

# **Eugene Field, a Study in Heredity and Contradictions — Volume 2 eBook**

## **Eugene Field, a Study in Heredity and Contradictions — Volume 2**

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## **EUGENE FIELD**

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **OUR PERSONAL RELATIONS**

## Page 2

In the loving “Memory” which his brother Roswell contributed to the “Sabine Edition” of Eugene Field’s “Little Book of Western Verse,” he says: “Comradeship was the indispensable factor in my brother’s life. It was strong in his youth: it grew to be an imperative necessity in later life. In the theory that it is sometimes good to be alone he had little or no faith.” From the time of Eugene’s coming to Chicago until my marriage, in 1887, I was his closest comrade and almost constant companion. At the Daily News office, for a time, we shared the same room and then the adjoining rooms of which I have spoken. Field was known about the office as my “habit,” a relationship which gave point to the touching appeal which served as introduction to the dearly cherished manuscript copy, in two volumes, of nearly one hundred of his poems, which was his wedding gift to Mrs. Thompson. It was entitled, in red ink, “Ye Piteous Complaynt of a Forsoooken Habbit; a Proper Sonet,” and reads:

*Ye boone y aske is smalle indeede  
Compared with what y once did seeke—  
Soe, ladye, from yr. bounteous meede  
Y pray you kyndly heere mee speke.  
Still is yr. Slosson my supporte,  
As once y was his soul’s delite—  
Holde hym not ever in yr. courte—  
O lette me have hym pay-daye nite!*

One nite per weeke is soothly not  
Too oft to leese hym from yr. chaynes;  
Thinke of my lorne impoverisht lotte  
And eke my jelous panges and paynes;  
Thinke of ye chekes y stille do owe—  
Thinke of my quenchlesse appetite—  
Thinke of my griffes and, thinking so,  
Oh, lette me have hym pay-daye nite!\_

Along the border of this soulful appeal was engrossed, in a woful mixture of blue and purple inks: “Ye habbit maketh mone over hys sore griffe and mightylie beseacheth the ladye yt she graunt hym ye lone of her hoosband on a pay-daye nite.”

Through those years of comradeship we were practically inseparable from the time he arrived at the office, an hour after me, until I bade him good-night at the street-car or at his own door, when, according to our pact, we walked and talked at his expense, instead of supping late at mine. The nature of this pact is related in the following verse, to which Field prefixed this note: “While this poem is printed in all the ‘Reliques of Ye Good Knights’ Poetrie,’ and while the incident it narrates is thoroughly characteristic of that Knightly Sage, the versification is so different from that of the other ballads that there is little doubt that this fragment is spurious. Prof. Max Beeswanger (Book III.,



page 18, old English Poetry) says that these verses were written by Friar Terence, a learned monk of the Good Knight's time."

*THE GOOD KNIGHT TO SIR SLOSSON*



## Page 3

The night was warm as summer  
And the wold was wet with dew,  
And the moon rose fair,  
And the autumn air  
From the flowery prairies blew;  
You took my arm, ol' Nomp,  
And measured the lonely street,  
And you said, "Let's walk  
In the gloom and talk—  
'Tis too pleasant to-night to eat!"

And you quoth: "Old Field supposin'  
Hereafter we two agree;  
If it's fair when we're through  
I'm to walk with you—  
If it's foul you're to eat with me!"  
Then I clasped your hand, ol' Nomp,  
And I said: "Well, be it so."  
The night was so fine  
I didn't opine  
It could ever rain or snow!

But the change came on next morning  
When the fickle mercury fell,  
And since, that night  
That was warm and bright  
It's snowed or it's rained like—well.  
Have you drawn your wages, Nomp?  
Have you reckoned your pounds and pence?  
Harsh blows the wind,  
And I feel inclined  
To banquet at your expense!\_

The "Friar Terence" of Field's note was the Edward J. McPhelim to whom reference has already been made, who often joined us in our after-theatre symposiums, but could not be induced to walk one block if there was a street-car going his way.

As bearing on the nature of these "banquets," and the unending source of enjoyment they were to both of us, the following may throw a passing light:

*Discussing great and sumptuous cheer  
At Boyle's one midnight dark and drear  
Two gentle warriors sate;  
Out spake old Field: "In sooth I reckon*



*We bide too long this night on deck—  
What, ho there, varlet, bring the check!  
Egad, it groweth late!”*

Then out spake Thompson flaming hot:  
“Now, by my faith, I fancy not,  
Old Field, this ribald jest;  
Though you are wondrous fair and free  
With riches that accrue to thee,  
The check to-night shall come to me—  
You are my honored guest!”

But with a dark forbidding frown  
Field slowly pulled his visor down  
And rose to go his way—  
“Since this sweet favor is denied,  
I’ll feast no more with thee,” he cried—  
Then strode he through the portal wide  
While Thompson paused to pay.\_

Speaking of “the riches that accrued” to Field it may be well to explain that when he came to Chicago from Denver he was burdened with debts, and although subsequently he was in receipt of a fair salary, it barely sufficed to meet his domestic expenses and left little to abate the importunity of the claims that followed him remorselessly. He lived very simply in a flat on the North Side—first on Chicago Avenue, something over a mile from the office, later on in another flat further north, on La Salle Avenue, and still later, and until he went to Europe, in a small rented house on Crilly Place, which is a few blocks west of the south end of Lincoln Park.

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By arrangement with the business office, Field's salary was paid to Mrs. Field weekly, she having the management of the finances of the family. Field, Ballantyne, and I were the high-priced members of the News staff at that time, but our pay was not princely, and two of us were engaged in a constant conspiracy to jack it up to a level more nearly commensurate, as we "opined," with our respective needs and worth. The third member of the trio, who personally sympathized with our aspirations and acknowledged their justice, occupied an executive position, where he was expected to exercise the most rigorous economy. Moreover, he had a Scotsman's stern and brutal sense of his duty to get the best work for the least expenditure of his employer's money. It was not until Field and I learned that Messrs. Lawson & Stone were more appreciative of the value of our work that our salaries gradually rose above the level where Ballantyne would have condemned them to remain forever in the sacred name of economy.

I have said that Field's weekly salary—"stipend," he called it—was paid regularly to Mrs. Field. I should have said that she received all of it that the ingenious and impecunious Eugene had not managed to forestall. Not a week went by that he did not tax the fertility of his active brain to wheedle Collins Shackelford, the cashier, into breaking into his envelope for five or ten dollars in advance. These appeals came in every form that Field's fecundity could invent. When all other methods failed the presence of "Pinny" or "Melvin" in the office would afford a messenger and plan of action that was always crowned with success. "Pinny" especially seemed to enter into his father's schemes to move Shackelford's sympathy with the greatest success. He was also very effective in moving Mr. Stone to a consideration of Field's requests for higher pay.

In his "Eugene Field I Knew," Francis Wilson has preserved a number of these touching "notes" to Shackelford, in prose and verse, but none of them equals in the shrewd, seductive style, of which Field was master, the following, which was composed with becoming hilarity and presented with befitting solemnity:

### *A SONNET TO SHEKELSFORD*

Sweet Shekelsford, the week is near its end,  
And, as my custom is, I come to thee;  
There is no other who has pelf to lend,  
At least no pelf to lend to hapless me;  
Nay, gentle Shekelsford, turn not away—  
I must have wealth, for this is Saturday.

Ah, now thou smil'st a soft relenting smile—  
Thy previous frown was but a passing joke,  
I knew thy heart would melt with pity while  
Thou heardst me pleading I was very broke.  
Nay, ask me not if I've a note from Stone,  
When I approach thee, O thou best of men!



I bring no notes, but, boldly and alone,  
I woo sweet hope and strike thee for a ten.

December 3d, 1884.\_

## Page 5

There is no mistaking the touch of the author of “Mr. Billings of Louisville” in these lines, in which humor and flattery robbed the injunction of Mr. Stone against advancing anything on Field’s salary of its binding force. Having once learned the key that would unlock the cashier’s box, he never let a week go by without turning it to some profitable account. But it is only fair to say that he never abused his influence over Mr. Shackelford to lighten the weekly envelope by more than the “necessary V” or the “sorely needed X.”

I have dwelt upon these conditions because they explain to some extent our relations, and why, after we had entered upon our study of early English ballads and the chronicles of knights and tourneys, Field always referred to himself as “the good but impecunious Knight, *sans peur et sans monnaie*,” while I was “Sir Slosson,” “Nompy,” or “Grimesey,” as the particular roguery he was up to suggested.

It was while I was visiting my family in the province of New Brunswick, in the fall of 1884, that I received the initial evidence of a particular line of attack in which Field delighted to show his friendship and of which he never wearied. It came in shape of an office postal card addressed in extenso, “For Mr. Alexander Slason Thompson, Fredericton, New Brunswick”—the employment of the baptismal “Alexander” being intended to give zest to the joke with the postal officials in my native town. The communication to which the attention of the curious was invited by its form read:

CHICAGO, October 6th, 1884.

GRIMSEY:

Come at once. We are starving! Come and bring your wallet with you.

EUGENE F——D.

JOHN F. B——E.

Of course the postmaster at Fredericton read the message, and I was soon conscious that a large part of the community was consumed with curiosity as to my relations with my starving correspondents.

But this served merely as a prelude to what was to follow. My visit was cut short by an assignment from the Daily News to visit various towns in Maine to interview the prominent men who had become interested, through James G. Blaine, in the Little Rock securities which played such a part in the presidential campaigns of 1876 and 1884. For ten days I roved all over the state, making my headquarters at the Hotel North, Augusta, where I was bombarded with postal cards from Field. They were all couched in ambiguous terms and were well calculated to impress the inquisitive hotel clerk with the impecuniosity of my friends and with the suspicion that I was in some way responsible for their desperate condition. Autograph hunters have long ago stripped me



of most of these letters of discredit, but the following, which has escaped the importunity of collectors of Fieldiana, will indicate their general tenor:

CHICAGO, October 10th, 1884.

If you do not hasten back we shall starve. Harry Powers has come to our rescue several times, but is beginning to weaken, and the outlook is very dreary. If you cannot come yourself, please send certified check.

Yours hungrily,

## Page 6

E.F.  
J.F.B.

The same postal importunities awaited me at the Parker House while in Boston, and came near spoiling the negotiations in which I was engaged, for the News, for the, till then, unpublished correspondence between Mr. Blaine and Mr. Fischer, of the Mulligan letters notoriety. My assignment as staff correspondent called for visits to New York, Albany, and Buffalo on my way home, and wherever I stopped I found proofs that Field was possessed of my itinerary and was bound that I should not escape his embarrassing attentions.

There is no need to tell that of all anniversaries of the year Christmas was the one that appealed most strongly to Eugene Field's heart and ever-youthful fancy. It was in his mind peculiarly the children's festival, and his books bear all the testimony that is needed, from the first poem he acknowledged, "Christmas Treasures," to the last word he wrote, that it filled his heart with rejoicings and love and good will. But there is an incident in our friendship which shows how he managed to weave in with the blessed spirit of Christmas the elfish, cheery spirit of his own.

We had spent Christmas Eve, 1884, together, and, as usual, had expended our last dime in providing small tokens of remembrance for everyone within the circle of our immediate friends. I parted from him at the midnight car, which he took for the North Side. Going to the Sherman House, I caught the last elevator for my room on the top floor, and it was not long ere I was oblivious to all sublunary things.

Before it was fairly light the next morning I was disturbed and finally awakened by the sound of voices and subdued tittering in the corridor outside my door. Then there came a knock, and I was told that there was a message for me. Opening the door, my eyes were greeted with a huge home-knit stocking tacked to it with a two-pronged fork and filled with a collection of conventional presents for a boy—a fair idea of which the reader can glean from the following lines in Field's handwriting dangling from the toe:

*I prithee, gentle traveller, pause And view the work of Santa Claus. Behold this sock that's brimming o'er With good things near our Slason's door; Before he went to bed last night He paddled out in robe of white, And hung this sock upon the wall Prepared for Santa Claus's call. And said, "Come, Santa Claus, and bring Some truck to fill this empty thing." Then back he went and locked the door, And soon was lost in dream and snore.*

The Saint arrived at half-past one—  
Behold how well his work is done:  
See what a wealth of food and toy  
He brought unto the sleeping boy:  
An apple, fig, and orange, too,



A jumping-jack of carmine hue,  
A book, some candy, and a cat,  
Two athletes in a wrestling spat,  
A nervous monkey on a stick,  
And honey cake that's hard and thick.  
Oh, what a wealth of joy is here  
To thrill the soul of Slason dear!



## Page 7

Touch not a thing, but leave them all  
Within this sock upon the wall;  
So when he wakes and comes, he may  
Find all these toys and trinkets gay,  
And thank old Santa that he came  
Up all these stairs with all this game.\_

If I have succeeded in conveying any true impression of Eugene Field's nature, the reader can imagine the pleasure he derived from this game, in planning it, in providing the old-fashioned sock, toys, and eatables, and in toiling up six flights of stairs after he knew I was asleep, to see that everything was arranged so as to attract the attention of the passing traveller. The success of his game was fully reported to him by his friend, the night clerk—now one of the best known hotel managers in Chicago—and mightily he enjoyed the report that I had been routed out by the early wayfarer before the light of Christmas broke upon the slumbering city.

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCTION TO COLORED INKS

My room in the Sherman House, then, as now, one of the most conveniently located hotels in the business district of Chicago, was the scene of Eugene Field's first introduction to the use of colored inks. His exquisitely neat, small, and beautifully legible handwriting has always been the subject of wondering comment and admiration. He adopted and perfected that style of chirography deliberately to reduce the labor of writing to a minimum. And he succeeded, for few pen-men could exceed him in the rapidity with which he produced "copy" for the printer and none excelled him in sending that copy to the compositor in a form so free from error as to leave no question where blame for typographical blunders lay. In over twenty years' experience in handling copy I have only known one regular writer for the press who wrote as many words to a sheet as Field. That was David H. Mason, the tariff expert, whose handwriting was habitually so infinitesimal that he put more than a column of brevier type matter on a single page, note-paper size.

Strange to say, the compositors did not complain of this eye-straining copy, which attracted them by its compactness and stretched out to nearly half a column in the "strings" by which their pay was measured. From this it may be inferred that there was never any complaint of Field's manuscript from the most exacting and captious of all newspaper departments—the composing room.

However, I set out to relate the genesis of Field's use of the colored inks, with which he not only embellished his correspondence and presentation copies of his verse, but with which he was wont to illuminate his copy for the printer. It came about in this way:



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In the winter of 1885 Walter Cranston Larned, author of the "Churches and Castles of Mediaeval France," then the art critic for the News, contributed to it a series of papers on the Walters gallery in Baltimore. These attracted no small attention at the time, and were the subject of animated discussion in art circles in Chicago. They were twelve in number, and ran along on the editorial page of the News from February 23d till March 10th. At first we of the editorial staff took only a passing interest in Mr. Larned's contributions. But one day Field, Ballantyne, and I, from a discussion of the general value of art criticism in a daily newspaper, were led to question whether it conveyed an intelligible impression of the subject, and more particularly of the paintings commented on, to the ordinary reader. The point was raised as to the practicability of artists themselves reproducing any recognizable approach to the original paintings by following Mr. Larned's verbal descriptions. Thereupon we deliberately set about, in a spirit of frolic to be sure, to attempt what we each and all considered a highly improbable feat.

Armed with the best water colors we could find in Abbott's art store, we converted my bachelor quarters in the Sherman House into an amateur studio, where we daily labored for an hour or so in producing most remarkable counterfeits of the masterpieces in Mr. Walters's gallery as seen through Mr. Larned's text. We were innocent of the first principles of drawing and knew absolutely nothing about the most rudimentary use of water colors. Somehow, Field made a worse botch in mixing and applying the colors than did either Ballantyne or I. They would never produce the effects intended. He made the most whimsical drawings, only to obliterate every semblance to his original conception in the coloring. To prevent his going on a strike, I ransacked Chicago for colored inks to match those required in the pictures that had been assigned to him. This inspired him with renewed enthusiasm, and he devoted himself to the task of realizing Mr. Larned's descriptions in colored inks with the zest that produces the masterpieces over which artists and critics rave.

His first work in this line was a reproduction—or shall I call it a restoration—of Corot's "St. Sebastian." In speaking of this as one of the noteworthy paintings in the Walters gallery, Mr. Larned had said that it was a landscape in which the figures were quite subordinate and seemed merely intended to illustrate the deeper meaning of the painter in his rendition of nature. According to the critic's detailed description, it was a forest scene. "Great trees rise on the right to the top of the canvas. On the left are also some smaller trees, whose upper branches reach across and make, with the trees on the right, a sort of arch through which is seen a wonderful stretch of sky. A rocky path leads away from the foreground beneath the overhanging trees, sloping upward until

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it reaches the crest of a hill beneath the sky. Just at this point the figures of two retreating horsemen are seen. These are the men who have been trying to kill St. Sebastian, and have left him, as they thought, dead in the depth of the forest. In the immediate foreground lies the figure of the half dead saint, whose wounds are being dressed by two women. Hovering immediately above this group, far up among the tree branches, two lovely little angels are seen holding the palm and crown of the martyr. All the figures are better painted than is usual with Corot, and the angels are very light and delicate, both in color and form.” Mr. Larned quoted from a celebrated French authority that this was “the most sincerely religious picture of the nineteenth century.” I leave it to the reader if Mr. Larned’s description conveys any such impression. To Field’s mind, it only suggested the grotesque, and his reproduction was a *chef d’oeuvre*, as he was wont to say. He followed the general outline of the scene as described above, but made the landscape subordinate to the figures. The retreating ruffians bore an unmistakable resemblance to outlawed American cowboys. The saint showed carmine ink traces of having been most shamefully abused. But the chief interest in the picture was divided between a lunch-basket in the foreground, from which protruded a bottle of “St. Jacob’s” oil, and a brace of vividly pink cupids hopping about in the tree-tops, rejoicing over the magical effect of the saintly patent medicine. His treatment of this picture proved, if it proved anything, that Corot had gone dangerously near the line where the sublime suggests the ridiculous.

In Fortuny’s “Don Quixote” Field found a subject that tickled his fancy and lent itself to his untrammelled sense of the absurd. According to Mr. Larned, Fortuny’s picture—a water-color—in the Walters gallery was one which represents the immortal knight in the somewhat undignified occupation of searching for fleas in his clothing. He has thrown off his doublet and his under garment is rolled down to his waist, leaving the upper portion of his body nude, excepting the immense helmet which hides his bent-down head. Both hands grasp the under garment, and the eyes are evidently turned in eager expectancy upon the folds which the hands are clasping, in the hope that the roving tormentor has at last been captured. “What an astonishing freak of genius!” exclaimed Mr. Larned. “For genius it certainly is. The color and the drawing of the figure are simply masterly, and the entire tone of the picture is wonderfully rich; indeed, for a water-color, it is quite marvellous. This is one of Fortuny’s celebrated pictures, but how the ‘Ecole des Beaux Arts’ would in the old days have held up its hands and closed its eyes in holy horror! Possibly an earnest disciple of Lessing, even, might have a rather dubious feeling about such a choice of subjects.”

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But it suited Field's pen and colored inks to a T. He entered into Fortuny's spirit as far as he dared to go and helped it over the edge of the merely dubious to the unmistakably safe grotesque. His own Don Quixote was clad in modern costume, from the riding-boots and monster spurs up to the belt. From that point his emaciated body—a fearfully and wonderfully articulated semi-skeleton—was nude save for one or two sporadic hairs. In the place of the traditional helmet, the Don's head was encased in a garden watering-pot, on the spout of which, and dominating the entire canvas, as artists say, poised on one foot and evidently enjoying the sorrowful knight's discomfiture, was the pestiferous *pulex irritans*.

In the Walters gallery were several pictures of child-life by Frere, in which, according to Mr. Lamed, "every little figure is full of character"—a fact about which there is no doubt in the accompanying reproduction of Frere's "The Little Dressmaker," which by some chance was preserved from those "artist days."

