The Port Tobacco Times

AND CHARLES COUNTY ADVERTISER.

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Poetry.

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS.

BY PHILIP BURROUGHS STONG.

Choose thou, oh youth, thy path in life,
Let not events decide;
Be not in life's momentous strife,
Like weeds upon the tide.

Determined what thy aim shall be,
Toil with that aim in view;
If circumstances hinder thee,
Make circumstances new.

Be not the iron that is bent
And beaten as it glows;
But be, through full and fixed intent,
The arm that gives the blows.

Remember this: We can attain
What fully we intend;
We for ourselves ourselves ordain
Life's destiny and end

They win in life who will to win.
They fall who faint and fear;
To him with dauntless heart within
No obstacles appear.

There is no mount too high to scale,
No stream too wide to span,
For him who wills he will not fail,
Who *will* and therefore *can*.

So choose, oh youth, thy path in life,
With firm resolve decide;
Bring all thy powers into the strife,
Success shall the bride!

Select Reading.

THE CONFESSION OF A ROBBER.

BY KATE W. HAMILTON.

It begun in a robbers' cave. I don't suppose much that is good begins in robbers' caves, and Aunt Jane says a boy oughtn't to have his head full of such things But her head is full of this one now, and, any way, it wasn't a very bad cave; very bad robbers, I mean.

Joe Brown and Bill Sykes and a lot of us boys started it—six of us. We thought we'd be the Gory Brothers at first, but the pokeberries weren't ripe enough so we could get any juice, and we had to give up the Gory. But the cave was the best part of it, and we had a first rate cave. There's a vacant lot right next to Watkin's store, where an old house had been burned down. The cellar wall is all loosened, and thrown down in places, and we dug right in where the wall had been. We could throw the dirt out among the rubbish in that old cellar without anybody noticing it, and we dug a good way, so that we had a long passage way with a room at the end of it. The passage-way was pretty low, so we had to go on our hands and knees to get through it, and when we came to the room there was a door, and we had to give a queer knock. The Grand Ponty—fickle warder—that was Joe—would say:

"Who's there?"

And we had to answer:

"Hop skotch-ka doodle!"

It was real interesting when you learned how, and about the grips and everything. But the cave was pretty dark and sort of close with all of us there, and so we made a hole through the top of it, for a secret exit in case of attack. All the caves we read of had them. It let the light and air in some, and when we didn't want it for our exit, we could use it for a chimney. The cave wasn't big enough for both, and any way, we were tired of digging, and our hands were all blistered The chimney came up just a little back of Watkins's store, and we covered it up with one of the empty hogsheads that were thrown out there. We turned the hogshead bottom upward, and fastened it so it couldn't be knocked away, and made a hole in the top for the smoke to come out; big enough for the smoke to come it, too.

We knew nobody would notice the hogshead, because there were always so many empty barrels and hogsheads back of Watkins's store They were all full of whisky and rum and such stuff, when they were rolled in; but they got empty pretty fast. Bill Sykes said the only difference between Watkin's barrels and his customers was that the barrels rolled out the back door empty and the customers rolled out the front door full; they both smelled too strong of whiskey for any use. But there were some folks who didn't see anything funny about it; and they were the folks that owned the customers.

Jimmie Collins lives near our house, and his father went to Watkins's all the time. He could earn good wages at his trade, but he didn't; and he spent nearly all he did get for drink. Mrs. Collins washes and sews, and Aunt Jane, and other people, helped her; and even then the little Collinses never had things like other children. I was so sorry for Jimmy that I did think I'd ask him to join the Band. But when I sort of hinted to him if he'd like to be a Gory Brother, he said:

"What's that? Something to eat?"

He looked as if he'd sell out any brotherhood for a square meal, so I didn't know as it would be safe for him to join But we boys took up a collection for him; only we didn't have but five cents and some marbles.

But there wouldn't have been any trouble about that cave if it hadn't been for Watkins. We had carried in a few sticks one day, and made a little blaze so we could talk around our council fire. But it made such a smoke that we put it out, and began to counsel without any fire, when, all of a sudden, somebody said:

"Who's there?"

We all jumped, and I forgot that the question came from the wrong side of the door, and I yelled:

"Hop skotch-ka doodle?"

