

WOES OF STEVENSON

SORRY STORY OF THE DAYS BEFORE HE CAME TO HIS OWN

STARVED AT SAN FRANCISCO

Even at That Time He Had in Him the Work That Was to Place Him in the Front Rank of English Letters—Was Not a Success as a Reporter, Though He Was a Brilliant Writer.

Early in the winter of 1878-80 Robert Louis Stevenson got a job—the transaction didn't even rise to the dignity of "obtaining a position"—in the city department of the San Francisco Chronicle.

Stevenson wrote a gorgeous story, in which all the information bearing on the local aspect of the festival was carefully ignored. A man who saw the copy and told me of the incident said it was a piece of work such as only Robert Louis Stevenson could turn off, though nobody in that office then knew or cared who the long, gaunt, ill-dressed, starved-looking Scotswoman might be.

The story, however, was hopeless so far as the requirements of the city editor were concerned, and Hudson, who was then acting in that capacity, on the Chronicle, indignantly asked his new man if he knew where the festival had been held, who the committeemen in charge were, and if he had not got a list of the merchants who had provided the presents for the children, to all of which Stevenson replied that he had not thought those details at all worth while.

A brisk young police reporter was hurriedly sent out for a few facts concerning the matter, and Stevenson was told that his copy would probably prove available for a Sunday special. The story was mislaid, however, and never saw print at all.

His next detail proved even less fortunate. He was told one evening that he should go out to the Presidio next morning and get the facts relative to the installation of a new electric system of waterworks whereupon he raised his particular hair on the fretful Hudson's head by replying, with much ease of manner, that he had an engagement for the next day and would be unable to go to the Presidio, after which he was incontinent and picturesquely fired by Hudson and there is no record that he ever again tackled reportorial work.

He did some special articles of a Sunday edition of the Chronicle, but there is no indication that he thought highly of them, for he never rescued them from the files.

Stevenson's life in San Francisco covered a period of nine months and included the most miserable days of his life. Physically he was in a fearful condition, the consumption heavy upon him and he spit blood and raved with fever. Finally he was on the ragged edge of death. He went from doctor to doctor, and in the end he was turned away by them all until the illness which overtook him in the spring of 1880 nearly killed him.

Then Mrs. Fanny Osborne, who afterward became his wife, secured the services of Dr. Ford, who gave Stevenson generous and skilled treatment.

Meanwhile, during the winter, being unable to obtain credit from the doctors, he was reduced to the humiliating necessity of medicine and advice at the municipal dispensary. The grim horror and irony of the business is accentuated when you recall that at this very time Stevenson was tolling like a worker in metals over the finest piece of narrative prose which has been given to our language by this gentleman.

The essay on Thoreau was in his hand, and the "Anatole Immigrant" had been sent in manuscript to his friend and counselor, Colvin, only to be returned riddled with needless corrections.

alized by their disillusion, shied off at the queer, silent Scotswoman, who, by all signs, was a stranded fish.

The musician looking party, whom doubtless the brisk reporter sent out to recover his Salvation Army story gazed upon with pity and contempt, was thirty years of age, and had seen all the sides of his books published and had what Sidney Colvin estimated as "a half established reputation."

Stevenson looked at the situation squarely in the face and saw all the bitterness of his hapless days he wrote of the San Francisco period as being the time when he was "penitent and dying author, and when it seemed strange, not to be able to afford a drink."

Yet, despite the hardships of the days and the little he had to thank the town for, he always wrote kindly things about the city and its people generally. In very pleasant contrast, it seems to me, to the gulf of Mr. Kipling, who seemed to think it a proper business that should show every expression of a San Francisco house of shame and its inmates into a consideration of American life.

San Francisco didn't help Stevenson in his hour of tribulation, though at his death it has raised a pretty monument to his memory in Portsmouth square, where he loved to lounge on bright days, and Joe's cozy evening is daily haunted by people feeling a belated anxiety as grief for him.

The people can tell you no end of pleasant stories about him—all except the proprietor of the coffee house himself, who frankly confessed he has the least remembrance of the gentleman, and wonders why people should be so keen to learn at just what table a forgotten patron used to eat.

NEWS OF THE LODGE ROOMS. ORDER EASTERN STAR. The annual meeting of Constellation Chapter No. 18 was held at Masonic hall last Wednesday evening.

The officers showed the chapter to be in a flourishing condition. Among the visitors present was Mrs. Mary J. Taylor, past grand matron, who installed Brother J. C. Fischer into the office of grand sentinel of the grand chapter.