The completed results of our many off-hours of artist life were bound in a volume which was presented to Mr. Larned at a formal lunch given in his honor at the Sherman House. The speech of presentation was made by our friend, "Colonel" James S. Norton, in what the rural paragrapher would have described as "the most felicitous effort of his life," and the wonderful collection was commended to Mr. Larned's grateful preservation by the judgment of Mr. Henry Field, whose own choice selection of paintings is the most valued possession of the Chicago Art Institute. Mr. Field testified that he recognized everyone of the amazing reproductions from their resemblance, grotesque in the main, to the originals in the Walters gallery, with which he was familiar.

[Illustration: THE LITTLE DRESS-MAKER. (Hand-drawn "SINGER" sewing machine.)  
*From a drawing by Eugene Field.*]

It was for this occasion that Field composed and recited his remarkable German poem, entitled "Der Niebelungen und der Schlabbergasterfeldt." From the manuscript copy in my scrap-book I give the original version of this extraordinary production, which was copied in the Illinois Staats Zeitung and went the rounds of the German press in all the dignity of German text and with a variety of serious criticisms truly comical:

### *DER NIEBELRUNGEN UND DER SCHLABBERGASTERFELDT*

(Narratively)

Ein Niebelungen schlossen gold  
Gehabt haben Richter weiss  
Ein Schlabbergasterfeldt un Sold  
Gehaben Meister treulich heiss  
"Ich dich! Ich dich!" die Maedchein tzwei  
"Ich dich!" das Niebelungen drei.



(Tragically)

Die Turnverein ist lieb und dicht  
Zum Fest und lieben kleiner Geld,  
Der Niebelungen picht ein Bricht—  
Und hitt das Schlabbergasterfeldt!  
“Ich dich! Ich dich!” die Maedchein schreit  
Und so das Schlabbergaster deit!



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(Plaintively)

Ach! weh das Niebelungen spott  
Ach! weh das Maedchein Turnverein  
Und unser Meister lieben Gott—  
Ach! weh das Weinerwurst und Wein!  
Ach! weh das Bricht zum kleiner Geld—  
Ach! weh das Schlabbergasterfeld!\_

Ever after this Walters gallery incident it was my duty, so he thought, to keep Field's desk supplied with inks, not only of every color of the rainbow, but with lake-white, gold, silver, and bronze, and any other kind which his whim deemed necessary to give eccentric emphasis to some line, word or letter in whatever he chanced to be composing. His peremptory requests were generally preferred in writing, addressed "For the Lusty Knight, Sir Slosson Thompson, Office," and delivered by his grinning minion, the office factotum. Sometimes they were in verse, as in the following:

*"Who spilt my bottle of ink?" said Field,  
"Who spilt my bottle of ink?"  
And then with a sigh, said Thompson, "'Twas I—  
I broke that bottle of ink,  
I think,  
And wasted the beautiful ink."*

"Who'll buy a bottle of ink?" asked Field,  
"Who'll buy a bottle of ink?"  
With a still deeper sigh his friend replied, "I—  
I'll buy a bottle of ink  
With chink,  
I'll buy a bottle of ink!"

"Oh, isn't this beautiful ink!" cried Field,  
"Beautiful bilious ink!"  
He shook the hand of his old friend, and  
He tipped him a pleasant wink,  
And a blink,  
As he went to using that ink.\_

While Field insisted on a variegated assortment of inks he did not demand a separate pen for each color. In lieu of these he possessed himself of an old linen office coat, which he donned when it was cool enough for a coat and used for a pen-wiper. When the temperature rendered anything beyond shirt-sleeves superfluous, this linen affair was hung so conveniently that he could still use it for what he regarded as its primary use. In warm weather I wore a presentably clean counterpart of Field's Joseph's coat of



many colors. As often as necessary this went to the laundry. One day when it had just returned from one of these periodical visits, I was startled, but not surprised, to find that Field had appropriated my spotless linen duster to his own inky uses and left his own impossible creation hanging on my hook in its stead. Field's version of what then occurred is beautifully, if not truthfully, portrayed in the accompanying "Proper Sonnet" and life-like portraits.

If the reader will imagine each mark on the coat, of which "Nompy" bootlessly complains, done in different colors, he will have some idea of the infinite pains Field bestowed on the details of his epistolary pranks.

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Out of the remarkable series of postal appeals which Field sent to me when I was visiting in New Brunswick grew an animated correspondence between Field and my youngest sister. She bore the good old-fashioned Christian names of Mary Matilda—a combination that struck a responsive chord in Field's taste in nomenclature, while his "come at once, we are starving" aroused her sense of humor to the point of forwarding an enormous raised biscuit two thousand miles for the relief of two Chicago sufferers. The result was an exchange of letters, one of which has a direct bearing on his whimsical adoption of many-colored inks in his writing. It read as follows:

[Illustration: A PROPER SONET. *From a drawing in colors by Eugene Field.*

Then Kreee 3 times his breast he smote,  
And gruesome oaths swore he;  
"Oh, bring back *mine*, and take *your* coat—  
Your painted coat, the which I note  
Full ill besemmeth me!"  
But swere and plede he as he mote,  
Old Field said "No, ol' Nomp, no!  
You'll get your coat not none no mo!"

[Illustration: FIELD AND BALLANTYNE AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF A BISCUIT FROM NEW BRUNSWICK. *From a drawing by Eugene Field.*]

[red ink] CHICAGO, May the 7th, 1885.

[blue ink] Dear Miss:

I make bold to send herewith a diagram of the new rooms in which your brother Slason is now [brown ink] ensconced. The drawing may be bad and the perspective may be out of plumb, but the motif is good, as you [green ink] will allow. All that Brother Slason needs now to symmetrize his new abode is a box from home—a box filled [purple ink] with those toothsome goodies which only a kind, loving, indulgent sister can make and donate to an absent [black ink] brother. Having completed my contribution to the Larned gallery, and having exhibited the pictures in the [red ink] recent salon, I have a large supply of colored inks on hand, which fact accounts for that appearance of an [blue ink] Easter necktie or a crazy quilt which this note has. In a few days I shall take the liberty of sending [brown ink] you the third volume of the "Aunt Mary Matilda" series—a tale of unusual power and interest. With [green ink] many reverential obeisances and respectful assurances of regard, I beg to remain, [lilac ink] Your obedient servant, [purple ink] EUGENE FIELD, [red ink] per [blue ink] William Smith, [brown ink] Secretary.

This epistle did indeed look like a crazy quilt. There was a change of color at the beginning of each line, as I have endeavored to indicate. It is beautifully written and in

many respects besides its variegated aspect is the most perfect specimen of Field's painstaking epistolary handiwork I know of.

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The “diagram of Mr. Slason Thompson’s New Rooms” accompanying this letter was entirely worthy of it, and must have afforded him hours of boyish pleasure. No description can do it justice. He gave a ground plan of two square rooms with the windows marked in red ink, the doors in green, the bed, with a little figure on it, in blue, the fireplace in yellow, chairs and tables in purple, and the “buttery,” as he insisted on calling the bathroom, in brown. As these apartments were in the Pullman Building, on the corner of Michigan Avenue and Adams Street, and commanded a glimpse of the lake, Field’s diagram included a representation of Lake Michigan by zigzag lines of blue ink, with a single fish as long as a street-car, according to his scale, leering at the spectator from the billowy depths of indigo blue. Everything in the diagram was carefully identified in the key which accompanied it. An idea of the infinite attention to detail Field bestowed on such frivolling as this may be gathered from the accompanying cut of the Pullman Building, from the seventh story of which I am shown waving a welcome to the good but “impecunious knight.” The inscription, in Field’s handwriting, tells the story.

[Illustration: THE GOOD KNIGHT SLOSSON’S CASTLE. *From a drawing by Eugene Field.*

The good knight Slosson from a watch tower of his castle desenith and salutith the good Knight Eugene, sans peur et sans monie.]

[Illustration: A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS. *From drawings by Eugene Field.*

No. 1

The fair Mary Matilda skimming over the hills and dales of New Brunswick.

No. 2

Lovelorn Eddie Martin in hot pursuit of same.

No. 3

Lone pine in the deserted vale where the musquash watches for his prey.

No. 4

Horrible discovery made by the fair Mary Matilda upon her return to the lone pine in the secluded vale.

No. 5

All that is left of poor Eddie.]



Early in the spring of 1885 Field was inspired, by an account I gave him of a snow-shoeing party my sister had described in one of her letters, to compose the series of pen-and-ink tableaux reproduced on pages 30 and 31.

An inkling as to the meaning of these weird pictures may be gleaned from the letter I sent along with them to my sister, in which I wrote:

I was telling Field the story of your last snow-shoeing party when he was prompted to the enclosed tragedy in five acts. He hopes that you will not mistake the stars for mosquitoes, nor fail to comprehend the terrible fate that has overtaken Eddy Martin at the mouth of the voracious musquash, whose retreating tail speaks so eloquently of his toothsome repast. The lone pine tree is a thing that you will enjoy; also the expression of horror on your own face when you behold the empty boots of Eddy. There is a tragedy too deep for tears in the silent monuments of Field's ignorance



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of moccasins.

In explanation of the final scene in this “sad, eventful history” it should be said that “poor Eddie” was a harmless, half-witted giant who sawed the cord wood and did odd chores about my father’s place. This gives significance to the pendant buck-saw and the lonely wood-horse. His lance rusts upon the wall and his steed stands silent in the stall. The reader should not pass from these examples of Field’s humor with pen and ink without marking the changes that come across the face of the moon as the tragedy unfolds.

That Field found a congenial spirit and correspondent in my sister is further evidenced in the following letter written in gamboge brown:

CHICAGO, July the 2d, 1885.

DEAR MISS:

In order that you may no longer groan under the erroneous impression which you appear to harbor, touching my physique, I remit to you a photograph of a majority of myself. The photograph was made last December, when I was, so to speak, at my perihelion in the matter of avoirdupois. You may be gratified to know that I have not shrunken much since that time. I have taken the timely precaution to label the picture in order that none of your Fredericton people thumbing over your domestic album shall mistake me for either a young Episcopal rector or a rising young negro minstrel. The several drawings and paintings I have sent you ever and anon at your brother’s expense are really not the best samples of my art. Mr. Walter Cranston Larned, a wealthy young tennis player of this city, has most of my *chef d’oeuvres* in his private gallery. I hope to be able to paint you a landscape in oil very soon. There is no sacrifice I would not be willing to make for one whom I esteem so highly as I do you. It might be just as well not to read this line to the old folks. Your brother Slosson has recently developed an insatiate passion for horse racing, and in consequence of his losses at pools I find him less prone to regale me with sumptuous cheer than he was before the racing season broke out. The prince, too, has blossomed out as a patron of the track, and I am slowly becoming more and more aware that this is a bitter world. I think I may safely say that I look wholly to such noble, generous young women as you and your sisters to preserve in me a consciousness that there is in life such a boon as generosity. You will observe (if you have any eye for color) that I pen you these lines in gamboge brown; this is because Fourth of July is so near at hand. This side of the line we are fairly reeking with patriotism just now; even that mugwump-alien—your brother—contemplates celebrating in a fitting manner the anniversary of our country’s independence of *British Tyranny!*

Will you please slap Bessie for me—the pert minx! I heard of her remarks about my story of Mary Matilda and the Prince.



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Believe me as ever,

Sincerely yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

The story of "How Mary Matilda Won a Prince" was the third in what Field called his "Aunt Mary Matilda Series." The first of these was "The Lonesome Little Shoe" (see "The Holy Cross and Other Tales" of his collected works), which, after it was printed in the Morning News, was cut out and pasted in a little brown manila pamphlet, with marginal illustrations of the most fantastic nature. The title page of this precious specimen of Fieldiana is characteristic:

THE LONESOME LITTLE SHOE:

BEING A WONDERFUL NARRATIVE CULLED FROM  
THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF EUGENE FIELD

1885.

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED

DEDICATED TO AUNT MARY MATILDA'S PRESENT  
AND FUTURE NEPHEWS AND NIECES,  
THEIR HEIRS, ASSIGNS AND ASSIGNEES  
FOREVER

CANADIAN TRACT SOCIETY

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What became of the second of this wonderful series no one knows. The third, "How Mary Won a Prince," is the only instance that has come under my notice where Field put any of his compositions in typewriter. This was done to make the first edition consist of a single copy. The prince and hero of this romantic tale was our associate, John F. Ballantyne, and the story itself was "Inscribed to the beautiful, accomplished, amiable and ever-to-be-revered, Miss Mary Matilda Thompson, of Frederickton, York County, New Brunswick, Dominion of Canada, 1885." It was said to be "elegantly illustrated," of which the reader may judge from the accompanying reproductions.

HOW MARY MATILDA WON A PRINCE.

A gypsy had told Mary Matilda that she would marry a prince. This was when Mary Matilda was a little girl. She had given the gypsy a nice, fresh bun, and the gypsy was



so grateful that she said she would tell the little girl's fortune, so Mary Matilda held out her hand and the old gypsy looked at it very closely.

"You are very generous," said the gypsy, "and your generosity will cause a prince to fall in love with you; the prince will rescue you from a great danger and you will wed the prince."

Having uttered these strange words, the gypsy went away and shortly after was sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary for having robbed a hen-roost.

Mary Matilda grew from childhood to be the most beautiful maiden in all the province; none was so beautiful and so witty as she. Withal she was so amiable and benevolent that all loved her, even those who envied her the transcendent charms with which she was endowed. As the unfortunate gypsy had predicted, Mary Matilda was the most generous maiden on earth and the fame of her goodness was wide-spread. Now Mary Matilda had an older brother who had gone to a far-off country to become rich, and to accomplish those great political reforms



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to which his ambition inclined him. His name was Slosson, and in the far-off country he fell in with two young men of his own age who were of similar ambition. But they were even poorer than Slosson, and what particularly grieved them was the fact that their lineage was obscured by dark clouds of doubt. That is to say, they were unable to determine with any degree of positiveness whether they were of noble extraction; their parents refused to inform them, and consequently they were deeply distressed, as you can well imagine. Slosson was much charmed with their handsome bearing, chivalric ways, and honorable aspirations, and his pity was evoked by their poverty and their frequent sufferings for the very requirements of life. Freely he shared his little all with them, in return for which they gave him their gratitude and affection. One day Slosson wrote a letter to his sister Mary Matilda, saying: "A hard winter is coming on and our store of provisions is nearly exhausted. My two friends are in much distress and so am I. We have accomplished a political revolution, but under the civil service laws we can hardly expect an office." Mary Matilda was profoundly touched by this letter. Her tender heart bled whenever she thought of her absent brother, and instinctively her sympathies went out toward his two companions in distress. So in her own quiet, maidenly way she set about devising a means for the relief of the unfortunate young men. She made a cake, a beautiful cake stuffed with plums and ornamented with a lovely design representing the lost Pleiad, which you perhaps know was a young lady who lived long ago and acquired eternal fame by dropping out of the procession and never getting back again. Well, Mary Matilda put this delicious cake in a beautiful paper collar-box and sent it in all haste to her brother and his two friends in the far-off country. Great was Slosson's joy upon receiving this palatable boon, and great was the joy of his two friends, who it must be confessed were on the very brink of starvation. The messages Mary Matilda received from the grateful young men, who owed their rescue to her, must have pleased her, although the consciousness of a noble deed is better than words of praise. But one day Mary Matilda got another letter from her brother Slosson which plunged her into profound melancholy. "Weep with me, dear Sister," he wrote, "for one of my companions, Juan, has left me. He was the youngest, and I fear some great misfortune has befallen him, for he was ever brooding over the mystery of his lineage. Yesterday he left us and we have not seen him since. He took my lavender trousers with him."

As you may easily suppose, Mary Matilda was much cast down by this fell intelligence. She drooped like a blighted lily and wept.

"What can ail our Mary Matilda?" queried her mother. "The roses have vanished from her cheeks, the fire has gone out of her orbs, and her step has lost its old-time cunning. I am much worried about her."



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They all noticed her changed appearance. Even Eddie Martin, the herculean wood-sawyer, observed the dejection with which the sorrow-stricken maiden emerged from the house and handed him his noontide rations of nutcakes and buttermilk. But Mary Matilda spoke of the causes of her woe to none of them. In silence she brooded over the mystery of Juan's disappearance.

[Illustration: THE PRINCE ASKING EDDIE MARTIN ABOUT THE FAIR MARY MATILD.]

When the winter came and the soft, fair snow lay ten or twelve feet deep on the level on the forest and stream, on wold and woodland, little Bessie once asked Mary Matilda if she would not take her out for a walk. Now little Bessie was Mary Matilda's niece, and she was such a sweet little girl that Mary Matilda could never say "no" to anything she asked.

"Yes, Bessie," said Mary Matilda, "if you will bundle up nice and warm I will take you out for a short walk of twenty or thirty miles."

So Bessie bundled up nice and warm. Then Mary Matilda went out on the porch and launched her two snow-shoes and got into them and harnessed them to her tiny feet.

"Where are you going?" asked Eddie Martin, pausing in his work and leaning his saw against a slab of green maple.

"I am going to take Bessie out for a short walk," replied Mary Matilda.

"Are you not afraid to go alone?" said Eddie Martin. "You know the musquashes are very thick, and this spell of winter weather has made them very hungry and ferocious."

"No, I am not afraid of the musquashes," replied Mary Matilda. But she was afraid of them: only she did not want to tell Eddie Martin so, for fear he would want to go with her. This was the first and only wrong story Mary Matilda ever told. Having grasped little Bessie by the hand, Mary Matilda stepped over the fence and was soon lost to view. Scarcely had she gone when a tall, thin, haggard looking young man came down the street and leaned over the back gate.

"Can you tell me," he asked in weary tones, "whether the beautiful Mary Matilda abides hereabouts?"

"She lives here," replied Eddie Martin, "but she has gone for a walk with little Bessie."



“Whither did they drift?” queried the mysterious unknown.

“They started toward the Nashwaaksis,” said Eddie Martin. “And I sadly fear the deadly musquash will pursue them.”

The stranger turned pale and trembled at the suggestion.

“Will you lend me your saw for a brief period?” he asked.

“Why?” inquired Eddie Martin.

“To rescue the fair Mary Matilda from the musquashes,” replied the stranger. Then he seized the saw, and with pale face started in the direction Mary Matilda had gone.

Meanwhile Mary Matilda had crossed the Nashwaaksis and was speeding in a southerly course toward the Nashwaak. The gentle breeze favored her progress, and as she sailed along, the snow danced like frozen feathers around her.

“Oh, how nice!” cried little Bessie.

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“Yes, this clear, fresh, cold air gives one new life,” said Mary Matilda.

They now came to the Nashwaak, on the farther bank of which were crouched a pack of hungry musquashes eagerly awaiting the approach of Mary Matilda and little Bessie.

“Hush,” whispered the old big musquash. “Make no noise or they will hear us and make good their escape.” But just then another musquash carelessly trod on the big musquash’s tail and the old musquash roared with pain.

“What was that?” cried little Bessie.

Mary Matilda had heard the strange cry. She paused to listen. Then she saw the pack of musquashes in the snow on the farthest bank of the Nashwaak. Oh, how frightened she was! but with a shrill cry she seized Bessie in her arms, and, turning swiftly about, fled in the direction of McLeod hill. The musquashes saw her retreating, and with a howl of commingled rage and disappointment they started in hot pursuit. They ran like mad, as only starving musquashes can run. Every moment they gained on the maiden and her human charge until at last they were at her very heels. Mary Matilda remembered she had some beechnuts in her pocket. She reached down, grasped a handful of the succulent fruit and cast it to her insatiate pursuers. It stayed their pursuit for a moment, but in another moment they were on her track again, howling demoniacally. Another handful of the beechnuts went to the ravenous horde, and still another. By this time Mary Matilda had reached McLeod hill and was crossing the Nashwaaksis. Her imagination pictured a scuttled brigantine lying in the frozen stream. On its slippery deck stood a pirate, waving a gory cutlass.

[Illustration: THE PRINCE’S COAT-OF-ARMS—FLIGHT OF THE FAIR MARY MATILDA—THE AGGRAVATING MIRAGE.]

“Ha, ha, ho, ho!” laughed the gory and bearded pirate.

“Save me!” cried Mary Matilda. “My beechnuts are all gone!”