But nobody came in, nor said anything more. The Grand Ponty—fickle warder—was afraid to open the door alone; so we all opened it together, and there was nobody to be seen. We looked at each other, and Bill Sykes said maybe it was an ambush, and they meant to knock us over when we crept out one by one. We didn't want to creep out after that, and we didn't care about staying there very long.

"Now is the time for the secret exit," said Joe in a whisper.

We all climbed up one after another, and out at the top of the hogshead as fast as we could; and what do you think we found? Watkins and three or four more men, and some boys, all standing round and wondering what made the smoke come out of the barrel! It was Watkins himself who had called "Who's there?" But we never thought of any voice coming from that way, and we had just betrayed the secret exit and the cave and the whole business worse than Jimmy Collins could have done it in six months

Well, when they saw us come pouring out they all stared for a minute, and then they laughed, and one of the men said:

"That's the biggest barrelful I ever saw; six boys!"

"Ho! that ain't nothin'," piped Jimmy Collins, who was hanging round on the edge of the crowd. "A barrel will hold more than that—Watkins's barrels will, anyhow. Ma says our cow, and the little house we used to have, and our good clothes and all her happiness have gone into his rum barrels."

The men fairly shouted; all but one; that was Jimmy Collins's father. Watkins's face grew red and then purple, and he looked as if he'd like to scalp Jimmy.

"You young rascal!" he roared, stamping his foot. "If I catch you"—

But the roof of that cave wasn't a good place to prance around on. The first thing we knew Watkins dropped out of sight and our barrel and a lot more barrels and no end of dirt on top of him.

"He's killed!" said somebody.

Bill Sykes's eyes stood out like glass marbles, and his lips turned white. He looked round at us, and said he:

"Cut, boys! Cut for your lives!"

"We did it, too. You never saw six pairs of heels fly as ours did, and we didn't stop till we dropped down behind the thick bushes in Pumphrey's woods. Playing you're an outlaw with the detective on your track is nice enough; but the real thing is not so funny. I suppose even an out-law would like a chance to go home to supper when it's getting dark, especially if he knew his Aunt Jane would be worrying about him. We held a good deal solemner council there in the woods than we ever did around the council fire. Joe said it would just kill his mother if he was hung or sent to jail either. Bill was sure we hadn't committed murder, because everybody knew Watkins broke through into the cave himself; but then it might be manslaughter on account of our having dug it right under his ground; we never thought of his ground either.

I don't know how long we hid, but nobody came after us. It grew so late that it was nearly dark; we couldn't stay there all night, and at last we planned to go and see Lawyer Pumphrey, and tell him all about it, because we thought we'd have to get a lawyer anyway But just as we were coming out of the woods we met him, and we stopped right there in the road and told him. He is a first rate lawyer; but he looked pretty sober when he first heard what he had done, and he chewed his moustache a good deal, and sort of trembled.

"Yes, I see," said he. "A two story robber's cave, with one big robber above, and six small ones below. It's bad business—very."

He said, seeing we had engaged him first, he wouldn't appear against us, and he would do what he could for us. If the worst came to the worst he thought he could get us off on a heavus corpus—or something like that. But Bobby Grey—he's the smallest of us—began to cry then, and said that wouldn't do him any good. He wanted to get off alive; he didn't want to be a corpus.

I should have thought Squire Pumphrey would have chewed his moustache all off by that time and he told us to go home, and not be afraid; he'd make it all right.

But he didn't have to do anything about it, for Watkins wasn't killed after all. They dug him out most as good as ever, only his nose was all done up in strips of plaster when we went by to school the next day We didn't go on his side of the street. We have given up the Gory Brothers now, and turned our band into a temperance society. It meets in our barn, and I'm the first president. And who do you think was the first one to sign our pledge after ourselves? Jimmy Collins's father. He walked right up to the barn door and asked to put his name down; and says he:

"I hope that not only six boys, but one new man has come out of that old rum barrel of Watkins's."

You never saw a boy so proud as Jimmy Collins is. He says he is going to have a father like other fellows. We talk of taking Jim into our society, and we are going to initiate him to-night if he isn't black-balled. I guess he won't be, because we haven't any black balls made yet.—*N. Y. Independent.*

BLOOMINGTON, ILL.

The economic question agitating the public mind just now is whether it costs more to be a member of Congress or a student at Harvard College.

MUSKRAT HUNTING.