Brother A. M. Swanson presented Brother J. C. Fischer with a beautiful gold-headed cane as a slight token of esteem. He is held in by his Masonic friends. The following are the elective officers for the ensuing year: W. M., Mrs. J. C. Simpson; W., Dr. G. E. Sandberg; A. M., Mrs. R. D. Czekwitz; conductor, Mrs. Mackey; secretary, Mrs. M. A. Gordon; treasurer, Mrs. John Jagger.

St. Paul Lodge No. 24 elected the following officers: Friday night, worthy matron, Mrs. Jessie Schuman; worthy patron, Prof. S. A. Farnsworth; associate matron, Miss Addie Knapp; secretary, Mrs. Eunice H. Quick; treasurer, Mrs. Eva Heaton; conductress, Miss Inez Hunter.

KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS. On Wednesday last Capital Lodge No. 61 conferred the rank of knight upon five esquires and balloted next two applications for membership.

Next Wednesday the first regular meeting of the entertainment committee is arranging for the installation of the officers upon Wednesday evening, Jan. 20.

Washing No. 74 conferred the second rank at its last meeting. P. C. Poupney visited us on the fly, and Brother Ross, an ever welcome guest, assisted us in conferring the rank.

TOYS, GAMES, CHRISTMAS-TREE ORNAMENTS, ETC.

The Well-known Low AMERICAN Prices Will Prevail. We Guarantee Them Lower Than Any Other Store. The Only First Floor Toy Department in the City.

Advertisement for The American Housefurnishing Company. Lists various toys and furniture items with prices. Includes: Toy Train, Iron Fire Engine, Toy Desk, Toy Stoves, Toy Trunks, India, Boys' Printing Presses, Wrought Iron Candle Sticks, Turkish Lanterns, Hand or Table Mirrors, Roman Seats, Rocker, Brass Stand, Oak Easels, Reed Rockers, Hall Trees, and various furniture sets.

The American Housefurnishing Company

22 and 24 East Seventh St., St. Paul.

Thursday evening. Several candidates will be present for initiation. NATIONAL UNION. St. Paul and Vita Nova councils will give their first prize card and dancing party for the ensuing year.

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Excelsior Meridian Lodge No. 60 working on the Masonic degree on two candidates. The first degree on several candidates next Monday evening.

At Union lodge the following officers were elected last Thursday evening to serve during the ensuing six months: H. T. Nelson, recording secretary; Robert Wilson Sr., financial secretary; H. Coplovich, treasurer.

DRUIDS. Vasa Grove No. 24, at its regular meeting Monday, conducted its work in a satisfactory manner.

North Star Grove No. 4 held a well-attended meeting Tuesday. There was work on the first degree.

ROYAL NEIGHBORS. Maple Leaf camp, R. N. A., will hold its annual election of officers at the hall

Rev. Mr. Hamby, "Star Spangled Banner," Minnesota Gopher Tribe and Council of Pocahontas; invocation, Prophet H. Bauer.

History of the Survey. The council of the Minnesota Historical society will meet Monday evening.

White Flyer Dancing Party. The White Flyer Cycle club will give its sixteenth dancing party at Sherman hall Tuesday evening.

Camera Club Programme. The monthly meeting of the St. Paul Camera club will be held Tuesday evening.

Prohibitionists. The State Chairman Geo. W. Higgins, of Minneapolis, will be one of the speakers at the Prohibition social next Tuesday evening.

Order of Eagles. The fraternal Order of Eagles, which was established some ten days ago in this city, of which this paper made mention, is in the high way of prosperity.

with seventy-five members, and since that time fully 100 applications for membership have been presented.

Highway Robbery Charged Against a Late Police Captive. Officer Cline rounded the corner of Seventh and Sibley streets shortly after 11 o'clock last night just in time to witness one of the boldest highway robberies of the season.

Angler at Work. Fish That Fishes for Other Fish—New Arrivals at the Aquarium. Of all the monsters of the deep, few seem more uncanny to the average observer than the "angler fish."

Job of "Squaring the Kickers" for a Big Circus. New Orleans Times-Democrat. "The job of 'squarer' for a circus used to be highly picturesque," said an old-time showman last evening.

Not Room in Churches. An English authority has estimated that if all the inhabitants of the British Isles should decide to attend church on the given Sunday 25,000,000 would be crowded out for lack of seating room in the churches.

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Advertisement for a "Handy Remedy for Colds." Describes the benefits of the remedy for colds and flu.