“Throw them the baby!” answered the bearded pirate, “and save yourself! Ha, ha, ho, ho!”

Should she do it? Should she throw little Bessie to the devouring musquashes? No, she could not stoop to that ungenerous deed.

“No, base pirate!” she cried. “I would not so demean myself!”

But the scuttled brigantine had disappeared. Mary Matilda saw it was a mirage. Meanwhile the musquashes gained on her. The beechnuts had whetted their appetite.



It seemed as if they were sure of their prey. But all at once they stopped, and Mary Matilda stopped, too. They were confronted by a haggard but manly form. It was the mysterious young stranger, and he had a saw which Eddie Martin had lent him. His aspect was so terrible that the musquashes turned to flee, but they were too late. The mysterious stranger laid about him so vigorously with his saw that the musquashes soon were in bits. Here was a tail, there a leg; here an ear, there a nose—oh, it was a rare potpourri, I can tell you! Finally the musquashes all were dead.

“To whom am I indebted for my salvation?” inquired Mary Matilda, blushing deeply.

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“Alas, I do not know,” replied the wan stranger. “I am called Juan, but my lineage is enveloped in gloom.”

At once Mary Matilda suspected he was her brother’s missing friend, and this suspicion was confirmed by the lavender trousers he wore. She questioned him closely, and he told her all. Bessie heard all he said, and she could tell you more particularly than I can about it. I only know that Juan confessed that, having tasted of Mary Matilda’s cake, he fell deeply in love with her and had come all this distance to ask her to be his, indissolubly.

“Still,” said he, sadly, “’tis too much to ask you to link your destiny with one whose lineage is not known.”

By this time they had reached the back-yard gate. Eddie Martin was sitting on the wood-pile talking with a weird old woman. The weird old woman scrutinized Mary Matilda closely.

“Do you know me?” she asked.

“No,” said Mary Matilda.

“I have been serving ten years for a mild indiscretion,” said the old woman, sadly. “I am the gypsy who told your fortune many years ago.”

Then the old gypsy’s keen eyes fell on Juan, the stranger. She gave a fierce cry.

“I have seen that face before!” she cried, trembling with emotion. “When I knew it, it was a baby face; but the spectacles are still the same!”

[Illustration: BROTHER SLOSSON AND HIS OTHER FRIEND EN ROUTE TO THE WEDDING.]

Juan also quivered with emotion.

“Have you a thistle mark on your left arm?” demanded the old gypsy, fiercely.

“Yes,” he answered, hoarsely; and pulling up the sleeve of his linen ulster he exposed the beautiful emblem on his emaciated arm.

“It is as I suspected!” cried the old gypsy. “You are the Prince of Lochdougal, heir presumptive to the estates and titles of the



Stuarts.” And with these words the old gypsy swooned in Eddie Martin’s arms.

When she came to, she explained that she had been a stewardess in the Lochdougal castle at Inverness when Juan’s parents had been exiled for alleged conspiracy against the queen. Juan was then a prattling babe; but even then he gave promise of a princely future. Since his arrival at maturity his parents had feared to impart to him the secret of his lineage, lest he might return to Scotland and attempt to recover his estates, thereby incurring the resentment of the existing dynasty. Of course when she heard of his noble lineage, Mary Matilda could do naught but accept the addresses of the brave prince. He speedily regained his health and flesh under the grateful influences of her cuisine. The wedding day has been set, and little Bessie is to be one of her bridesmaids. The brother Slosson is to be present, and he is to bring with him his other friend, whose name he will not mention, since his lineage is still in doubt.

## CHAPTER III

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### SOME LETTERS

“There’s no art,” said the doomed Duncan, “to find the mind’s construction in the face,” nor after a somewhat extensive acquaintance with men and their letters am I inclined to think there is very much to be found of the true individuality of men in their letters. All men, and especially literary men, seem to consider themselves on dress parade in their correspondence, and pose accordingly. Ninety-nine persons out of a hundred are more self-conscious in writing than they are in talking. Even the least conscious seem to imagine that what they put down in black and white is to pass under some censorious eye. The professional writer, whether his reputation be international, like that of a Lowell or a Stevenson, or confined to the circle of his village associates, never appears to pen a line without some affectation. The literary artist does this with an ease and grace that provokes comment upon its charming naturalness, the journeyman only occasions some remark upon his effort to “show off.” If language was given us to conceal thoughts, letter writing goes a step further and puts the black-and-white mask of deliberation on language.

Eugene Field was no exception to the rule that literary men scarcely ever write letters for the mere perusal or information of the recipient. He almost always wrote for an ulterior effect or for an ulterior audience. But he seldom wrote letters deliberately for reproduction in his “Memoirs.” If he had done so they would have been written so skilfully that he would have made himself out to be pretty much the particular kind of a character he pleased. For obvious reasons most of the communications that passed between Field and myself were verbal, across a partition in the office, or by notes that were destroyed as soon as they had served their purpose. That Field had other correspondents the following request for a postage stamp will testify:

#### *THE GOOD KNIGHT’S DIPLOMACY.[1]*

One evening in his normal plight  
The good but impecunious knight  
Addressing Thompson said:  
“Methinks a great increasing fame  
Shall add new glory to thy name,  
And cluster round thy head.

“There is no knight but he will yield  
Before thy valor in the Field  
Or in exploits of arms;  
And all admit the pleasing force  
Of thy most eloquent discourse—  
Such are thy social charms.



“Alike to lord and vassal dear  
Thou dost incline a pitying ear  
    To fellow-men in pain;  
And be he wounded, sick, or broke,  
No brother knight doth e’er invoke  
    Thy knightly aid in vain.

“Such—such a gentle knight thou art,  
And it is solace to my heart  
    To have so fair a friend.  
No better, sweeter boon I pray  
Than thy affection—by the way,  
    Hast thou a stamp to lend?”

“Aye, marry, ’tis my sweet delight  
To succor such an honest knight!”  
    Sir Thompson straight replied.  
Field caught the proffered treasure up,  
Then tossing off a stirrup-cup  
    From out the castle hied.



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July 2d, 1885.\_

[1] In this specimen of Field's privately circulated verse, as in his letters, his own punctuation and capitalization are followed. He had a system of his own which, when complicated with the office style of the News, resulted in most admirable confusion and inconsistency.

Was ever request for so small a "boon" couched in such lordly pomp of phrase and in such insinuating rhyme?

It was shortly after Field secured this boon that he had his first opportunity to waste postage stamps on me. With a party of friends I went up to Mackinac Island to spend a few days. By the first mail that reached the island after I had registered at the old Island House, I received a letter bearing in no less than five different colored inks the following unique superscription:

For that Most Illustrious and Puissant Knight Errant, *Sir Slosson Thompson*, Erstwhile of Chicago, but now illumining *Mackinac Island, Michigan*,

Where, under civic guise, he is accomplishing prodigious slaughter  
among the fish that do infest that coast.

It may be taken for granted that the clerks and the hotel guests were consumed with curiosity as to the contents of an envelope over which they had a chance to speculate before it reached me. These were:

CHICAGO, July 19th, 1885.

SWEET KNIGHT:

Heedful of the promise I made to thee prior to thy setting out for the far-distant province of Mackinac, I am minded to temporarily lay aside the accoutrements of war and the chase, and pen thee this missive wherein I do discourse of all that has happened since thy departure. Upon Saturday I did lunch with that ill-tempered knight, Sir P——, and in the evening did I discuss a goodly feast with Sir Cowan, than whom a more hospitable knight doth not exist—saving only and always thyself, which art the paragon of courtesy. This day did I lunch at my own expense, but in very sooth I had it charged, whereat did the damned Dutchman sorely lament. Would to God I were now assured at whose expense I shall lunch upon the morrow and the many days that must elapse ere thy coming hence.

By this courier I send thee divers rhymes which may divert thee.  
Soothly they are most honest chronicles, albeit in all modesty I may  
say they do not o'erpraise me.



The good Knight Melville crieth it from the battlements that he will go into a far country next week. Meanwhile the valorous Sir Ballantyne saweth wood but sayeth naught. That winsome handmaiden Birdie quitteth our service a week hence; marry, I shall miss the wench. The fair lady Julia doth commend thy prudence in getting out of the way ere she reproaches thee for seducing the good Knight into that Milwaukee journey, of the responsibility of which naughtiness I have in very sooth washed my hands as clean as



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a sheep's liver. By what good fortune, too, hast thou escaped the heat and toil of this irksome weather. By my halidom the valor trickleth down my knightly chin as I pen these few lines, and my shirt cleaveth to my back like a porous plaster. The good knight of the Talking Cat speaketh to me of taking his vacation in the middle of August, whereat I much grieve, having a mind to hie me away at that sweet season myself. One sumptuous feast have we already had at thy expense at Boyle's, as by the check thou shalt descry on thy return. Sir Harper did send me a large fish from Lake Okeboji today, which the same did I and my heirdom devour triumphantly this very evening. I have not beheld the Knight of the Lawn since thy departure. Make fair obeisance to the sweet ladies who are with thee, and remember me in all courtesy to Sir Barbour, the good Knight of the Four Winds.

Kissing thy hand a thousand times, I sign myself  
Thy loyal and sweet servant,

FIELD,  
The Good and Honest Knight.

Under another cover addressed ostentatiously:

"For the Good and Generous Knight, Sir Slosson Thompson, now summering amid rejoicings and with triumphant cheer at Mackinac Island, Michigan,"

came the following poem, entitled:

### *THE GOOD SIR SLOSSON'S EPISODE WITH THE GARRULOUS SIR BARBOUR*

Sir Slosson and companions three—  
With hearts that reeked with careless glee—  
    Strode down the golden sand,  
And pausing on the pebbly shore,  
They heard the sullen, solemn roar  
    Of surf on every hand.

Then Lady Florence said "I ween"—  
"Nay, 'tis not half so grand a scene,"  
    Sir Barbour quickly cried,  
"As you may see in my fair state,  
Where swings the well-greased golden gate  
    Above the foamy tide."

Sir Slosson quoth, "In very sooth"—  
"Nay, say not so, impetuous youth,"



Sir Barbour made his boast:  
"This northern breeze will not compare  
With that delicious perfumed air  
Which broods upon our coast."

Then Lady Helen fain would say  
Her word, but in his restless way  
Sir Barbour nipped that word;  
The other three were dumb perforce—  
Except Sir Barbour's glib discourse,  
No human sound was heard.

And even that majestic roar  
Of breakers on the northern shore  
Sank to a murmur low;  
The winds recoiled and cried, "I' sooth,  
Until we heard this 'Frisco youth,  
We reckoned we could blow!"

Sir Slosson paled with pent-up ire—  
His eyes emitted fitful fire—  
With rage his blood congealed;  
Yet, exercising sweet restraint,  
He swore no vow and breathed no plaint—  
But pined for Good Old Field.

The ladies, too, we dare to say,  
(If they survived that fateful day),  
Eschew all 'Frisco men,  
Who, as perchance you have inferred,  
Won't let a person get a word  
In edgewise now and then.\_

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The subject of the good-natured and clever satire was our mutual friend, Barbour Lathrop, with whom I had been associated in journalism in San Francisco and who is famous from the Bohemian Club literally around the globe and in many of its most out-of-the-way islands as a most entertaining, albeit incessant, story-teller and conversationalist. Pretty nearly all subjects that interest humanity have engaged his attention. He could no more rest from travel than Ulysses; and he brought to those he associated with all the fruits that faring forth in strange lands could give to a mind singularly alert for education and experience under any and all conditions. His fondness for monologue frequently exposed him to raillery, like the above, in the column where Field daily held a monopoly of table talk.

But the episode with the “Garrulous Sir Barbour” was not the rhyme of chief interest (to Field and me) forwarded by “this courier.”

This was confided to a third envelope even more elaborately addressed and embellished than either of the others, as follows:

For the valorous, joyous, Triumphant and Glorious Knight, The ever gentle and Courteous Flower of Chivalry, Cream of Knight Errantry and Pole Star of Manly virtues, *Sir Slosson Thompson*, who doth for the nonce sojourn at *Mackinac Island, Michigan*,

Where under the guise of a lone Fisherman he is  
regaled with sumptuous cheer and divers rejoicings,  
wherein he doth right merrily disport.

The rhyme under this cover in which the impecunious knight did not “overpraise” himself bore the title “How the Good Knight protected Sir Slosson’s Credit,” and was well calculated to fill me with forebodings. It ran in this wise:

*One midnight hour, Sir Ballantyne  
Addressed Old Field: “Good comrade mine,  
The times i’ faith are drear;  
Since you have not a son to spend  
I would to God our generous friend  
Sir Slosson now were here!”*

Then spake the Impecunious Knight,  
Regardful of his piteous plight:  
“Odds bobs, you say the truth;  
For since our friend has gone away,  
It doth devolve on thee to pay—  
Else would I starve i’ sooth.”



Emerging from their lofty lair  
This much bereaved but worthy pair  
    Proceeded unto Boyle's,  
Agreed that buttered toast would do.  
Although they were accustomed to  
    The choicest roasts and broils.

"Heyday, sir knights," a varlet cried  
('Twas Charlie, famous far and wide  
    As Boyle's devoted squire);  
"Sir Slosson telegraphs me to  
Deliver straightway unto you  
    Whatever you desire."

The knights with radiant features saw  
The message dated Mackinaw—  
    Then ordered sumptuous cheer;  
Two dollars' worth, at least, they "cheered"  
While from his counter Charlie leered  
    An instigating leer.



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I wot poor Charlie did not dream  
The telegram was but a scheme  
    To mulct Sir Slosson's pelf;  
For in the absence of his friend  
The Honest Knight made bold to send  
    That telegram himself.

Oh, honest Field I to keep aright  
The credit of an absent Knight—  
    And undefiled his name!  
Upon such service for thy friends  
Such knightly courtesies depends  
    Thy everlasting fame!\_

Two days later I received a postal written in a disguised hand by Ballantyne, I think, and purporting to come from "Charlie," showing the progress of the conspiracy to mulct Sir Slosson's pelf. It read:

FRIEND THOMPSON,

Fields and Ballantyne gave me the telegram tonight ordering one supper. But they have been eating all the week at your expense. Is it all right?

Yours,

CHAS. BURKEY.

And by the same mail came this comforting epistle from the arch conspirator:

CHICAGO, July the 22d, 1885.

DEAR SIR KNIGHT:

I have been too busy to reply to your many kind letters before this. On receipt of your telegram last night, we went to Boyle's and had sumptuous cheer at your expense. Charlie has begun to demur, and intends to write you a letter. Browne wrote me a note the other day. I enclose it to you. Please keep it for me. I hope your work will pan out more successfully. I had a long talk with Stone to-night, and churned him up about the paper. He agreed with me in nearly all particulars. He is going to fire W—— when D —— goes (August 1). He said, "I am going to have a lively shaking up at that time." One important change I am not at liberty to specify, but you will approve it. By the way, Stone spoke very highly of you and your work. It would be safe for you to strike him on the salary question as soon as you please. The weather is oppressively warm. Things run along about so so in the office. Hawkins told me he woke up the other night, and



could not go to sleep again till he had sung a song. The Dutch girls at Henrici's inquire tenderly for you.... Hastily yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

The note from Mr. Browne here mentioned related to the proposed publication of a collection of Field's verse and stories. The Browne was Francis F., for a long time editor of *The Dial*, and at that time holding the position of principal reader for A.C. McClurg & Co. As I remember, Mr. Browne was favorably disposed toward putting out a volume of Field's writings, but General McClurg was not enamoured of the breezy sort of personal persiflage with which Field's name was then chiefly associated. This was several years before Field made the Saints' and Sinners' Corner in McClurg's Chicago book-store famous throughout the bibliomaniac world by fictitious reports relating to it printed occasionally in his "Sharps and Flats" column. It was not until 1893 that McClurg & Co. published any of Field's writings.



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My work to which Field refers was the collection of newspaper and periodical verse entitled "The Humbler Poets," which McClurg & Co. subsequently published.

Enclosed in the letter of July 22d was the following characteristic account, conveying the impression that while he was willing to waste all the resources of his colored inks and literary ingenuity on our friendship, I must pay the freight. I think he had a superstition that it would cause a flaw in his title of "The Good Knight, *sans peur et sans monnaie*" if he were to add the price of a two-cent postage stamp to that waste.

[Illustration: A STAMP ACCOUNT.

Mr. Slosson Thompson.  
to Eugene Field, Dr.

To 4 stamps at 2 cts—July 20—.08  
To 1 stamp —July 22—.02  
Total .10

Please remit.]

[Illustration: AN ECHO FROM MACKINAC ISLAND. *With drawings by Eugene Field.*]

Shortly after my return from Mackinac, Field presented me with the following verses, enlivened with several drawings in colors, entitled "An Echo from Mackinac Island, August, 1885":

I.

*A Thompson went rowing out into the strait—  
Out into the strait in the early morn;  
His step was light and his brow elate,  
And his shirt was as new as the day just born.*

His brow was cool and his breath was free,  
And his hands were soft as a lady's hands,  
And a song of the booming waves sang he  
As he launched his bark from the golden sands.

The grayling chuckled a hoarse "ha-ha,"  
And the Cisco tittered a rude "he-he"—  
But the Thompson merrily sang "tra-la"  
As his bark bounced over the Northern Sea.\_

II.



*A Thompson came bobbling back into the bay—  
Back into the bay as the Sun sank low,  
And the people knew there was hell to pay,  
For HE wasn't the first who had come back so.*

His nose was skinned and his spine was sore,  
And the blisters speckled his hands so white—  
He had lost his hat and had dropped an oar,  
And his bosom-shirt was a sad sea sight.

And the grayling chuckled again “ha-ha,”  
And the Cisco tittered a harsh “ho-ho”—  
But the Thompson anchored furninst a bar  
And called for a schooner to drown his woe.\_

During the fall of 1885 I was again sent East on some political work that took me to Saratoga and New York. As usual, Field was unremitting in his epistolary attentions with which I will not weary the reader. But on the journey back from New York they afforded entertainment and almost excited the commiseration of a young lady travelling home under my escort. When we reached Chicago I casually remarked that if she was so moved by Field's financial straits I would take pleasure in conveying as much truage to the impecunious knight as would provide him with buttered toast, coffee, and pie at Henrici's. She accordingly entrusted me with a quarter of a dollar, which I was to deliver with every assurance of her esteem and sympathy. As I was pledged not to reveal the donor's name, this tribute of silver provided Field with another character, whom he named “The Fair Unknown,” and to whom he indited several touching ballads, of which the first was:



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### *THE GOOD KNIGHT AND THE FAIR UNKNOWN*

Now, once when this good knight was broke  
And all his chattels were in soak,  
    The brave Sir Thompson came  
And saith: "I' faith accept this loan  
Of silver from a fair unknown—  
    But do not ask her name!"

The Good Knight dropped his wassail cup  
And took the proffered bauble up,  
    And cautiously he bit  
Its surface, but it would not yield,  
Which did convince the grand old Field  
    It was not counterfeit.

Then quoth the Good Knight, as he wept:  
"Soothly this boon I must accept,  
    Else would I sore offend  
The doer of this timely deed,  
The nymph who would allay my need—  
    My fair but unknown friend.

"But take to her, O gallant knight,  
This signet with my solemn plight  
    To seek her presence straight,  
When varlets or a caitiff crew  
Resolved some evil deed to do—  
    Besiege her castle gate.

"Then when her faithful squire shall bring  
To him who sent this signet ring  
    Invoking aid of me—  
Lo, by my faith, with this good sword  
Will I disperse the base-born horde  
    And set the princess free!

"And yet, Sir Thompson, if I send  
This signet to my unknown friend,  
    I jeopardize my life;  
For this fair signet which you see,  
Odds bobs, doth not belong to me,  
    But to my brawny wife!



“I should not risk so sweet a thing  
As my salvation for a ring,  
And all through jealous spite!  
Haste to the fair unknown and say  
You lost the ring upon the way—  
Come, there’s a courteous Knight!”