THE SPORT ALONG RIVER MARSHES—FOUR STORY MUSKRAT DWELLINGS.

Muskrat shooting is a sport which is attracting considerable attention now and is being largely engaged in. During the winter a few muskrats are killed, but it is not until the approach of Spring that the season fully opens. The area of marsh land along the rivers and their numerous inlets form favorite hunting grounds for muskrats, and they are now being captured in large numbers. Next to the beaver the muskrat is one of the most ingenious of rodents in the construction of its houses, and its mode of life and habits are very interesting. They select the low river marsh lands as their dwelling place, and there they build their houses. A location is preferred which is flooded at high tide, but which is clear of water at low ebb, and every creek and almost every little inlet to the rivers afford innumerable positions that are favorable. After determining upon the exact position for their house, the rats burrow leads or miniature tunnels from the water's edge at low tide to the spot upon which the house is to be erected. They then set about collecting material for their dwelling. The tall canes and coarse marsh grass are cut down and pulled in place, and the marsh mud is used as a kind of mortar. A large circular foundation is laid, and the ground floor arranged on a level with the leads. This completed, an upward lead is made like a spiral stairway to the second floor, which is made into a room similar to the first, but of less circumference. A third and sometimes a fourth floor is built with the spiral lead running from the level of the marsh to the top of the house, each succeeding room being of somewhat less diameter up to the roof or dome, which acts as a water shed. The height of each floor from the level of the marsh is regulated by the successive heights reach by the tide. The rats are social in their habits, and at extreme low ebb, when the accommodations are greatest in their houses, quite a number may be found in the same hut. At flood tide fewer are found in any one house, as the accommodations are limited then only to the upper stories which are free of water, but these are all the more easily secured by the hunter. There are three ways by which the rats are captured: By shooting, by trapping and by spearing. A few may be secured at night by creeping as noiselessly as possible along the creek edges, and watching for them to crawl up on a bank to feed. In this they are very dainty. Having procured a favorite root, they approach cautiously the water edge and dip it in and rub off the mud, dip it in again and again until it is perfectly clean and suited to their taste, when it is eaten with evident relish, provided the sportsman is sufficiently interested in the process to wait. A boat, however is usually used, as the rats can be more easily and quietly approached on the water. In this case two persons occupy the same boat, the sportsman requiring a pusher, as in the case of ortolen. As this sport can only be engaged in at night, the sky must be comparatively clear in order that the sportsman may have the advantage of the moonlight, or, better still, bright starlight. A headlight with reflector is, however, sometimes used on the bow of the boot, and this arrangement is frequently quite successful during the darker nights to one sufficiently well acquainted with the hunting grounds. Trapping is another of the modes by which the rats are secured. The traps are made of boards about six inches wide and three feet long. These are nailed together like an ordinary box trap, the open ends being secured by swinging doors of wire network, fastened to the upper part of both entrances. These doors allow easy ingress to the trap, but once in, the rat cannot get out without opening the door by pulling it to him, which secret they seem very slow to discover. These traps are put in the leads running from the houses to the water when the tide is at low ebb and the rats are out feeding. On the return they crawl up the leads, push against one of the wire doors of the trap, which immediately opens into the trap, but he cannot get further, as the next door opens toward him. Before he can gnaw out the tide makes up and he is drowned in the trap. By having a number of traps and watching the tide closely a trapper can capture a large number in this way. The most destructive mode of capture is by spearing. Four or five rods of of iron three or four feet long are secured in a cross section frame of wood or iron and their points are well sharpened, and with this the hunter approaches the rat house as quietly as possible, as the inmates are constantly on the alert and if alarmed will quickly run down their spiral stairway and run into the leads. Stepping to the side of the house he reaches over it and plunges the spears down through it as far as he can push them. With the pick he pulls the house to pieces, and frequently finds two or three muskrats, and sometimes more, impaled by the spears. This destructive method is, however, not looked upon with favor by sportsmen, as it tends to drive the rats away from the more accessible parts of the marsh. The muskrat is somewhat similar in appearance to his dry land cousin, but is incomparably larger. The brown muskrat, which is larger than the black muskrat, when full grown will measure twelve or fourteen inches from the tip of the nose to the root of the tail, and his rat like caudel appendage sometimes attains a length of eight inches. Muskrat skins are valuable for their soft glossy fur, and are bought by traders at from six to ten cents each and sold to furriers. The flesh of muskrats is said to be palatable and it is sometimes eaten. These river rats are specified by a peculiar kind of musk inclosed in a little fatty sack just under the skin in the lower part of the body. The muskrat season opens early in winters and closes in May. The season is now at its most popular period.—*Baltimore Sun.*

Bro. Gardiner on Human Nature.

