She handed him the paste-pot,
He passed the scissors oft;
They dipped in the same inkstand
That crowned their desk between,
Yet he never called her "Katie,"
She never called him "Gene."
Though close—ah! close—the droplight
That classic head revealed,
She was to him Miss Katherine,
He naught but Mr. Field;
Decorum graced his upright brow
And thinned his lips serene,
And, though he wrote a poem each hour,
Why should she call him "Gene?"
She gazed at his sporadic* hair—
She knew his hymns by rote;
They longed to dine together
At Casey's table d'hote;
Alas, that Fortunes "hostages"—
But let us draw a screen!
He dared not call her "Katie;"
How could she call him "Gene?"
(By one of "Gene's victims.)

*Sporadic (in Greek, scattered). Occurring singly, or apart from other things of the same kind, or in scattered instances. (Webster's International Dictionary.)

One of the queer things he did at the News office was the establishing of what he called the "Field memorial window," really a portion of a glass door over which he had an artist draw a cherub with the orthodox wings attached to his own head and face. Under this cherub's head he took delight in pasting all the disagreeable clippings he coud gather from the newspapers and periodicals regarding any one in the office and especially about himself. This wondow came to be regarded as a regular bulletin board of spleen and many a quiet chuckle Field would have watching the long faces of his companions as they read sarcastic or facetious remarks about them. As for himself Field never cared how much fun was made of him and was the first to applaud when the laugh was at his expense.

CLEVELAND MOFFET.

Not Afraid of Thirteen.

(From the New York Herald.)

"Bless my soul, if there isn't thirteen of us here," said Engineer Dettraw, of the Erie Road, as he looked over the men in Kirk's restaurant at the Port Jervis depot, waiting for lunch.

"Yes, and this is the 13th of the month," interposed Warren Ridgeway.

Kirk, the hash slinger, was too busy in making thirteen sandwiches to notice the remark.

"Coffee for thirteen," he roared to the boy.

"What are you fellows laughing at?" he asked as he turned to the thirteen fellows on the outside of the lunch counter. By this time Tommy Leard, the 13-year-old waiter, had set out the thirteen cups of coffee on the counter, and over the coffee the joke was explained.

"That is peculiar," retorted Kirk, "but I don't believe in this bad luck stuff connected with thirteen. If there was any truth in it I'd be out of the business, for I have had more thirteen experiences than this whole gang of thirteen fellows can shake a stick at.

"Do you know that it is thirteen years since I started in business, on the 13th of December, and on a Friday, too?" he asked. "I remember distinctly that on the night of that first day I figured up the receipts to be $13."

"Kirk, you're telling one of those stories of yours; what do you think we are?" inquired Dave McCall. In less than thirteen seconds Kirk had handled oer the pile of thirteen books, each containing the year's cash account, and in thirteen seconds more had proved the truth of his statement.

"As I was saying before somebody stopped me," continued Kirk, "I was anticipating some changes in the building, and while I was figuring I discovered that there were thirteen windows and doors in this place." The thirteen men turned and counted.

"Just as true as Gospel, that is," was the remark that came from each, and Kirk continued: "You'll be surprised when I tell you that the counter around which you are sitting is exactly thirteen feet long. It's exactly thirteen feet from the bottom to the gable of this lunch room.

"Have you ever had any bad luck, Kirk?" one of the most superstitious of the gang asked.

"No, I've been fortunate, and I think," he remarked, "that thirteen has served me as a mascot. I live at 13 Catherine street. I almost forgot to tell you that."

Pie was out for thirteen, and while eating it the talk drifted to railroad topics. The explosion of the boiler of one of the engines on the Lehigh and Hudson railroad, near Warwick, came up, and almost immediately some one remarked that the number of the engine was 13. Four men were killed in this disaster.

The flying express, 13, turned the curve leading to the depot before the talk was finished, and the thirteen men turned to their separate stations in receiving the train, while Kirk made up another batch of twenty-six sandwiches for the passengers who might care for lunch.

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