Eftsoons he spake, the Good Knight drew  
His visor down, and waving to  
Sir Thompson fond farewell,  
He leapt upon his courser fleet  
And crossed the drawbridge to the street  
Which was ycleped La Salle.\_

Another bit of verse was inspired by this incident which is worth preserving: One night I was dining at the house of a friend on the North Side where the “Fair Unknown” was one of the company—a fact of which Field only became possessed when I left the office late in the afternoon. The dinner had not progressed quite to the withdrawal of the ladies when, with some confusion, one of the waiting-men brought in and gave to me a large packet from the office marked “Personal; deliver at once.” Thinking it had something to do with work for the Morning News, I asked to be excused and hastily tore the enclosure open. One glance was enough to disclose its nature. It was a poem from Field, neatly arranged in the form of a pamphlet, with an illustration by Sclanders. The outside, which was in the form of a title page, ran thus:

HOW THE GOOD KNIGHT ATTENDED UPON SIR SLOSSON:

BEING A WOEFUL TALE  
OF  
THE MOST JOYOUS AND DIVERTING DAYS



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WHEREIN

KNIGHTS ERRANT DID COURTEOUSLY  
DISPORT THEMSELVES  
AND ACHIEVE PRODIGIES OF VALOR,

AND

MARVELS OF SWEET FRIENDSHIP.

And inside the plaintive story was told in variegated ink in the following lines:

*One chilly raw November night  
Beneath a dull electric light,  
At half-past ten o'clock,  
The Good Knight, wan and hungry, stood,  
And in a half-expectant mood  
Peered up and down the block.*

The smell of viands floated by  
The Good Knight from a basement nigh  
And tantalized his soul.  
Keenly his classic, knightly nose  
Envied the fragrance that arose  
From many a steaming bowl.

Pining for stews not brewed for him,  
The Good Knight stood there gaunt and grim—  
A paragon of woe;  
And muttered in a chiding tone,  
“Odds bobs! Sir Slosson must have known  
’Twas going to rain or snow!”

But while the Good and Honest Knight  
Flocked by himself in sorry plight,  
Sir Slosson did regale  
Himself within a castle grand—  
of the Good Knight and  
His wonted stoup of ale.

Mid joyous knights and ladies fair  
He little recked the evening air  
Blew bitterly without;  
Heedless of pelting storms that came



To drench his friend's dyspeptic frame,  
He joined the merry rout.

But underneath the corner light  
Lingered the impecunious Knight—  
Wet, hungry and alone—  
Hoping that from Sir Slosson some  
Encouragement mayhap would come,  
Or from the Fair Unknown.\_

The drawing in this verse marks the beginning of the transfer of our patronage from the steaks and gamblers' frowns of Billy Boyle's to the oysters and the cricket's friendly chirps of the Boston Oyster House. The reference to Field's "dyspeptic frame" is not without its significance, for it was about this time that he became increasingly conscious of that weakness of the stomach that grew upon him and began to give him serious concern.

How Field seized upon my absence from the city for the briefest visit to bombard me with queer and fanciful letters, found another illustration during Christmas week, 1885, which I spent with a house party at Blair Lodge, the home of Walter Cranston Larned, whom I have already mentioned as the possessor of Field's two masterpieces in color. Each day of my stay was enlivened by a letter from Field. As they are admirable specimens of the wonderful pains he took with letters of this sort, and the expertness he attained in the command of the archaic form of English, I need no excuse for introducing them here. The first, which bears date "December 27th, 1385," was written on an imitation sheet of old letter paper, browned with dirt and ragged edged. In the order of receipt these letters were as follows:



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Soothly, sweet Sir, by thy hegira am I brought into sore distress and grievous discomfiture; for not only doth that austere man, Sir Melville, make me to perform prodigies of literary prowess, but all the other knights do laugh me to scorn and entreat me shamelessly when I be an hungered and do importune them for pelf whereby I may compass victual. Aye, marry, by my faith, I swear't, it hath gone ill with me since you strode from my castle in the direction of the province wherein doth dwell Sir Walter, the Knight of the Tennis and Toboggan. I beseech thee to hie presently unto me, or at least to send silver or gold wherewith I may procure cheer—else will it go hard with me, mayhap I shall die, in which event I do hereby name and constitute thee executor of my estates and I do call upon the saints in heaven to witness the solemn instrument. Verily, good Sir, I do grievously miss thee and I do pine for thy joyous discourse and triumphant cheer, nor, by my blade, shall I be content until once more thou art come to keep me company. Touching that varlet Knight, Sir Frank de Dock, I have naught to say, save and excepting only that he be a caitiff and base-born dotard that did deride me and steal away unto his castle this very night when I did supplicate him to regale me with goodly viands around the board of that noble host, the gracious Sir Wralsy of Murdough. I would to heaven a murrain would seize the hearts of all such craven caitiffs who hath not in them the sweet courtesy and generous hospitality that doth so well become thee, O glorious and ever-to-be-mulcted Sir Knight of the well-stored wallet. I do beseech thee to have a care to spread about in the province wherein thou dost sojourn a fair report of my gentleness and valor. Commend me to the glorious and triumphant ladies and privily advise them to send me hence guerdons of gold or silver if haply they are tormented by base enchanters, cruel dragons, vile hippogriffins, or other untoward monsters, and I do swear to redress their wrongs when those guerdons do come unto me. For it doth delight me beyond all else to avenge foul insults heaped upon princesses and lorn maidens. If so be thou dost behold that incomparable pearl of female beauty and virtue, the Fair Unknown, prithee kiss thou her bejewelled hand for me and by thy invincible blade renew my allegiance unto her sweet cause. Methinks her sunny locks and azure orbs do haunt my dreams, and anon I hear her silvery tones supplicating me to accept another arms. And I do lustily beshrew fate that these be but dreams. Now in very sooth do I pray ye may speedily come unto me. Or if you abide in that far-off province, heaven grant ye prosperity and happiness such as surely cannot befall the Good Knight till thou dost uplift his arms again. I do supplicate thee to make obeisance unto all in my name and to send hither tidings of thy well-being. How goeth the jousts and tourneys with the toboggan, and hath the cyclonic Sir Barbour wrought much havoc with his perennial rhetoric in the midst of thee? I do kiss thy hand and subscribe myself,

Thy sweet and sorry slave,



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### THE GOOD KNIGHT.

All of this exercise in the phraseology of chivalry was written on a single sheet of note-paper with such generous margins that the text only covered a space of two and one-half by four inches on each page. Next day I received the second of this knightly series:

While I addressed thee fair and subtile words on yester even, O sweet and incomparable knight! there did enter into my presence a base enchanter who did evilly enchant and bewitch me, making me to do dire offence unto the mother tongue. Soothly this base born enchanter did cause me to write “arms,” when soothly I did mean an “alms,” and sore grievousness be come upon me lest haply thou dost not understand this matter ere this missive reach thee. I do beseech thee have a care to tell the fair princesses and glorious ladies that I am in very truth a courteous knight and learned eke, and that I shall neither taste food nor wine until I have slain the evil enchanter that did so foully bewitch me. Odds bobs, I trow it was that varlet dotard, Sir Frank de Dock, who hath entreated me most naughtily since thou art departed unto that far-off province. By this courier do I dispatch certain papers of state unto thee, and faith would I have dispatched thy wages eke, but that caitiff in minion, Sir Shekelsford, did taunt and revile me when I did supplicate him to give up.

The incomparable Sir Melville hath all the good knights writing editorials this eve, from the hoary and senile Dock down to the knavish squire that sweeps out the castle.

May peace bide with thee in thy waking hours and brood o’er thy slumbers, good gentle sir, and may heaven speed the day when in fair health and well-walleted thou shalt return unto

Thy pining and sweet slave,

### THE GOOD KNIGHT.

December 28th, 1885.

Before another day elapsed I received the third, and, in some respects, most interesting of this series, addressed to me by my knightly title at “Blair Lodge Castle, Lake Forest,” which is less than thirty miles from Chicago:

Joyous and merry knight:—Soothly I wot this be the last message you shall have from me ere you be come again hence, since else than the stamp hereupon attached have I none nor ween I whence another can be gotten. By the bright brow of Saint Aelfrida, this is a sorry world, and misery and vexation do hedge us round about! A letter did this day come unto the joyous and buxom wench, the lady Augusta, wherein did Sir Ballantyne write how that he did not believe that the poem “Thine Eyes” was printed in



Sir Slosson's book. Now by St. Dunstan! right merrily will he rail when so he learneth the whole truth. Sir Melville hath not yet crossed the drawbridge of the castle, albeit it lacketh now but the length of a barleycorn till the tenth hour. Sir Frank de Dock hath hied him home for he is truly a senile varlet and when I did supplicate him to regale me with a pasty



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this night he quoth, "Out upon thee, thou scurvy leech!" "Beshrew thyself, thou hoary dotard!" quoth I, nor tarried I in his presence the saying of a pater noster, but departing hence did sup with that lusty blade, Sir Paul of Hull, and verily he did regale me as well beseemeth a good knight and a gentle eke. Now, by my sword I swear't, all this venal and base-born rabble shall rue their folly when thou art returned, O nonpareil of all the brave and hospitable! I pray thee bring rich booty from that province wherein thou dost now tarry—crowns, deniers, livres, ducats, golden angels, and farthings. Then soothly shall we make merry o'er butts of good October brewing. Commend me to the discreet and beauteous ladies after the manner of that country, for I have heard their virtues highly praised, it being said that they do sing well, play the lute and spinet and work fair marvels with the needle. I do beseech thee bespeak me fair unto the grand seneschal, Sir Barbour, and thy joyous and courteous host, Sir Walter. In sooth it is a devilry how I do miss you. Thy friend and slave in sweetness and humility,

THE GOOD KNIGHT.  
December 29th, 1885.

## CHAPTER IV

### MORE LETTERS

In the fall and winter of 1885-86 I succeeded in inducing Field to take the only form of exercise he was ever known voluntarily to indulge. While his column of "Sharps and Flats" to the end bore almost daily testimony to his enthusiastic devotion to the national game and of his critical familiarity with its fine points and leading exponents, he was never known to bat or throw a ball. He never wearied of singing the praises in prose and verse of Michael J. Kelly, who for many years was the star of the celebrated "White Stockings" of Chicago when it won the National League pennant year after year. Nor did he cease to revile the Chicago base-ball management when it transferred "King Kel" to the Boston club for the then unheard-of premium of \$10,000. When the base-ball season was at its height his column would bristle with the proofs of his vivid interest in it. I have known it on one day to contain over a score of paragraphs relating to the national game, encouraging the home nine or lampooning the rival club with all the personal vivacity of a sporting reporter writing for a country weekly. Interspersed among these notes would be many an odorous comparison like this, printed June 28th, 1888:

Benjamin Harrison is a good, honest, patriotic man, and we like him. But he never stole second base in all his life and he could not swat Mickey Welch's down curves over the left-field fence. Therefore we say again, as we have said many times before, that much as we revere Benjamin Harrison's purity and amiability, we cannot but accord the tribute of our sincerest admiration, to that paragon of American manhood, Michael J. Kelly.



So when Kelly essayed to change the scene of his labors from the diamond to the melodramatic stage in 1893 it is not surprising to find that Field, in a semi-humorous and semi-serious vein, thus applauded and approved his choice:



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Surprise is expressed in certain quarters because Mike Kelly, the base-ball virtuoso, has made a hit upon the dramatic stage. The error into which many people have fallen is in supposing that Kelly was simply a clever base-ball machine. He is very much more than this: he is an unusually bright and intelligent man. As a class, base-ball professionals are either dull brutes or ribald brutes; ignorance as dense as Egyptian darkness has seemed to constitute one of the essentials to successful base-ball playing, and the average professional occupies an intellectual plane hardly above that of the average stall-fed ox or the fat pig at a country fair. Mike Kelly stands pre-eminent in his profession; no other base-ball player approaches him. He is in every way qualified for a better career than that which is bounded on one side by the bleaching boards, and on the other by the bar-room. Of course he is a good actor. He is too smart to attempt anything at which he does not excel.

But I have been diverted from telling of the sport in which Field was an active participant by the recollection of his critical and literary expertness in the great game in which he never took an active part. Once when Melville Stone was asked what was his dearest wish at that instant, he replied, "to beat Field and Thompson bowling." This was in the days before bowling was the fashionable winter sport it has since become. The alleys in Chicago in 1885 were neither numerous nor in first-class condition; but after Field once discovered that he had a special knack with the finger-balls we hunted them up and tested most of them. After a while we settled down on the alleys under Slosson's billiard-room on Monroe Street for our afternoon games and on the Superior Alleys on North Clark Street on the evenings when it was my turn to walk home with "Gene." Rolling together we were scarcely ever overmatched, and he was the better man of the two. He rolled a slow, insinuating ball. It appeared to amble aimlessly down the alley, threatening to stop or to sidle off into the gutter for repose. But it generally had enough momentum and direction to reach the centre pin quartering, which thereupon, with its nine brothers, seemed suddenly smitten with the panic so dear to the bowler's heart. I never knew another bowler so quick to discover the tricks and peculiarities of an alley or so crafty to master and profit by them. Whenever the hour was ripe for a game Field would send the boy with some such taunt or challenge as is shown in the accompanying fac-simile.

I shall never forget, nor would an elaborately colored score by Field permit me, if I would, his chagrin over the result of one of these matches. He and Willis Hawkins had challenged Cowen and me to a tourney, as he called it, of five strings. His record of this "great game of skittles," all figured out by frames, strikes and spares in red, blue, yellow, and green ink, shows the following result:



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Field	878	Thompson	866
Hawkins	697	Cowen	818
<hr/>		<hr/>	
1575		1684	

Only one of the three alleys was fit to roll on, and Field scored 231 and 223 in his turns upon it. The modern experts may be interested in the following details of his high score:

---

				X	X	X	X				X	X								
	18		37		57		87		117		144		164		182		202		231	

---

It will be perceived that Field’s score contained six strikes and five spares, which was good rolling on a long and not too carefully planed alley. His average was spoiled by the frames he was forced to roll on the poorer alleys, where all his cunning could not insure a safe passage of his slow delivery on their billowy surfaces. Field’s disgust over the result of this game lasted all summer, and Hawkins was never permitted to forget the part he played in the defeat of “the only Bowling King.”

[Illustration: A BOWLING CHALLENGE FROM EUGENE FIELD.]

Who is this graceful, agile king  
 In proud but modest garb revealed?  
 He is the only Bowling King,  
 And loud and long the people sing  
 The prowess of Old Field.

How slender yet how lithe is he  
 And when unto the fray he glides  
 So awful is his majesty  
 That Nompys fears his wrath to be  
 And straightway runs and hides.

May 4th, 1886.]



During the fall of 1886 I went to New Brunswick on my annual vacation, and Field fairly out-did himself in keeping me informed of how “matters and things” moved along at the office while I was gone. It pleased his sense of humor to dispatch a letter to me every evening invariably addressed “For Sir Slosson Thomson.” As these letters ran the gamut of the subjects uppermost in Field’s life at this time, I give them in the order of their receipt:

I

CHICAGO, September 10th (Friday night), 1886.

Dear Nomp: Hawkins, Cowen and I went out to the base-ball game together to-day and saw the champions down the Detroits to the tune of 14 to 8. It was a great slugging match all around. Conway pitched for Detroit and McCormick for Chicago. As I say, there was terrific batting; on the part of Chicago, Gore made 1 base hit, Kelly 3, Anson 2, Pfeffer 3, Williamson 1, Burns 1 and Ryan 2; on the part of Detroit. Richardson made 2, Brouthers 4, Thompson 1 and Dunlap 1. The Chicagos played in excellent form, yet batting seemed to be *the* feature of the game. McCormick struck out 6 men and gave 2 men bases on called balls; Conway struck out 4 men and gave 4 bases on balls. Brouthers made 3 home runs, but there happened to be no one on bases at the time. There was such a large crowd of spectators that Hawkins, Cowen and I had to sit

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on the roof of the grand-stand. The sun cast its rays on us, and it was hot! [Here followed a detailed pen-and-ink sketch of the scene.]

Whilst I was drawing this *chef d'oeuvre* (and, by the way, it took an hour to do it) Ballantyne came in. "That's mighty good," said he; "are you making it for the paper?"

I understand that Stone has sailed out of town again, this time to Kansas City. Poor man! his slavish devotion to the details of his newspaper is simply grinding the life out of him.

Mrs. Billings [Field's sister-in-law] has arrived from Washington and she will go down to St. Louis with Julia and Mrs. Ballantyne next Monday morning. Later in the fall she will make us a visit.

Cowen pawned his watch to-day for \$40 and bet \$30 to \$21 on the Chicagos. This is the result by innings: [Here followed another drawing as shown in the accompanying fac-simile.] The watch retained its normal size for two innings, but in the third it shrank so sadly as to become hardly visible to the mind's eye. In the fourth inning, however, it began to pick up, and in the seventh it had resumed its normal shape, and in the ninth it was as big as a dinner-plate and we could hear it tick, although hung in Moses Levy's secluded retreat on Dearborn Street, two and one-half miles distant. As we were riding over to the base-ball grounds Cowen's eyes rested on a vision of female loveliness—a girl he knew—standing on the corner of Madison and Aberdeen Streets. It was all Hawkins and I could do to hold him in the car. But I am determined to save this young and interesting soul if I can. Peattie and his wife start for Colorado next Monday. 'Tis now 11 o'clock. Where are you that you are not here to walk with me? Tossing in the "upper ten" [another drawing] and struggling for fresh air! Well, good-by and bless you, old boy.

Affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

[Illustration: A LETTER FROM EUGENE FIELD CONTAINING THREE DRAWINGS.]

If the reader is at all curious in such matters, a cursory inspection of the illustrations of this letter will assure him that its composition and embellishment must have cost its fanciful writer at least three hours' work. But this was the kind of work that lightened the toil of Field's daily grind.

II



(Written in gamboge ink) CHICAGO, Sunday night, September the 12th, 1886.

Dear Nomp:—You have been gone but forty-eight hours—it seems an age. I have been thinking the matter over and I have come to the appalling conclusion that I shall starve before you get back, unless, perchance, in the meantime, Marie Matilda or some fair unknown sends me truage that can be realized upon. Dock has returned with an air of rusticity that makes me shiver when I think of all he has got to go through with before you come to the rescue.



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My wife goes to St. Louis to-morrow and I shall be on the turf for one long week. Ballantyne, Cowen, Dennis and I went to the base-ball game yesterday—10,000 people; enthusiasm; slugging game; Chicagos fielded beautifully; Chicagos 14, Detroit's 4—that's all I've got to say on that subject. I have sent a personal to each of the Denver papers announcing that Mr. and Mrs. Peattie are there on their bridal tour. I have given Peattie divers letters of introduction to Denver folks: to Dr. Lemen, introducing him as an invalid; to Judge Tall, as a client; to Fred Skiff, as a rich young man anxious to invest in Colorado mines—etc., etc. The dear boy will have a lovely time methinks. Hawkins has moved his desk up into Dennis's room, and Dock sits here at your table close to me while you are gone. If he can afford it I do not object. It is Ballantyne's plan to keep Hawkins doing paragraphs for the morning and evening papers, and to put Bates (who returned to-day) in the local department as chief copy-reader. At the theatres this week: "We, Us & Co." at Henderson's; "Alone in London" at Hooley's; Redmund & Barry at McVicker's; "Zitka" at the Columbia, and Mayo at the Grand. By the way, Dr. Reilly's wife's brother, Bruno Kennicoot, has taken the management of the new Windsor Theatre on the North Side; that makes another friend of mine among the managers of Chicago. It is frightfully cold here; real winter weather. Good-by, dear boy. Have a good time and make the home folks happy.

Yours as ever,

FIELD.

Post Scriptum:—Give my love to Miss Mary Matilda and to your impetuous sister, Hel'n; also to the sceptical Bessie.

E.F.