Human natur' am a werry onsartin thing

It am so full of streaks an' freaks an' noshuns dat it am a wonder de Lawd doan' git discouraged wid us sometimes.

A statesman will riz up in de evenin' an' declar' dat we have de greatest kentry on airth. Nex' mawnin', if his coffee am not up to par, or his beefsteak am a little off, he am ready to walk out an' announce to de public dat our system of gov'ment am one which will eventooly bring de kentry to a state of poverty an' degradashun.

Dar' am a large class of people who, when dey hev honey fur supper, bless de Lawd fur His goodness an' am ready to subscribe $100 toward de erecshun of a new church Nex' mawnin', when apple sass takes de place o' honey, dey emagine dat old Satan has got a fust mortgage on eberything, an' dey wouldn't put up a nickel fur a church if dey had money to throw away.

Dar' am people who go about wid broad smiles on deir faces an' tell you dat dis world am all right. It's daily growin' better an' it's plenty good 'nuff for anybody. An hour later, when de grocer or de butcher has called deir attenshun to a leetle bill which has run six months, de scene changes. De grin am gone, an' dis world am all wrong.

We plan for a huckleberry excurcursion wid de feelin' dat our fellowmen am all right. We wake up to find dat excurshun spoilt by a rainy day, an' we at once declar' our fellowmen a set of thieves an' conspirators.

Dar am no accountin' fur what poo', weak, vascillatin' human natur' will do. We expeck men to be wicked, and den hold up our hands ober deir deeds. We know dat all marriages can't be happy, but am scandalized over divorces. De male sex demands de strictest vartue in woman, an' den turns about and works deir downfall. We chide de selfishness of de world, but hang to all we git. We denounce an' revile a man while he lives, an' turn about an' make a hero an' a martyr of him as soon as de bref leaves his body. We preach charity to all, but who of us forgives our fellow-man fur his short comins'?

I tell you, my friends, we am a poo' miserable lot, no matter what de color or previous condishum, an' de pusson who has de cheek to stan' up an' criticise his nayburs am perhaps de wust sheep in de lot. We've got to show de streaks in our natur', an' de fact dat de man who will lend you money widout security will run away wid your wife must not be looked upon as anything out of the reg'lar track of human natur'.—*Detroit Free Press.*

A Merited Rebuke.

A gentleman prominent in legal circles in Boston was recently riding in a train, and in the seat before him was a young and gayly-dressed damsel. The car was pretty full, and presently an elderly woman entered and, finding no seat vacant but the one beside the young woman mentioned, sat down beside her. She was a decently dressed woman, but apparently of humble station, and she carried several clumsy bundles, which were evidently a serious annoyance to her seatmate. The young woman made no effort to conceal her vexation, but in the most conspicuous manner showed the passengers around that she considered it an impertinent intrusion for the newcomer to presume to sit down beside her. In a few moments the old woman, depositing her packages upon the seat, went across the car to speak to an acquaintance she discovered on the opposite side of the aisle. The lawyer leaned forward to the offended young lady and courteously asked if she would change seats with him. A smile of gratified vanity showed how pleased she was to have attracted the notice of so distinguished looking a gentleman. "Oh, thank you ever so much," she said effusively. "I should like to, but it would be as bad for you as for me to sit beside such an old woman," he responded with undiminished deference of manner, "it was not your comfort I was thinking of, but the old lady's."—*Boston Record.*

PEBBLES.

A little child once asked his mother the question: "Mother, what part of Heaven do people go to who are good, but not agreeable."

It was a grim joke on the part of a condemned man, who, the night before his execution, requested the jailer to close his grated window because he considered night air unhealthy.

The great Alaskan glacier is credited with moving only at the rate of one fourth of a mile a year. What the great Alaskan glacier seems to need more than anything else is an affidavit.

No, it is not hard to write funny paragraphs; all you have to do to procure a pen, some paper and ink, and then sit down and write them as they occur to you. It is not the writing but the occurring that is hard.