The announcement which Field caused to be made in the Denver newspapers and the letters of introduction which he gave to Mr. Peattie resulted, as Field contemplated, in his having a lively time. As the conspirator also took the precaution to advise the addressees of these letters and the manager of the hotel of his fell purpose, Mr. and Mrs. Peattie found themselves the victims of insistent and deliberate misapprehensions from the moment they were shown to the bridal suite until they fled from the swarm of land speculators and mining promoters which Field's ingenuity brought about them wherever they moved in Colorado. That this was merely a sportive method of showing his real friendship for both Mr. and Mrs. Peattie may be judged from the following verses:

*MR. PEATTIE'S CAPE*

Oh, pale is Mr. Peattie's face  
And lank is Mr. Peattie's shape,



But with a dreamy, sensuous grace,  
Beseeming Peattie's swinging pace,  
Hangs Mr. Peattie's cape!

'Tis wrought of honest woollen stuff  
And bound about with cotton tape—  
When winter winds are chill and rough  
There's one big heart that's warm enough  
In Mr. Peattie's cape!

It fits him loose about the ribs,  
But hugs his neck from throat to nape,  
And, spite his envious neighbors' fibs,  
A happy fellow is his nibs  
In Mr. Peattie's cape.



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So here's defiance to the storm,  
And here's a pledge in amber grape  
To him whose heart is always warm,  
And who conceals a lissome form  
In Mr. Peattie's cape.\_

The following verses present an example of what Field could or could not do with the Scotch dialect, which he seldom attempted. It was inspired by the fact that Peattie had been named after Scotland's dearest poet and by his own fondness for Robert and Elia:

### *THE RETURN OF THE HIGHLANDER*

He touted low and veiled his bonnet  
When that he kenned his blushing Elia—  
“Gude faith” he cried, “my bonny bride,  
I fashed mesell some wan wod steal ye!”

“My bonny loon,” the gude wife answered,  
“When nane anither wod befriend me,  
Gainst mickle woes and muckle foes,  
Braw Donald Field did aft farfend me!”

“Of all the bonnie heelon chiels  
There's nane sae braw as this gude laddie—  
Wi' sike an arm to shield fro' harm—  
Wi' sike a heart beneath his plaidie!”

“Gin Sandy Knox or Sawney Dennis  
Or Dougal Thompson take delight in  
A-fashing we wi' gholish glee—  
Braw Donald Field wod do my fightin'!”

Then Robert Peattie glowed wi' pleasure;  
“I wod na do the deed o' Sunday,  
But Donald Field shall be well mealed  
To-morrow, which I ken is Monday!”

Then Robert took his gude wife hame  
And spread a feast o' Finnan Haddie;  
In language soft he praised her aft,  
And aft she kiss her bonnie laddie.

October 23d, 1887.\_



Another bit of personal verse in my scrap-book is suggested by the reference to Morgan Bates in the letter of September 12th in the form of an acrostic to Clara Doty Bates, his wife. In the spring of 1886 Mr. and Mrs. Bates were occupying the home of Mrs. Coonley (now Mrs. Lydia Coonley Ward) on LaSalle Avenue, and one day Morgan was boasting in Field's presence of the palatial nature of their quarters. As the anniversary of Mrs. Bates's birthday was at hand, Field immediately proposed that the entire editorial staff of the News should invite itself and its family to her hospitable board. Bates was taken into the conspiracy of friendship, and on the evening of April 28th we descended on Mrs. Coonley's North Side mansion and ransacked it from cellar to garret. It was Field's humor that day to set every picture in the house just enough awry to disturb Mrs. Bates's sensitive vision. When she arrived on the scene she greeted us with the utmost cordiality, as we did her. But no matter where she stood, her eye would be annoyed by a picture-frame just out of plumb, and she would be excused while she straightened it. Nearly every picture and portrait on the lower floor had been adjusted before she understood the motive of Field's solicitude to see every painting and engraving in the house. Unlike the regulation surprise party of society, we



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had not provided the refreshments for our own entertainment, and we had Bates under bonds not to give Mrs. Bates an inkling of our visit. But she was enough of a Martha to rise to the occasion. Several members of the company were detailed on separate errands to Clark Street for various raw meats and non-alcoholic liquid supplies, and Mrs. Bates herself descended to the kitchen to oversee the preparation of the bounteous feast which presently emerged from chaos. By way of grace, Field read an impromptu poem written in dark blue ink on pale blue paper with each line beginning with a capital in red:

### *TO CLARA DOTY BATES*

Circled around this fair and sumptuous board  
(Like nymphs, dear ladies, you—like satyrs, we)  
All to one purpose cheerfully agree—  
Ruthless assault on Bates's savory hoard.  
And since the skirmish duty falls on me—  
Despite the wait, of hungry folk deplored—  
One opening shot I claim, one modest toast  
To her who makes life easy for our host.

You, madam, have achieved a noble fame,  
Better by far than selfishness could earn—  
A million grateful children bless your name—  
To you we drink—then to the viands turn;  
Easy, mayhap, it is to write a book—  
Success to her whose muse will deign to cook!

E.F.  
Chicago, April 28, 1886.\_

III

CHICAGO, Tuesday night, September the 14th, 1886.

My Dear Child:—This man Reilly, who has thrust himself upon me during your absence, is fast becoming a seven-year itch. He sprawls about over this room of mine as if it were his own, he strews his damned medical literature over my table, he has a constant stream of idiot callers, and he refuses to give up when I demand truage of him. I hope you will pack your gripsack and start home immediately upon receipt of this. Ballantyne left for St. Louis a few moments ago. In honor of the fact that he is supposed to be on deck to-night, Stone has taken his family and gone to the Casino Theatre for the evening. Cowen spent the night at my house last night and to-day Pinny caught twenty-



five crickets for him to take to his room to make music for him. While Cowen was riding down in the car a pretty girl got aboard, and in trying to get a peep at her Cowen dropped the box containing the crickets. For some moments it rained crickets. The women climbed up on the seats of the car and there was general alarm. I believe that Cowen recovered three of the crickets, but two of these had but two legs between them. The Chicagos won the game at St. Louis yesterday (1 to 0), but lost to-day (4 to 5). Flynn pitched yesterday and your friend Clarkson pitched to-day. It wouldn't surprise me if Chicago and Detroit were to go East tied.

Ballantyne has made Hawkins move his desk back to the library and Hawkins is passing wroth about it.



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Here is what I bought Gussie for a wedding present to-day: 2 quires of paper with envelopes, 1 curling iron, 2 papers of pins, 2 papers of hairpins, 1 darning ball, 2 combs, 1 bottle Calder's tooth powder, 1 bottle of vaseline, 1 bottle of shoe polish, 1 box of lip salve, 1 button hook and 1 bottle of listerine.

It is quite wintry here. We are all well. Remember me to Marie Matilde and to la belle Helene.

Affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

It must not be inferred from anything in these letters that Field's relations with Dr. Reilly were ever anything but the most friendly and grateful. It simply amused him to rail at and revile one of his best friends.

IV

CHICAGO, Wednesday night, September the 15th, 1886.

My dear Nompys—Presumably you are by this time sitting by the sad sea waves in that dreary Canuck watering place, drawing sight drafts on the banks of Newfoundland and letting the chill east wind blow through your whiskers. We, too, are demoralized. That senile old substitute of yours—the Dock—has been as growly-powly as a bear to-day. As for me, I am growing desperate. You can see by the enclosed picture how changed I am.

[Illustration: FIELD'S PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF. "As I would have looked but for the refining influence of Old Nompys."]

Well, Chicago beat St. Louis to-day and, the gods be glorified! Kansas City beat Detroit! as for New York, Boston whipped her day before yesterday and Washington shut her out to-day! now if Detroit will only lose a game or two to St. Louis! I more than half suspect that your home folk will think that you and I are base-ball mad.

Stone has bought Gussie a salad set for a wedding gift. I suggested it in the hope that with two sets on hand Gussie might be disposed to give us the old one....

Remember me in respectful phraseology to the belligerent Marie Matilde.

Yours as ever,

FIELD.

V

CHICAGO, Thursday evening, September the 16th, 1886.

My dear Fellow:—It is presumed that Ballantyne and his bride arrived in this city to-day at seven A.M., but up to this hour (eight P.M.) the bridegroom has not put in an appearance at the office. Cowen is threatening to write to you; it occurs to me that he ought to do something to atone for the vile slanders he has uttered about you since you went away. Stone kept Reilly busy at writing from two o'clock yesterday afternoon until twelve last night. Your friend Werner, advance agent of the McCaul Company, is in town. He inquired for you to-day. I have been reading the memoirs of Dolly Madison and am specially delighted with the letter written by the old Quakeress, Mrs. Hobbs. It is a beautiful letter, and you must read it at your first opportunity.

Stone is very much pleased over the result of the County Democratic Convention, the defeat of Dunphy giving him particular gratification. Love to all. God bless you, dear boy.



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Yours as ever,

FIELD.

Detroit, 0; St. Louis, 0; game called at end of fifth inning.  
Chicago walloped Kansas City.

VI

CHICAGO, Saturday, September the 18th, 1886.

This, sweet lad, is the dullest Saturday that has befallen me in many a year. John and his bride are over at Hooley's Theatre watching that lachrymose melodrama, "Alone in London." There is nothing worth seeing at any other house. There is nobody for me to visit with, so here I sit in this box trying to kill the time. I see very little of Cowen. A disreputable looking friend of his from the West is here dead-broke and hunting work; Cowen is feeding and sleeping him *ad interim*, and I think the fellow has an evil influence over our friend....

I am, as ever, your friend,

FIELD.

VII

CHICAGO, Sunday, September 19th, 1886.

My dear Old Boy:—This man Reilly whom you have put upon me has just played upon me the most shamefulest trick I ever heard tell of. He invited me out to supper and told me he had only eighty cents. He ordered twenty cents worth and made me scrimp along on sixty cents. When he came to pay the check he produced a five-dollar bill! I never felt so humiliated in all my life. I pine for the return of the sweet friend who seeks not by guile to set limit to my appetite. My children insisted upon going to bed last night with pieces of Gussie's wedding cake under their pillows. Dady had the presence of mind to wake up in the night and eat his piece. He told me this morning that he dreamed that he was married to Mr. Cowen. Last evening I wandered down town in a furious rainstorm and tried to find somebody I knew. Failing in this, I meandered home and went to bed without saying my prayers, conscious of having spent an ill day. At the theatre this week: Columbia, "Pepita"; McVicker's, Lotta; Grand, Kate Castleton; Hooley's, "Private Secretary." Dock is trying to get me to go to the Columbia to-night, but your pale face looms up in my mind's eye and warns me not to go, or, at least, not to sit in a box if I do go.



The conclusion of this letter has been sacrificed to the importunity of some autograph fiend from whose tribe I have had the greatest difficulty in preserving its fellows.

VIII

CHICAGO, Monday, September the 20th, 1886.

The envious old Dock, who has never had an emotion, an ambition or a hope beyond a quart bottle of Ike Cook's Imperial, said to me but just now: "Why do you waste your time writing to that man Thompson? He will never thank you for it; he will put up none the more liberally when he returns." Then he added, with a bitter look: "You never wrote to me while I was at Springfield!" Ah, how little he knows of you, this peevish old glutton who cares for naught



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above pandering to his dyspeptic maw! But my writing to you has caused a great deal of scandal here in the office, and I fear I am seriously compromised. Cowen has been threatening to denounce me to you, but I have no fear that he will be able to grant you any time from his numerous [a] hoydens, doxies, and beldames. He threatened me for the mounenance of an hour this afternoon, but I bade him write and it pleased him—passing well knew I that he could not missay me with you.

I am delighted with the result of the game at Detroit to-day—7 to 3 in favor of Chicago! This, I think, insures us the championship.

Miller, our circulator, is very much disturbed because our country circulation has dropped about 1,000 in less than a fortnight; he has been hobnobbing with Ballantyne about it to-day. Mr. Stone is still in Kansas City hunting wild geese. “Pepita” is billed as the joint production of Thompson and Solomon, and about twenty people have asked me if you were the Thompson referred to and I have indignantly repudiated the libel, for, maugre my head, “Pepita” is just a little the rottenest thing I ever saw or heard. I have not clapped my eyes on any of [b] your suburban friends since you departed. At McVicker’s the other evening I found myself being scrutinized by a buxom country lass who looked as if she might be the fair unknown from Evanston. Her rueful visage and the sympathetic glance she bestowed on me seemed to assure me that she, too, was pining for the grandest of old grands.

My wife has been away for a week, but not a line have I had from her. It has comforted me a good deal, however, to hear John say that she looked just about sixteen years of age at the wedding.

I took the Dock out to supper to-night and heaped coals of fire upon his head. I let him have everything he wanted and I paid the bill with a flourish that would have reflected credit upon a Roman conqueror. I wish you were going to be here day after to-morrow [c] to go with us to the last base-ball game of the season—a postponed game between the Chicagos and the St. Louis Club. I am to have a private box on account of being a mascot. The Dock has just informed me that he has just rung into one of his editorials the expression “seismic phenomena,” and he seems to be as tickled as Jack Homer was when he pulled an alleged plum out of that historic pie. I don’t know what you think about it, but this business of writing with five different colors of ink is queering me at a terrible rate and I am sure that I would die of softening of the brain if I were to keep it up any length of time. But I presume to say that your sceptical little Bessie will think this the most beautiful page she ever saw. I am sorry, but not surprised, to hear that your passes failed you on the Canadian



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Pacific. You should have applied for them sooner. I have always [d] found railway officials the slowest people in the world, and they are particularly slow when it comes to the matter of passes. Of course you are having a charming time with your home folk; well, you deserve it, and I hope you will make the most of it. Give my love to them all. You see I regard myself as one of the family. Let me hear from you whenever you feel like writing, but don't bother about it.

Ever your friend,

EUGENE FIELD.

Small wonder that even Field's patience revolted at the self-imposed "business" of writing this letter in five different colors of ink. The first page, which ran down to the letter "a" in the above, was written in pale green ink; the second, running to "b," was in black; the third, running to "c," was in red; and the fourth was a medley of these with purple, gamboge, and mauve to make the six colors. The fifth page from "d" was completed in plain black.

IX

CHICAGO, Tuesday, September the 21st, 1886.

What you say in your letter, dear chuck, is quite true. The paper has become fairly disreputable of late. The issue of last Saturday was as base a specimen of daily journalism as ever was inflicted on a civilized community. Stone (who has returned from Kansas City) says he was disgusted with that Saturday issue, but I have heard him suggest no scheme whereby the dawdling condition of affairs is to be bettered. The whole staff is demoralized, and I believe that, so far from getting better, matters and things are steadily going to worse. The outlook is very discouraging. One sensible thing has been done in hiring Reilly to do regular work. Under the new arrangement he is to receive forty dollars a week, which Stone considers a big price for an editorial writer, but which I regard as too measley for any use. Still Reilly is satisfied, for he will be able to do, under the new arrangement, as much work for Rauch (of the State Board of Health) as he has been doing in the past. Not a word have I heard from my spouse since she went to St. Louis—in fact, I have never been informed that she arrived in St. Louis. I thought she might arrive to-night, and so I went down to the station and sat around on the trucks and things like a colossal male statue of Patience. The train was late, and, when it came, it came without her, of course. Getting back to the office, I find that Dock has had a de'il of a time. He had to wait this evening to get some data from Yount for a political editorial. Yount did not show up until half-past eight; after he had disgorged the necessary information he left the Dock cocked and primed for quick work. But the Dock had no sooner got fairly started—in fact, had scarcely reached his first politico medical phrase—when in came Roche (fresh from his bridal tour through



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Colorado) with a thunder-gust of tedious experiences. The Dock bore the infliction with Christian fortitude and thanked God when Roche left. In a moment or two thereafter, however, a Kansas City friend of mine called—very drunk, and not finding me, insisted upon discussing me, my work, and my prospects, with the Dock. John Thatcher dropped in subsequently, and so the Dock had quite a matinee of it. By the time I got back to the office the old gentleman was as vaporish as a hysterical old woman and he vented his spleen on my unoffending head. God knows what a trial that man is to me! Yet I try to be respectful and kind to him, for age is entitled to that much tribute at least from youth. Since penning these lines I have read them to the Dock and it would do your soul good to see him squirm. We are all well. When are you coming home? Paying postage on daily letters to Canada is swiftly bankrupting me; then, too, it is a long time since I had a square meal. But, japes, bourds, and mockages aside, we miss you and will be glad to see you back. Salutations to the home folk.

Yours in friendship,

EUGENE FIELD.

The pen-picture in this letter of the delays, intrusions, and interruptions that aroused Dr. Reilly's ire is a fair portrayal of the difficulties under which the editorial staff worked in those days. Field was the only one who could shut himself away from such annoyances to do his own wood-sawing. But when released from this, he delighted to add to the tribulations of his less erratic associates by his never-ending "japes, bourds, and mockages."

X

CHICAGO, Wednesday, September 22d, 1886.

A second letter came from you to-day, dear boy, and I am glad to hear that you are enjoying yourself, although I made mone passing measure when I learned that the caitiff Brunswick knight had forejusted you at tennis. I don't know why the revered Miss Mollie Tillie deems me a capricious man and a fickle; nor can I imagine. You should not suffer her to missay me so grievously. Where could the skeptical damosell have found a person more faithful than I have been in writing each day to her big brother? But if Miss Mollie throws me overboard, so to speak, I shall look to her bustling sister, Miss Nellie, for less capricious friendship. "*Varium et mutabile semper foemina.*" Poor old Dock! He comes into the room and leaves his key sticking in the door; to complicate matters still further, he leaves another key sticking in the book-case. When I reproach him with these evidences of a failing mind, he smiles and cries. I wish he were here that I might read these lines to him. Then there is Cowen—but I will not fill this letter with incoherent criminations. The enclosed sketch will explain all. It represents a scene in this office. I have stepped out to post a letter to you.



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Coming back I peep in at the window and behold baby Dock in his high-chair weeping lustily, whilst baby Cowen has crept out of his chair, toddled to the wall and is reaching for his *bottle!* Betwixt the hysterics of the one babe and the bottle of t'other I am well-nigh exhausted. Come back and take care of your babies yourself!

[Illustration: A SCENE IN THE DAILY NEWS OFFICE. *From a drawing by Eugene Field.*]

I do not see that any effort is being made to get out a better paper. The sheet has been simply rotten, and everybody says so—even the dogs are barking about it. Meanwhile I am sawing wood. I am reading a great deal. Read Mrs. Gordon's Life of Christopher North, parts of Burns's poems, life of Dr. Faustus, and Morte D'Arthur since you left, and hope to read Goethe's poems, Life of Bunyan, Homer's works, Sartor Resartus and Rasselas before you get back. I have about made up my mind to do little outside writing for four or five months and to do a prodigious amount of reading instead. My wife will be back to-morrow evening; as I am to meet her at the station, I may not have time to write you your daily note. She writes me that she has had a bad cold ever since she reached St. Louis and is heartily glad that she is coming home. Dunlap, of the McCaul Company, invites me to be his guest at the Southern Hotel while the company sings in St. Louis, but that sort of thing is out of the question. Do you intend to go to Indianapolis with me? E—— W—— has been very friendly of late. I suspect he is getting hard up. B——'s latest fad is to organize a Friday night club to discuss literature, art, science, etc. Hearing him talk about it to-day gave the old Dock a violent attack of nausea. Speaking of nausea reminds me that P—— has been seriously indisposed for two days as the consequence of eating nine peaches, two apples, and a pound of grapes! He is satisfied, however, that this variable fall weather is very trying. Shackelford is off on his vacation, but I do not complain, since I find Rogers, his substitute, a pleasant gentleman to do Saturday business with....

Affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

An interesting point in this letter is its reference to his proposed first appearance as a reader after coming to Chicago before the convention of Western Association of Writers at Indianapolis. Previous to this, during our acquaintance he had repeatedly declined requests to appear upon the platform. But in this case he was persuaded by Richard Lew Dawson, the secretary of the association, to make an exception in its favor. In a letter to Mr. Dawson, under date of September 3d, 1886, Field gives the following interesting estimate of some of his own work:

“Since reading your last letter, I have thought that it might be wise for me to contribute to your programme the following pieces, which exhibit pretty nearly all styles of my work:



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1. Death and the Soldier Prose. 10 minutes. 2. The Humane Lad (new) Verse. 3 minutes 3. The Noontide Hymn (new) Verse. 3 minutes 4. The Merciful Lad (new) Verse. 2 minutes 5. The Divine Lullaby (new) Verse. 2 minutes. "The reading of these pieces will require not more than twenty minutes, and I would prefer to give them consecutively. Numbers 2 and 4 are humorous. I do not like 'Death and the Soldier' as much as 'The First Christmas Tree,' the 'Robin and the Violet,' or 'The Mountain and the Sea'—I mean I do not like it so much as a piece of fanciful literary work, but it may be more catchy. You know what your audience will like, and I leave the matter in your hands."

Field closed his letter with a request that an invitation should be extended to me, which I duly received. This accounts for the reference to an approaching visit to Indianapolis in his letter of September 22d.

By the way, Field got more pleasure out of the various pronunciations of Goethe's name than instruction from the perusal of his poems. He was always starting or fostering discussions over it, as in the following paragraph:

The valued New York Life asserts that Chicago used to rhyme "Goethe" with "teeth" until the Renaissance set in, since which epoch it has rhymed it with "ity." This is hardly fair. In a poem read recently before the Hyde Park Toboggan Slide Lyceum the following couplet occurred:

*"Until at last John Wolfgang Goethe  
Was gathered home, upward of eighty."*

To resume the Fredericton series of letters:

XI

CHICAGO, Sunday the 26th, 1886.

Dear Boy:—Such a close, muggy night this is that I feel little like writing to you or to anybody else. Yet I am not one to neglect or shirk a duty. I have been with Kate Field all the evening, and we have discussed everything from literature down to Sir Charles Dilke and back again. A mighty smart woman is Kate! My wife returned from St. Louis last Thursday, bringing about fifty of my books with her. They were mostly of the Bohn's Library series, but among them was a set of Boswell's Johnson, Routledge edition of 1859. I want you to have an edition of this kind, and I have sent to New York to see if it can be had (cheap). I am reading like a race-horse. The famous history of Dr. Faustus has done me a power of good, and I have been highly amused with a volume of Bohn which contains the old Ray proverbs. Isn't it about time for you to be getting back home? You have been gone about sixteen days now, and we are growing more and more lonesome. Peattie is looked for next Tuesday. Mr. Stone goes out of town to-



morrow—to Dakota, I believe—and is to be absent for a week also. Shackelford will be back at work to-morrow. You alone are delinquent. Not only am I lonesome—egad, I am starving!



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So if you don't come *in propria persona*, at least *send* something. The old Dock has been as grumpy as a bear to-day and I have had a hard time bearing with him. He announced to me to-day that he thought that I was fickle—I tell you this so that you may repeat it to Miss Marie Mathilde, who, I believe, invented that opinion. *Entre nous*: Hawkins tells me that some of his friends are trying to buy the St. Paul Dispatch for him. There was a fire in the Chicago Opera House building to-night, but, unfortunately, no serious damage was done.

Stone is thinking of having the three of us—Dock, you and your habit—write a department for the Saturday News after the fashion of the Noctes. Think it all over whilst you are away. What are you going to bring me for a present? Don't go to buying any foolish trumpery; you have no money to waste on follies. What I need is a "Noctes," and any other useful book you may get hold of in New York. Love to the folks.

Ever yours,

FIELD.

The proposed "Noctes," except the set for Field, never materialized.

XII

CHICAGO, September 28th, 1886.

Dear Nomp:—I am just cunning enough to send this to the care of our New York office, for I surmise that it will reach there in time to intercept you. I do not intend that you shall get out of New York without being reminded of that present you intend bringing me for being so good as to write to you regularly whilst you were away. I confidently expect to see you back here next Sunday. On Monday I go to Indianapolis for two or three days, and I heartily wish you were going with me to help bear the expense of the trip. In fact, I am so anxious to have you along that I would cheerfully consent to letting you pay everything. But at any rate I agree to take supper with you at Mr. Pullman's godless hotel the night you return. The Dock invited me out to supper to-night. We went to the Drum. Suspecting that I was going to exceed his capability of payment, he handed me over a dollar—all the money he had. I had the check charged to me and kept the dollar. Whereat the Dock grieves passing sore. I have begun to surmise that my remarks about Literary Life will lead to Miss Cleveland's retirement from the editorship of that delectable mush-bucket. The signs all point that way now. I enclose you a letter to my friend Mitchell of the Sun. Tell him about the Goethe poem. I promised to send him a copy of it when Literary Life printed it. Scrutinize young Kingsbury's daily life



carefully. Heaven forefend all the temptations that compass him in the modern Babylon. Give my love to Mr. Scribner.

Yours as ever,

FIELD.

Field's satirical comments on *Literary Life*, a weekly that sought to make capital by engaging President Cleveland's sister, Miss Rose Cleveland, as its editor, not only led to her early retirement from an impossible position, but to the early collapse of the publication itself. When Miss Cleveland first came to Chicago to assume the duties of editorship Field welcomed her in verse:



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### *THE ROSE*

Since the days of old Adam the welkin has rung  
With the praises of sweet-scented posies,  
And poets in rapturous phrases have sung  
The paramount beauty of roses.

Wheresoever she 'bides, whether resting in lanes  
Or gracing the proud urban bowers,  
The red, royal rose her distinction maintains  
As the one regnant queen among flowers.

How joyous are we of the West when we find  
That Fate, with her gifts ever chary,  
Has decreed that the rose who is queen of her kind  
Shall bloom on our wild Western prairie.

Let us laugh at the East as an impotent thing  
With envy and jealousy crazy,  
While grateful Chicago is happy to sing  
In praise of the rose, she's a daisy.\_

## CHAPTER V

### PUBLICATION OF HIS FIRST BOOKS

Although the bibliomaniac and collector will claim that "The Tribune Primer," printed in Denver in 1882, was Eugene Field's first book, and cite the fact that a copy of this rare pamphlet recently sold for \$125 as proof that it is still his most valuable contribution to literature, his first genuine entrance into the world of letters between covers came with the publication of "Culture's Garland," by Ticknor & Company, of Boston, in August, 1887. Whatever may be the truth as to the size of the first edition of the "Primer," so few copies were printed and its distribution was so limited that it scarcely amounted to a bona-fide publication. Neither did the form of the "Primer," a little 18mo pamphlet of forty-eight pages, bound in pink paper covers, nor its ephemeral newspaper persiflage, rise to the dignity of a book.

"Culture's Garland," on the contrary, marks the first real essay of Field as a maker of books. Field himself is the authority for the statement that "Tom" Ticknor edited the book. "I simply sent on a lot of stuff," wrote he, "and the folks at the other end picked out what they wanted and ran it as they pleased." This is scarcely just to Mr. Ticknor. Field himself, to my knowledge, selected the matter for "Culture's Garland," and arranged it in the general form in which it appeared. He then delegated to Mr. Ticknor



authority to reject any and all paragraphs in which the bite of satire or the broadness of the humor transgressed too far the bounds of a reasonable discretion. The true nature of this, to my mind the most entertaining of all Field's books, is reflected in its title page, frontispiece, emblem, tail-piece, and the advertisements with which it concludes. The full title reads:

CULTURE'S GARLAND

Being Memoranda of  
The Gradual Rise of Literature, Art, Music,  
And Society in Chicago, and Other  
Western Ganglia

by  
EUGENE FIELD

With an Introduction by Julian Hawthorne.

The frontispiece is a pen-and-ink sketch of "the Author at the Age of 30 (A.D. 1880)," such as Field frequently drew of himself; the symbolic emblem, which takes the place of a dedication, was a string of link sausages "in the similitude of a laurel wreath," representing "A Chicago Literary Circle," and the tail-piece was a gallows, to mark "The End."

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Writing to a friend in Boston, in 1893, Field said that he thought “the alleged advertisements at the end of the volume are its best feature.” These were introduced by a letter from one of Field’s favorite fictitious creations, “Felix Bosbyshell,” to Messrs. Ticknor & Co.:

CHICAGO, June 26th, 1887.

Dear Sirs:—I am informed that one of the leading *litterateurs* of this city is about to produce a book under your auspices. Representing, as I do, the prominent advertising bureau of the West, I desire to contribute one page of advertisements to this work, and I am prepared to pay therefor cash rates. I enclose copy, and would like to have the advertisements printed on the fly-leaf which will face the *finis* of the book in question.

Yours in the cause of literature,

FELIX J. BOSBYSHELL,  
For Bosbyshell & Co.

This was accompanied by a Publisher’s Note, which Field also supplied:

It is entirely foreign to our custom to accept advertisements for our books; but we recognize the exceptional nature of the case and the fine literary character and high tone of the Messrs. Bosbyshells’ offering, and we cheerfully give it place over leaf.

In his discriminating and felicitous introduction to his friend’s book, Julian Hawthorne said: “The present little volume comprises mainly a bubbling forth of delightful badinage and mischievous raillery, directed at some of the foibles and pretensions of his enterprising fellow-townsmen, who, however, can by no means be allowed to claim a monopoly of either the pretensions or the foibles herein exploited. Laugh, but look to yourself: *mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur*. It is a book which should, and doubtless will, attain a national popularity; but admirable, and, indeed, irresistible though it be in its way, it represents a very inconsiderable fraction of the author’s real capacity. We shall hear of Eugene Field in regions of literature far above the aim and scope of these witty and waggish sketches. But as the wise orator wins his audience at the outset of his speech by the human sympathy of a smile, so does our author, in these smiling pages, establish genial relations with us before betaking himself to more ambitious flights.”

[Illustration: PAGE OF ADVERTISEMENTS FROM “CULTURE’S GARLAND.”

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W.H. DEVINE, | PROF. WM. GILMAN,



(Indorsed by Theodore Thomas,) |  
 | *Card and Letter Wholesale Dealer in* | *Writer, Cream, Milk,*  
*etc.* |  
 | Chicago, Ill.  
 Chicago, Ill. |  
 | THE BEST SOCIETY CIRCLES  
 Parties, Clubs, Societies, and | PATRONIZE HIM!  
 Festivals furnished with suppers |  
 or lunches at living rates. Has | WILL COMPOSE  
 provided Refreshments for the | *LETTERS, ESSAYS, SPEECHES,*



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Thomas Concerts for three seasons. | *EPIC POEMS, ETC.,*  
 | CHEAP FOR CASH.  
*DEVINE'S PINK LEMONADE.* |  
 | N.B.--A fine line of *LETTERS*  
*A Noble Beverage, which cheers,* | *OF CONDOLENCE* now in stock.  
 but does not intoxicate. Whets |  
 the appetite for classic music, | Send for Catalogue.  
 and will remove grease-spots |-----  
 from the finest fabric. | TO EXCHANGE.  
 -----|  
 VETERINARY HOSPITAL. | I have on hand a complete set of  
 | British Half-calf Poets (120  
*948 HEBERN AVE., CHICAGO.* | vols.), in prime condition, which  
 | I will exchange for a St. Bernard  
 POLYCARP SEARS, V.S. | Pup. Must be warranted to have  
 | had the distemper also, 1 folio  
 Summer Semester begins July 5. | Shakespeare.  
 |  
*Spavin, Glanders, and all* | Andrew J. Whistlewhite,  
 | Chicago, Ill.  
*other Equine Ailments* |-----  
 | ART SCHOOL.  
 SUCCESSFULLY TREATED. |  
 | *Mme. CAMILLE BEAUCLERQ,*  
*MAL DE MARE* a specialty. | Principal.  
 |  
 We also learn coachmen and | Fall Term begins Sept. 19, 1887.  
 |  
 footmen the *ART OF* | *Wax Flowers a Specialty;*  
 | ALSO CRAYON DRAWING.  
*ETTIQWET.* |  
 | We produce work that defies the  
 | Old Masters.  
 |  
 | Leave orders at Livermann's  
cigar-store.
 -----]



While Mr. Hawthorne's analysis of the book was correct, his prophecy as to its attaining a national popularity was never realized. The literary critics, East as well as West, whose views and pretensions Field had so often lampooned mercilessly, had their innings, and as Field had not then conquered the popular heart with his "Little Boy Blue," his matchless lullabies, and his fascinating fairy tales and other stories, "Culture's Garland" was left to cumber the shelves of the book-stores. Several of the articles and poems in this book have been included in the collected edition of Field's works. In it will be found Field's famous "Markessy di Pullman" papers, with these clever introductory imitations:

*"Il bianco di cazerni della graze fio bella  
Di teruca si mazzoni quel' antisla Somno della."  
—Petrarch.*

"He who conduces to a fellow's sleep  
Should noble fame and goodly riches reap."  
—Tasso.

"Sleep mocks at death: when weary of the earth  
We do not die—we take an upper berth."  
—Dante.

There, too, are reprinted the verses he composed and credited to Judge Cooley, to which allusion has already been made in these pages, and of which Field wrote to his friend Cowen the week they were published: "I think they will create somewhat of a sensation; I have put a good deal of work upon them." All the pieces of verse read by Field at the Indianapolis convention also appear in "Culture's Garland," three of them being included in the article on "Mr. Isaac Watts, Tutor," of which "The Merciful Lad" was one of Field's favorites:



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### *THE MERCIFUL LAD*

Through all my life the poor shall find  
In me a constant friend,  
And on the weak of every kind  
My mercy shall attend.

The dumb shall never call on me  
In vain for kindly aid,  
And in my hands the blind shall see  
A bounteous alms display'd.

In all their walks the lame shall know  
And feel my goodness near,  
And on the deaf will I bestow  
My gentlest words of cheer.

'Tis by such pious works as these—  
Which I delight to do—  
That men their fellow-creatures please,  
And please their Maker, too.\_

Field was immensely tickled with the British gravity of one of his critics, who ridiculed this imitation of Dr. Watts, because, forsooth, he could not comprehend how the dumb could call, the blind see, or the lame walk, while he wanted to know what gracious effect the gentlest words could produce on the ears of the deaf.

Throughout "Culture's Garland" Field is the unsparing satirist of contemporary humbug and pretence—social, political, and literary—and that perhaps accounts for its failure to achieve an immediate popular success. I, for one, am glad that so late as December, 1893, and after he had tasted the sweets of popular applause, with its attendant royalties, he had the courage to write of it to a friend in Boston, "I am not ashamed of this little book, but, like the boy with the measles, I am sorry for it in spots."

"Culture's Garland" really cleared the way for Field's subsequent literary success. It taught him the lesson that his average daily newspaper work had not body enough to fill out the covers of a book. With grim determination he set himself the task to master the art of telling stories in prose. He was absolutely confident of himself in verse, but to his dying day he was never quite satisfied with anything he wrote in prose. His poems went to the printer almost exactly as they were originally composed. Nearly all of his tales were written over and over again with fastidious pains before they were committed to type. Every word and sentence of such stories as "The Robin and the Violet," "The First Christmas Tree," "Margaret, a Pearl," and "The Mountain and the Sea" was scrutinized and weighed by his keen literary sense and discriminating ear before it was permitted to



pass final muster. In only one instance do I remember that this extreme care failed to improve the original story. “The Werewolf” (“Second Book of Tales”) was a more powerful and moving fancy as first written than as eventually printed. He consulted with me during four revisions of “The Werewolf,” and told me that he had written the whole thing over seven times. I never knew him so finicky and beset with doubts as to the use of words and phrases as he was in this instance. The result is a marvellous piece of technicality perfect archaic old English mosaic, with the soul—the fascinating shudder—refined, out of a weird and fearful tale.

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But all the care, study, and exercise Field put upon his prose stories bore fruit in the gradual improvement in tone and style of his daily composition. His study of old English ballads started him about this time on the production of a truly remarkable series of lullabies, while his work began to show more and more the influence of Father Prout. But the old Field continued to show itself in such occasional quatrains as this:

*For there was Egypt in her eye—  
The languor of the South—  
Persia was in her perfumed sigh,  
And Turkey in her mouth.*

Along in January, 1889, began the frequent paraphrases from Horace. “Wynken, Blynken and Nod,” over which Field expended more than the usual pains he bestowed on his verse, was printed in March of the same year. One day in April, in 1889, Field surprised and delighted the readers of the News with the publication of the following amazing array of verse in one issue: “Our Two Opinions,” Horace I, 4; Heine’s “Love Song,” Horace I, 20; Hugo’s “Pool in the Forest,” Horace I, 5; Beranger’s “Broken Fiddle,” Horace I, 28; “Chloe”; Uhland’s “Three Cavaliers,” and Horace IV, 11.

It must not be imagined that this was the result of one day’s or one week’s work. He had been preparing for it for months; and each piece of versification was as perfect as he could make it. The amazement and widely expressed admiration with which this broadside of verse was received encouraged Field to a still greater *tour de force*, upon the preparation of which he bent all his energies and spare time for more than three months. What Field described in a letter to Cowen as “The ‘Golden Week’ in my newspaper career,” consisted in “the paper running a column of my (his) verse per diem—something never before attempted in American journalism.” The titles of the verse printed during the “Golden Week” testify alike to his industry and versatility:

THE GOLDEN WEEK, JULY 15TH-20TH, 1889.

Monday, July 15, “Prof. Vere de Blaw.”

Tuesday, “Horace to His Patron,” “Poet and King,” “Alaskan Lullaby,” “Lizzie,” “Horace I, 30.”

Wednesday, “The Conversazhyony.”

Thursday, “Egyptian Folk Song,” Beranger’s “To My Old Coat,” “Horace’s Sailor and Shade,” “Uhland’s Chapel,” “Guess,” “Alaskan Balladry.”



Friday, "Marthy's Younkit," "Fairy and Child,"  
"A Heine Love Song," "Jennie," "Horace I, 27."

Saturday, "The Happy Isles of Horace," Beranger's  
"Ma Vocation," "Child and Mother," "The  
Bibliomaniac's Bride," "Alaskan Balladry, No. 2,"  
"Mediaeval Eventide Song."

Upon some of these now familiar poems Field had been at work for more than a month. He read to me portions of "Marthy's Younkit" as early as the spring of 1887. Among the letters which his guardian, Mr. Gray, kindly placed at my disposal, I find the following bearing on "The Golden Week." It is written from the Benedict Farm, Genoa Junction, Wis., some sixty miles from Chicago, to which Field had retired to recuperate after having provided enough poetry in advance to fill his column during the week of his absence:

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DEAR MR. GRAY: I send herewith copies of poems which have appeared in the Daily News this week. I am proud to have been the first newspaper man to have made the record of a column of original verse every day for a week; I am greatly mistaken if this feeling of pardonable pride is not shared by you. I regard some of the poems as my best work so far, but I shall do better yet if my life is spared. We are rustivating here by the side of a Wisconsin lake this summer. Farm board seems to agree with us and we shall in all likelihood remain here until September. I have been grievously afflicted with nervous dyspepsia for a month, but am much better just now. The paper gives me a three months' European vacation whensoever I wish to go. At present I intend to go in the winter and shall take Julia and Mary (Trotty) with me. I do wish that Mrs. Gray would write to me; I want to know all about her home affairs and especially about Mrs. Bacon—my grudge against her *in re* mince pie has expired under the statute of limitations. God bless you, dear friend—you and yours,

Affectionately,

EUGENE FIELD.

Although Field's body was rustivating on farm fare in Wisconsin, his pen was furnishing its two thousand three hundred words a day to the Daily News, as the "Sharps and Flats" column through the summer of 1889 shows. In a letter written from the Benedict Farm during the Golden Week to Cowen, who was at this time in London working on the English edition of the New York Herald, Field unfolds some of his doings and plans:

The copies of the London Herald came to hand to-day; I am sure I am very much indebted to you for the boom you are giving me; it is of distinct value to me, and I appreciate it. I send you herewith a number of my verses that have appeared this week in my column. Having done my work ahead I am rustivating in great shape and have become a veritable terror to the small fry in which the lakes of this delectable locality abound. My books will be issued about the first of August; they will be very pretty pieces of work; I shall send you a set at once. My western verse seems to be catching on; I notice that a good many others of the boys are striking out in the same vein. Young McCarthy has made a translation from the Persian, and I have half a notion to paraphrase parts of it. I want to dip around in all sorts of versification, simply to show people that determination and perseverance can accomplish much in this direction. You know that I do not set much store by "genius."

The books to which Field refers as likely to be issued about the first of August were his two "Little Books" of verse and tales, the copy for which had not, when he wrote the foregoing, all gone to the printer. His idea then was that a book could be got out with something like the same lightning dispatch as a daily newspaper.

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To tell the story of the publication of Field's two "Little Books," unique as it was in the making of books, requires that I say a few words of the change that had come over our personal relations, though not in our friendship. Two causes operated to make this change—my marriage in the spring of 1887, which drew from Field "Ye Piteous Appeal of a Forsoken Habbit" and the manuscript volumes of the best of his verse prior to that event, and my retirement from the staff of the Daily News, to assist in the foundation of the weekly political and literary journal called America. It was through my persuasion that we secured from Field his now famous "Little Boy Blue" for the initial number of the new periodical. Many stories are extant as to how this affecting bit of child verse was written, and many fac-similes of copies of it in Field's handwriting have been printed as originals. But the truth is, "Little Boy Blue" was written without any special suggestion or personal experience attending its conception and composition. It was an honest child, begotten of the freest and best genius of Field's fancy—the genius of a master craftsman who had the instinct to use only the simplest means to tell the significant story of the little toy dog that is covered with dust and the little toy soldier that is red with rust in so many a home.

Field handed his original copy of "Little Boy Blue" to me in the Daily News office. We read it over carefully together, and there I, with his consent, made the change in the seventh line of the last verse, that may be noted in the fac-simile. With my interlineation the copy went to the printer, who had orders to return it to me, which was accordingly done, and it has been in my possession ever since.

Field made several other noteworthy contributions to the pages of America, including such important verse or articles as "Apple Pie and Cheese," "To Robin Goodfellow," "A Proper Trewe Idyll of Camelot," "The Shadwell Folio," "Poe, Patterson, and Oquawka," "The Holy Cross," and "The Three Kings." The most remarkable of these was undoubtedly "The Shadwell Folio," which ran through two issues of America and afforded a prose setting for the following proofs of Field's versatility: "The Death of Robin Hood," "The Alliaunce," "Madge: Ye Hoyden," "The Lost Schooner," "Ye Crewel Sassinger Mill," "The Texas Steere," "A Vallentine," "Waly, Waly," "Ailsie, My Bairn," "Ye Morris Daunce," "Ye Battaile Aux Dames," "How Trewe Love Won Ye Battel," "Lollaby" (old English).

The first section of the "Shadwell Folio" appeared in the issue of America of October 25th, 1888. It was one of those conceits in which Field took the greatest pleasure and in the preparation of which he grudged no labor. It purported to be a parchment folio discovered in an old hair trunk by Colonel John C. Shadwell, "a wealthy and aristocratic contractor," while laying certain main and sewer pipes in the cellar of a deserted frame house at 1423 Michigan Street, Chicago. This number would have located the cellar well out in Lake Michigan. Colonel Shadwell presented this incomparable folio to "The Ballad and Broadside Society of Cook County, Illinois, for the Discovery of Ancient Manuscripts and for the Dissemination of Culture (limited)." On receipt of the folio, this society immediately adopted the following resolutions:

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*Resolved*, That the ballads set forth in the parchment manuscript, known as the Shadwell folio, are genuine old English ballads, composed by English balladists, and illustrating most correctly life in Chicago in Ancient Times, which is to say, before the fire. *Resolved*, That the parchment cover of said folio is, in our opinion, neither pigskin nor sheep, but genuine calf, and undoubtedly the pelt of the original fatted calf celebrated in Shakespeare's play of the "Prodigal Son." *Resolved*, That we hail with pride these indisputable proofs that our refinement and culture had an ancestry, and that our present civilization did not spring, as ribald scoffers have alleged, mushroom-like from the sties and wallows of the prairies.

*Resolved*, That we get these ballads printed in an edition of not to exceed 500 copies, and at a cost of \$50 per copy, or, at least, at a price beyond the capability of the hoy polloi.

Field then proceeded to review the contents of the fictitious folio, taking the precaution to premise his remarks and extracts with the statement that "it must not be surmised that all the poems in this Shadwell folio are purely local; quite a number treat of historical subjects." Of the poems in the first half of "The Shadwell Folio" I am able to give one of the most interesting in fac-simile, premising that, although this did not see the light of print until October, 1888, it was written in an early month of 1887.

On pages 19 and 20 of the folio, according to Field, we get a "pleasant glimpse of the rare old time" in the ballad entitled:

[Illustration: "THE ALLIAUNCE".

Come hither, gossip, let us sit  
beneath this plaisaunt vine;  
I fain wolde counsel thee a bit  
whiles that we sip our wine.

The air is cool and we can hear  
the voicing of the kine  
come from the pasture lot anear  
the styes where grunt the swine.

See how that Tom, my sone, doth fare  
with posies in his hands—  
Methinks he minds to mend him where  
thy dochter waiting stands.

Boys will be boys and girls be girls  
for Godde hath willed it soe;



Thy dochter Tib hath goodly curles—  
my Toms none fole, I trom.

His evening chores ben all to-done,  
and she hath fed the pigges,  
and now the village green upon  
they daunce and sing their jigges.

His squeaking crowd the fiddler plies,  
And Tom and Tib can see  
The babies in echoders eyes—  
saye, neighbour, shall it bee?

Nould give Frank in goodly store—  
that I; in sooth, ne can;  
but I have steers and hoggs gillore—  
and thats what makes the man!

Your family trees and blade be naught  
In these progressive years—  
The only blode that counts (goes?) for aught  
Is blode of piggs and steeres!



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So, gossip, let us found a line  
On mouton, porke and beefe;  
The which in coming years shall shine  
In cultures world as chief.

Sic stout and braw a sone as mine  
I lay youle never see,  
and theres nae huskier wench than thine—  
Saye, neighbor, shall it bee?]

On pages 123 and 124 of the folio Field discovered “this ballad of Chicago’s patient Grissel (erroneously pronounced ‘Gristle’ in leading western circles), setting forth the miseries and the fate of a lass who loved a sailor “:

### *THE LOST SCHOONER*

Hard by ye lake, beneath ye shade,  
Upon a somer’s daye,  
There ben a faire Chicago maid  
That greeting sore did saye:  
I wonder where can Willie bee—  
O waly, waly! woe is mee!

He fared him off on Aprille 4,  
And now ’tis August 2,  
I stood upon ye slimy shoore  
And swere me to be trewe;  
I sawe yt schippe bear out to sea—  
O waly, waly! woe is mee!

“Ye schippe she ben as braw an hulk  
As ever clave ye tides,  
And in her hold she bore a bulk  
Of new-mown pelts and hides—  
Pelts ben they all of high degree—  
O waly, waly! woe is mee!

“Ye schippes yt saile untill ye towne  
Ffor mee no plaisaunce hath,  
Syn most of them ben loded down  
With schingle, slabs and lath;  
That ither schipp—say, where is shee?  
O waly, waly! woe is mee!



“Ye Mary Jane ben lode with logs,  
Ye Fairy Belle with beer—  
Ye Mackinack ben Ffull of hoggs  
And ither carnal cheer;  
But nony pelt nor hide I see—  
O waly, waly! woe is mee!

“And ither schippes bring salt and ore,  
And some bring hams and sides,  
And some bring garden truck gillore—  
But none brings pelt and hides!  
Where can my Willie’s schooner be—  
O waly, waly! woe is mee!”

So wailed ye faire Chicago maide  
Upon ye shady shore,  
And swounded oft whiles yt she prayed  
Her loon to come oncet more,  
And crying, “Waly, woe is mee,”  
That maiden’s harte did brast in three.\_

The second half of “The Shadwell Folio,” printed November 1st, 1888, besides being memorable for the first publication of his well-known “Ailsie, My Bairn,” and the exquisite “Old English Lullaby,” contained “a homely little ballad,” as Field described it, “which reminds one somewhat of ‘Winfreda,’ and which in the volume before us is entitled ‘A Valentine.’”

The “Winfreda” here referred to is one of the poems upon which Field exhausted his ingenuity in composing with the verbal phraseology of different periods of archaic English. The version which appears in his “Songs and Other Verse” is his first attempt at versification “in pure Anglo-Saxon,” as he says in a note to one of the manuscript copies. Field intended to render this finally into “current English,” but, so far as I know, he never got to it.

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The publication of numerous poems and tales in the Daily News during the years 1888 and 1889, together with those printed in America, culminating in "The Golden Week," in July of the latter year, was but the prelude to the issue of his two "Little Books," according to a unique plan over which we spent much thought and consumed endless luncheons of coffee and apple pie. As I have intimated, Field was quite piqued over the cavalier reception of "Culture's Garland," and was determined that his next venture in book form should be between boards, a perfect specimen of book-making, and restricted, as far as his judgment could decide, to the best in various styles which he had written prior to the date of publication. He did not wish to entrust this to any publisher, and finally hit upon the idea of publishing privately, by subscription, which was carried out.

The circular, which was prepared and mailed to a selected list of my friends, as well as his, will best explain the rather unusual method of this venture:

### PRIVATE CIRCULAR

CHICAGO, February 23d, 1889.

Dear Sir:—It is proposed to issue privately, and as soon as possible, a limited edition of my work in verse and in prose. Negotiations for the publication of two volumes are now in progress with the University Press at Cambridge.<sup>1</sup> It is proposed to print one volume (200 pages) of my best verse, and one volume (300 pages) of tales and sketches. These books will be printed upon heavy uncut paper and in the best style known to the University printer.

2. The edition will be limited to 200 sets (each set of two volumes), and none will be put upon sale.

3. It is proposed to pay for the publication by subscriptions. One hundred (100) shares are offered to my personal friends at ten dollars a share, each subscriber to receive two (2) sets of the books. If you wish to subscribe to this enterprise, please fill out the accompanying blank (next page) and send it before March 25th, with money-order, draft, or check, to Mr. Slason Thompson, editor of "America," who has consented to act as custodian of the funds necessary to the accomplishment of the purpose specified.

Very sincerely yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

The accompanying blank addressed to me read:

Find enclosed ----- for ----- (\$ ) representing my subscription for ----- share ----- in the two-volume publication of Eugene



Field's original work.

-----

----- P.O. Address.

If Field had any doubts as to the estimation in which he was held by his friends, they were dispelled by the ready response to this appeal, while the generous words accompanying many of the orders were well calculated to warm the cockles of a colder heart than beat within the breast of "The Good Knight *sans peur et sans monnaie*." Many persons to whom

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circulars had not been sent heard of the proposed publication and wrote asking to be allowed to subscribe. The largest single subscription was for five shares. There were three for two shares, and all the rest were for one share each, many echoed the “Certainly! and glad of the chance,” which was Stuart Robson’s response. F.J.V. Skiff, Field’s old associate on the Denver Tribune, added a postscript to his order, saying, “And wish I could take it all,” while Victor F. Lawson, in a personal note to me accompanying his order, wrote, “If you run short on this scheme I shall be glad to increase my subscription whenever advised that it is needed.” This spirit pervaded the replies to our circular and gave Field keener pleasure than he ever experienced through the publication of any of his other books.

Chicago, as was to be expected, took a majority of the shares; Denver came next, and then Kansas City. Comparatively few shares were taken in the East, for Field’s fame had scarcely yet penetrated that region. But the names of Charles A. Dana, of Whitelaw Reid, and of Field’s “Cousin Kate” were early among the subscribers. His friends among the stage folk responded numerously, and so did journalists and railway men. There were only some half dozen bibliomaniacs on the list, for Field had not then become the poet, torment, and idol of the devotees of rare and eccentric editions. To remind them of the unusual opportunity they missed, let me recall the negotiations for the making of this original *edition de luxe*, which was not published for profit, but as an example of the excellence of simplicity and clearness in printing. From the start Field insisted that everything about the “Little Books” should be American, and the best procurable of their kind. The letters from John Wilson & Son show the progress of the negotiations for the printing of the two books, which were carried on in full assurance that there would be no failure of funds to carry out the enterprise. I quote their first reply to my request for an estimate on the work:

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., February 5, 1889.

SLASON THOMPSON, ESQ.,

Dear Sir:—In your request for a rough estimate of two volumes of 200 pages each, on paper 5 x 8 and printed page 2-1/2 x 4-1/2 you forgot to state the number of copies desired and the size of the type. We enclose two samples of paper that we can find. We have doubts about finding enough of the 5 x 8, but think we can that of the 5 x 7-1/2. We prefer the former. If the edition is small—say 100 or 150—we can, we think, scrape up enough of the 5 x 8. The size of your page could not, we think, be improved on. We also enclose samples of long primer, bourgeois and brevier sizes of type. [Here followed a detailed estimate on 250 copies of bourgeois type of \$668.70 for the two volumes.]

We should be most happy to execute the work. Hoping to hear from you again,



We are respectfully yours,



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JOHN WILSON & SON.

As soon as we had arrived at a clearer idea of our desires, and also of our means, I again communicated with Messrs. Wilson & Son, and received the following reply:

CAMBRIDGE, April 4th, 1889.

Dear Sir:—After much delay we have succeeded in finding a paper manufacturer in Massachusetts (the only one in America) who has just commenced making a paper similar to that used in “Riley’s Old-Fashioned Roses” (printed on English hand-made paper which I had sent them). To-morrow we shall send you a specimen (printed), also a specimen of another paper which we used some time ago on an *edition de luxe* of “Memorials of Canterbury” and of Westminster Abbey for Randolph & Co., of New York. No. 1 is a hand-made paper 16 x 20/28, at 60c. a lb.; No. 2, a machine made 20 x 22/60 at 20c. a lb.

ESTIMATE No. 1.

For comp. and electro (say 500 pages in the two vols.) about \$400.00

For 8 boxes for plates, 75 cts. 6.00

For 250 copies presswork (2 vols.), 66 forms,  
\$1.50 99.00

For Paper, 16 x 20/28, 20 reams, \$16.80 336.00

For Binding 250 copies, 500 (2 vols.) 25c.  
Parchment back and corners 125.00

For Dies, say 10.00

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\$976.00

Alterations from copy, 50 cts. an hour. (The estimate on No. 2 paper was \$727.00.)

We return “Riley.” Both of these papers have the rough, or deckle, edge.

We are anxious to make this book in the *best style*, and of American materials if possible.

Respectfully yours,



JOHN WILSON & SON.

Three things in estimate No. 1 caught Field's fancy—yea, four; the paper was to be hand made, deckle edge, of American manufacture, but, above all, sixty cents a pound. As a contrast to the stiff bleached Manila of "Culture's Garland," dear at a cent a pound, this sixty cents a pound decided Field in favor of No. 1, though we had to economize on everything else to get the job done within the \$1,100 we had in bank before we gave the order. The No. 2, having a softer surface, would have given us a better printed page, and its cost would have enabled us to embellish the edition with a steel-plate engraving of Field, as had been our intention, but the thought of using the most expensive American paper procurable for his "Little Books" outweighed every other consideration, and we forwarded the copy of the two volumes to John Wilson & Son, with orders to go ahead and push publication.

It was well into the middle of the fall when I received the following note from the printers, showing that the work had been completed:

University Press,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS., October 19th, 1889.

SLASON THOMPSON, ESQ.

DEAR SIR: Herewith please find our bill for printing and binding *Profitable Tales* and *Western Verse*.



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We shall send the two copies of each volume (unnumbered) to secure the copyright, and when the certificate is received, will send it to you. These copies are over and above the 250 copies sent to you.

Regretting the delay incident to the bringing out of two such volumes, and hoping that the author and his friends may be gratified and pleased with their mechanical execution, we are,

Respectfully yours,

JOHN WILSON & SON.

It is needless to say that both the author and his friends were gratified and pleased with the mechanical execution of the "Little Books," while Field's admirers have never wearied in their admiration of their contents. Every cent of the fund subscribed for these books went to pay for their printing; and as Field started for Europe before they were received from Cambridge, the task of numbering them, as well as the cost of forwarding them to subscribers, fell to my lot.

These two books contained not only the best of what Field had written up to that time, but their contents were selected with such care that they continue to represent the best he ever wrote. Much that he rejected at that time went to make up subsequent volumes of his works. The popular editions from the subscription plates of "A Little Book of Western Verse" and "A Little Book of Profitable Tales" had a phenomenal sale, and made a handsome return in royalties to him who sent them forth with the words:

*"Go, little book; and if any one would speak thee ill, let him  
bethink him that thou art the child of one who loves thee well."*

## CHAPTER VI

### HIS SECOND VISIT TO EUROPE

From 1889 Field's life was one long struggle with dyspepsia, an inherited weakness which he persisted in aggravating by indulgence in those twin enemies of health—pastry and reading in bed. During our intimate association I had exercised a wholesome restraint on his pie habit and reduced his hours of reading in bed to a minimum. As the reader may remember, our pact concerned eating and walking. When we ate, we talked, and while we walked, Field could not lie in bed browsing amid his favorite books, burning illuminating gas and the candle of life at the same time. So long as his study of life was pursued among men he retained his health. As soon as he began to retire more and more to the companionship of books and from the daily activities and associations of the newspaper office his assimilation of food failed to

nourish his body as it did his brain. The buoyancy went out of his step, but never out of his mind and heart.

As intimated in his letter to Mr. Gray, the publisher of the Daily News grew so solicitous over Field's health that he proposed a three months' European vacation, with pay, whenever he chose to take it. At first it was not Field's intention to avail himself of this generous offer until winter. But when his "Little Books" were safely under way he changed his mind and decided to start as soon as he could arrange his household affairs. In a letter to his friend Cowen, then in London, under date of June 11th, 1889, Field wrote:

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Trotty is delighted with the illustrated paper, and she is going to write you a letter, I think. Melvin is on the Indiana farm again this summer, and Pinny is visiting his Aunt Etta [Mrs. Roswell Field] in Kansas City. The rest of us are boarding with Mr. and Mrs. Reed, and the house is full of friends. We like our quarters very much, but shall give them up on the first of November, as Julia, Trotty, and I will go to Europe in December. The present plan is to go first to London, where I wish to spend most of my time. We shall want to put Trotty in a school near Paris, and her mother will have to make the tour of Italy. Mary French (who reared me) will be with us, and she will go with Julia on the Italian circuit. As for me, I want to spend most of my time in England, with two weeks in Paris and a few days in Holland. Wouldn't it be wise for me to live in one of the suburbs of London? I want to get cheap but desirable quarters—a pleasant place, not fashionable, and *not too far from the old-book shops*. My intention is to be absent three months, but I may deem it wise to stay six. Julia and Trotty can stay as long as they please. I should like to have Trotty learn French. Matters and things here in the office peg along about as usual—yes, just the same. The new building in the alley will be ready for occupancy by the first of September, but I suspect it will not be much of an improvement upon the present quarters. Dr. Reilly is the same old 2 x 4. He got \$250.00 for extra work the other day, and we have been tolerably prosperous ever since. [Here Field branched off into personal gossip about pretty nearly every one of their mutual friends in Denver and Chicago, having something to say about no less than nineteen persons in fourteen lines of his diamond chirography.] It is nearly time for Stone [who had sold out his interest in the Daily News to Mr. Lawson] to reach Paris. I wish you'd tell him that I propose to \*%!&[see Note below] him at billiards under the shadow of St. Paul's in London next Christmas time. Dear boy, I am overjoyed at the prospect of seeing you so soon. We speak of you so often, and always affectionately. You may look for a package from me about the 1st of August; I shall send it to the care of the Herald office in Paris. I have dedicated to you what I regard as my tenderest bit of western dialect verse, and I will send you a copy of the paper when it appears. Meanwhile I enclose a little bit, which you may fancy. God bless you.

[Transcriber's Note: The \*%!& stands for "expletive deleted" and is intentional.]

"Marthy's Younkit" is the bit of western dialect verse which was dedicated to Cowen, of which Field then and always thought so highly. It contained, in his estimation, more of imagination, as distinct from fancy, than any of his other verse. The poetic picture of the mountain-side is perfect:



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*Where the magpies on the sollum rocks strange  
flutter'n shadders make,  
An' the pines an' hemlocks wonder that the  
sleeper doesn't wake:  
That the mountain brook sings lonesome-like  
an' loiters on its way.  
Ez if it waited for a child to jine it in its  
play.*

In another letter to Cowen about this time I find the first intimation Field ever gave that he might have been tempted to leave his place on the Daily News. He wrote, "The San Francisco Examiner is making a hot play to get me out there. Why doesn't Mr. Bennett try to seduce me into coming to London? How I should like to stir up the dry bones!"

Under date of Kansas City, June 28th, 1889, Field wrote with an illuminated initial "M":

MY DEAR COWEN: Your cablegram reached me last night, having been forwarded to me here, where I have been for a week. I send you herewith "The Conversazzhyony," which is one of three mountain poems I have recently written: it has never been in print. The others, unpublished, are "Prof. Vere de Blaw" (the character who plays the piano in Casey's restaurant) and "Marthy's Younkit" (pathetic, recounting the death and burial of the first child born in the camp). The latter is the best piece of work, but inasmuch as you call for something humorous I send the enclosed.

This letter went on to discuss the possibility of getting a position on the London Herald for his brother Roswell, who desired to get out of the rut of his general newspaper work on the Kansas City Times, and Field confided to Cowen that "there is no telling what might come of having my brother in London"—the intimation being that he might be induced to stay there. But nothing came of either suggestion.

[Illustration: ROSWELL FIELD.]

Field's health was so miserable during the summer of 1889 that it was decided best that he should begin his vacation in October instead of waiting for December. On the eve of his departure he wrote to his old friend Melvin L. Gray:

DEAR MR. GRAY: Had I not been so grievously afflicted with dyspepsia, I should certainly have visited St. Louis before starting for Europe. The attack of indigestion with which I am suffering began last June, resulting from irregularity in hours of eating and sleeping and from too severe application to work. The contemplated voyage will do me good, I think, and I hope to gather much valuable material while I am abroad. I shall seek to acquaint myself with such local legends as may seem to be capable of treatment in verse. Most of my time will be spent in London, in Paris, and in Holland. I expect to find among the Dutch much to inspire me. I carry numerous letters of



introduction—all kinds of letters, except letters of credit. I regret that the potent name of Rothschild will not figure in the list of my trans-Atlantic acquaintances. I am exceedingly sorry that Roswell is not to go



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with us: with me he would have had advantages at his command which he cannot have when he goes alone. I am looking daily for my books; I rather regret now that I did not print a larger edition, for a great many demands are coming in from outsiders. I should like to publish a volume of my paraphrases of Horace while I am in London, and maybe I shall do so. Do give my love to Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Bacon. I think of you all very often, and nothing would give me greater delight than to pop in upon you and have a two hours' chat in that old familiar second-story back room. It may be, Mr. Gray, that you and I shall never take one another by the hand again, but I wish you to know that I shall always think of you with feelings of gratitude, of affection, and of reverence. And I feel a particular pleasure in saying these words to you upon the eve of my departure upon a journey which is to separate me at least temporarily from the home, the people, and the associations which must always be foremost in my affections. God bless you.

As ever, yours,

EUGENE FIELD. Chicago, September the 30th, 1889.

When Field arrived in London Cowen was away on the Continent, much to the disappointment of all concerned—especially the three boys, who at the last moment had been brought along. On October 24th Field wrote:

MY DEAR COWEN: Knowing that you will be anxious to know how we are getting along. I drop you this line to tell you that we have taken lodgings at No. 20 Alfred Place, Bedford Square, and we are quite contented. I have written to Moffett asking him whether we ought to locate the children in Paris or in Germany. You know that my means are very limited, and my desire to do the right thing is necessarily hampered. I met Colonel John C. Reid for the first time to-night [Mr. Reid was Mr. Bennett's manager]. He is in favor of Paris, but of course he does not understand how really d——d poor I am. The children have done Tussaud's and the Zoo, and will next make a descent on the Crystal Palace. They sincerely lament your absence from the city. When we were in Liverpool, Pinny was joshing Daisy because he had no money, and Daisy said: "I'll be all right when I see Mr. Cowen." It has pained all three boys because you fled from their approach.

Five days later, having secured a sheet of deckle-edged, water-marked Wilmot linen letter-paper and colored inks, Field proceeded to write an elaborately decorated note to his friend:

20 ALFRED PLACE, BEDFORD SQ., LONDON, W.C.

MY DEAR COWEN: We have waited a week to hear from Moffett, whom I addressed in care of the Herald office in Paris, but in lieu of any answer we are going to start the children off for Hanover in a few days. Mrs. Field is going to take them over, and I am to

remain in London, since travel disagrees with me so severely. I don't like the idea of separation, but this seems to be a sacrifice



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which I ought to make. I doubt very much whether I visit any other European city except Paris; I am greatly pleased with London, every sight awakening such a flood of reminiscence. If I were not so disgracefully poor. I could pick up a host of charming knick-knacks here; as it is, I have to shut my eyes and groan, and pass by on the other side. I have just finished "Yvytot," the first purely fanciful ballad I ever wrote. I have been at work on it for two months, and I think it is the best piece of literary work I have done, although it is somewhat above the class of work that is popular. You will like it for its rhythmical smoothness and for its weirdness. But Mrs. Field prefers "Krinken," "Marthy's Younkit," *et id omne genus*. My next verse will be "John Smith, U.S.A.," a poem suggested by seeing this autograph at Gilley's. In it I shall use the Yankee, the Hoosier, the southern and the western dialect, wondering whether this Smith is the Smith I knew in Massachusetts, or the Smith from Louisville, or the Smith from Terry Hut, or (last of all) the Smith from the Red Hoss Mountain district. I wish you were here to help me throw my ideas into shape. How do you like this handsome paper?

Affectionately,

EUGENE FIELD.

Tuesday, October 29th, 1889.

Field may have thought that he spent only two months on "Yvytot," but as a matter of fact he had been mulling it over for twice that many years; and he had hoped to finish it in time for his "Little Book of Western Verse." But it was one of those bits of verse upon which he loved to putter, and he was loath to put it into type beyond the reach of occasional revision. When the "Little Book of Western Verse" was issued in popular form "Yvytot" was included in it in the place of the list of subscribers and John Wilson & Son's colophon. Speaking of the Hoosier dialect, Field was fond of telling the following story on his friend James Whitcomb Riley:

James Whitcomb Riley went to Europe last summer. On the return voyage an incident happened which is well worth telling of. To beguile the tediousness of the voyage it was proposed to give a concert in the saloon of the ship—an entertainment to which all capable of amusing their fellow-voyagers should contribute. Mr. Riley was asked to recite some of his original poems, and of course he cheerfully agreed to do so. Among the number present at this mid-ocean entertainment, over which the Rev. Myron Reed presided, were two Scotchmen, very worthy gentlemen, *en route* from the land o' cakes to the land of biscuits upon a tour of investigation. These twain shared the enthusiasm with which the auditors applauded Mr. Riley's charming recitations. They marvelled that so versatile a genius could have lived in a land reputed for uncouthness and savagery.

"Is it no wonderfu', Donal'," remarked one of these Scots, "that a tradesman suld be sic a bonnie poet?"

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“And is he indeed a tradesman?” asked the other.

“Indeed he is,” answered the other. “Did ye no hear the dominie intryjuce him as the hoosier poet? Just think of it, mon!—just think of sic a gude poet dividing his time at making hoosiery?”

There is more of the old spirit of the genuine Eugene Field in the next letter, written from London, November 13th, 1889, than in any of his other correspondence after 1888:

MY DEAR COWEN: I am now (so to speak) in God’s hands. Getting the four children fitted out for school and paying a quarter’s tuition in advance has reduced me to a condition of financial weakness which fills me with the gloomiest apprehension. You of fertile resource must tell me what I am to do. I will not steal; to beg I am ashamed. My bank account shows L15. Verily, I am in hell’s hole. Had I received your letter in time I should have gone to Paris with the children. Not a word have I heard from Moffett, and your letter reached me after my return from Germany. Instinct all along has told me “Paris,” but reason has counselled “Germany.” I have yielded to reason, and the children are in Hanover—Trotty at the school of Fraulein Gensen, Allee Strasse, No. 1, and the three boys with Professor C. Ruehle (prophetic name!), Heinrich Strasse, 26 A. Parting from them was like plucking my heart from me; but they are contented. The night before they went to live with the professor, Pinny and Daisy were plotting to “do” that worthy man, but I do not fear for him, as he is a very husky gentleman. It seems the smart thing now to keep the children at Hanover for six months; then, if a change be deemed advisable, I shall take them to Paris. My health appears to be better. I have written five poems, which are highly commended. My books are out, and, though I have not clapped eyes on them yet, they are being highly praised by the American press. I shall see that you get copies. So far, we have been about but very little. Our finances are too cramped to admit of our doing or seeing much. But we may be happy yet. Julia joins me in affectionate assurances.

Ever sincerely yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

Of a different tone, and yet giving very much the same impression of how Field was spending his time in London, is the following letter to his quondam guardian, Mr. Gray, beginning with an illuminated initial V, of date London, January 9th, 1890:

Very many times during the last three months, dear Mr. Gray, have I thought of you and yours, and upon several occasions have I been at the point of sitting down and writing to you. There is perhaps no one to whom letter-writing is as a practice—I had almost said habit—more of a horror than it is to me. The conventional letter seems to me to be a dreadful thing—twice dreadful (as Portia’s quality of mercy was twice blessed)—an affliction to the sender



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and equally an affliction to the recipient. But you and I seldom write letters of this kind. I do not think I ever before received a letter that moved me so deeply as did the letter you sent me just before I left Chicago. I am not ashamed to admit that I like to know that I have your regard, but the whole tone of this letter was that of a kindly affection which was very comforting to me, and for which I shall always feel deeply grateful to you. My health has improved much since I last wrote to you. I am now feeling quite as I felt when I was in my original condition—perhaps I should say my normal condition of original sin. For a week past I have been confined to the house with a catarrhal cold, but aside from this temporary local ailment my health is vastly better. I should be in the mood to return home at once were it not for a sense that being here I should further improve the opportunity to gather material that may be of value to me in my work when I get back into the rut again. I have a very great desire to go to Norway and the Orkney Islands for a month in order to see those countries and their people, for I am much interested in North of Europe romance, and I am ambitious to write tales about the folk of those particular points. I think it possible that I shall find a way to gratify this urgent desire before returning to America, although with the children at school I am hardly prepared just now to say what further sacrifice I shall be able to make in order to achieve my project. The children are in school at Hanover. Trotty is at the girls' school of a Miss Julia Gensen, No. 1 Allee Strasse, and the three boys are with Prof. C. Ruehle, No. 26 Heinrich Strasse. I give the exact localities, for the reason that Mrs. Gray may kindly take the notion one of these days to write to the little exiles. The children are healthy and happy; we have not seen them for nine weeks, but we hear from them every week, and we are assured that they are making desirable progress. In her last letter Trotty says, with a *naivete* that is simply electric: "Nobody would guess that the boys were your boys—they are so gentlemanly!" Prof. Ruehle is an old instructor of boys, and for several years he was a professor at Woolwich Academy.... Pinny is acquiring the German so rapidly that he is accounted quite a marvel by his instructor and his associates. Melvin and Trotty are not so quick; they progress slowly, but Daisy seems to be doing admirably. Hanover is a lovely city; I enjoyed my week there, and upon our way back to London Julia and I sojourned four days in Holland, to our great delight. Here in London our life has been exceedingly quiet, but useful. I have met a number of excellent people, and have received some social attention. I have done considerable work, mostly in the way of verse. I wish you would write to John F. Ballantyne, asking him to send you copies of the paper containing



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my work since I came here. I am anxious to have you see it, particularly my poem in the Christmas Daily News, and my tale in the Christmas number of the Chicago America. I am just now at work on a Folklore tale of the Orkney Islands, and I am enjoying it very much. I hope to get it off to the paper this week. I am hoping that my two books pleased you; they are the beginning only, for if I live I shall publish many beautiful books. Yesterday I got a letter from a New York friend volunteering to put up the money for publishing a new volume of verse at \$20 a copy, the number of copies to be limited to fifty. Of course I can't accede to the proposition. But I am thinking of publishing a volume of verse in some such elaborate style, for my verse accumulates fast, and I love to get out lovely books! The climate here in London is simply atrocious—either rain or fog all the time. Yet I should not complain, for it seems to do me good. Julia is well, and she joins me in wishing you and yours the best of God's blessings.

May you and I meet again, dear venerated friend, this side of the happy Islands!

Ever affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

London, January 9th, 1890.

Do give my best love to Mrs. Bacon, and tell her that, being a confirmed dyspeptic now, I forgive her that mince-pie. My permanent address is care New York Herald Office, 110 Strand, W.C., London.

Speaking of the number of excellent people met in London, Field on his return told with great gusto his experience at a dinner-party there at which he was seated between the wife of a member of Parliament and Mrs. Humphry Ward. The conversation turned upon P.T. Barnum, who was then in London with his "greatest show on earth." One of the ladies inquired of Field if he was acquainted with the famous showman, to which Field said he replied, with the utmost gravity and earnestness:

"From my earliest infancy. Do you know, madame, that I owe everything I am and hope to be to that great, good man? When he first discovered me I was living in a tree in the wilds of Missouri, clothed in skins and feeding on nuts and wild berries. Yes, madam. Phineas T. Barnum took me from my mother, clothed me in the bifurcated raiment of civilization, sent me to school, where I began to lisp in numbers before I had mastered the multiplication table, and I have been lisping ever since." Field had a peculiar hesitation in his speech, almost amounting to the pause of an embarrassed stutterer; and if he related this experience to the British matrons as he rehearsed it to his friends afterward, it was small wonder that they swallowed it with many a "Really!" "How curious!" "Isn't it marvellous?" This dinner occurred at the time when the trial of several

members of the Clan-na-gael for the murder of Dr. Cronin was in progress in Chicago. The case was followed with as much interest in England



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as in America. When Mrs. Ward learned that Field hailed from that city, she said to him, "I am so glad to meet somebody from Chicago, for I am greatly interested in the town. Do tell me, did you know Dr. Cronin or any of those horrid Clan-na-gaels?" "I had the satisfaction of telling her," said Field, "that Martin Bourke (one of the suspects) and I had been very intimate friends, and that Dan Coughlin (another) and I belonged to the same hunting club, and had often shot buffaloes and cougars on the prairie a few miles west of Chicago. As for Sullivan, the ice-man, I assured her that if that man was convicted it would be a severe blow to the best circles of the city." "Still more satisfaction had I," Field added, "in the conviction that my auditor believed every one of the preposterous yarns I told her."

"The new volume" referred to in Field's letter to Mr. Gray was that which subsequently took the form of "Echoes from the Sabine Farm," published by his friend and fellow-bibliomaniac, Francis Wilson. The story of how it came to be issued in that particular form is told by Mr. Wilson in his introduction to the subscription edition. It was originally Field's intention that I should take charge of this publication, although I had never been consulted about it. Therefore I was somewhat surprised on receiving the following note:

PHILADELPHIA, December 20th, 1889.

MR. SLASON THOMPSON—

DEAR SIR:

Enclosed find my check for \$20 (Twenty Dollars) for No. 1 copy Mr. Eugene Field's proposed book of "Horace"—printed on Japanese proof and pasted on Whatman's hand-made paper, with etched vignettes, initial and tail-pieces, rubricated throughout.

Very truly,

FRANCIS WILSON.

In acknowledging the receipt of Mr. Wilson's check I ventured to question whether Field's paraphrases of Horace up to that time warranted the elaborate setting proposed, to which I received the following semi-indignant and semi-jocose rejoinder:

PHILADELPHIA, December 27th, 1889.

MR. SLASON THOMPSON—

REVEREND SIGNOR:



It is Mr. Field's intention to produce a Horace at \$20 a copy, the edition limited to fifty; printed on Japanese proof and pasted on Whatman hand-made paper; rubricated throughout, with etched vignettes and tail-pieces, and I want copy No. 1. Sometimes even the swift citizens of Chicago must get their information from slow-going Philadelphia. I do not know whether it is Mr. F.'s intention to have you get out his affectionate effort, but I should hope not—being guided, of course, by your expressed doubt and wonderment in the matter. However, I promise not to say anything about this to Mr. Field. I sent you the \$20 so as to be in time for the copy I wish, and I know you'll not object to holding it until Mr. Field's return, which ought to be not later than May—as he writes. I shall also send you other subscriptions, which you may turn over to Mr. Hobart Taylor in the event of your discovering that gentleman has fewer qualms of conscience than yourself in the matter. If he has not, you *must* keep the money as a punishment for the uncomplimentary allusion you have made to Field's Horace.



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Soit!

Very sincerely,

FRANCIS WILSON.

With the suspicious fervor of your hopeless collector of first editions, Mr. Wilson finally decided to publish Field's renditions from Horace himself, so as to be sure of having copy No. 1. And yet he had the almost unheard-of magnanimity to send that cherished copy to Field, who returned it with a prettily worded note, in which he acknowledged his obligation to Mr. Wilson and expressed the hope that the latter would live forever, provided he, Field, could "live one day longer to write his epitaph." Not until I came across the foregoing letter have I understood why Wilson thwarted all Field's efforts to present me with a copy of the precious edition of "The Sabine Farm." They profited by my advice, however, and postponed publication for two years, Field and his brother Roswell in the meantime working assiduously in making new paraphrases of Horace and in polishing the old ones.

The mutations of journalism which had sent Cowen scurrying over Europe when Field had counted on having his companionship in London carried the former back to Washington, where he joined with some other equally sanguine writers in the attempt to float a literary and political periodical named *The Critic*. On February 15th, 1890, Field wrote to his friend from No. 20 Alfred Square:

MY DEAR COWEN: The improvement which you boys have made in the *Critic* is very marked. If you can hold out long enough, you will win—you are bound to. You have youth, experience, and ambition upon your side, and they are potent factors. Of course you know that my earnest sympathies are, and will be, with you. I am feeling quite well now. I have secured the Gladstone axe, with documents from the grand old man proving its identity. I also have Charles Kean's Hamlet chair, but I can't prove it. Meanwhile I bankrupt myself buying books, letters, and play-bills. Oh, for \$200! How rich I should feel. Did you give Hawkins his two night-shirts and the tie? And did you send the sleeping-socks to Mrs. Ballantyne? I must send some little souvenir to Buskett. Do tell him to write to me and tell me how he happened to leave the mountains. By the way, I wish you would secure for me from the Postmaster-General or his assistant a set of proofs of government stamps. I have begun making a collection, and he will provide that much, if properly approached. The children are well. The boys dun me regularly. Pinny is more artful about it than the rest. He makes all sorts of promises, calls me "dearest papa," and sends me arithmetical problems he has solved and German stories he has pilfered from his reader. Still, I am very proud of those children; at any rate, I want to go first. Give my love to Hawkins and his wife and to Buskett; Julia joins me in affectionate remembrances to you all. God bless you, my beloved friend.

EUGENE FIELD.



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There was no shadow in this letter of the sorrow which was then hovering over his home and family. Out of a cheerful heart he wrote, "I am feeling quite well now," although the mists and fogs of London were chilling him to the marrow, while the social attentions were tempting him to dietetic destruction. A few months after he wrote the words, "The children are well" and "At any rate, I want to go first," he was returning to America with the body of his eldest son, who died suddenly in Holland, and facing bravely the fact that his own vitality had been fatally impaired. "What exceeding folly," he wrote to a friend, "was it that tempted me to cross the sea in search of what I do not seem able to find here—a righteous stomach? I have been wallowing in the slough of despond for a week and my digestive apparatus has gone wrong again. I have suffered tortures that would have done credit to the inventive genius of a Dante, and the natural consequence is that I am as blue as a whetstone."

The death of his son made a deep impression on Eugene Field. Melvin was the serious, unobtrusive member of the family circle. As Field has just intimated, Pinny was a shrewd and mischievous youngster, who attracted more attention and was permitted more license than his brothers. Daisy was his mother's special pet, and Trotty had many of the characteristics of her father. Besides, she was the only girl in the family of boys. Thus Melvin in temperament and disposition seemed always just outside the inner circle of the household. This came home to Field, and he regretted it deeply before he wrote the concluding lines of his dedication of "With Trumpet and Drum":

*So come; though I see not his dear little face,  
And hear not his voice in this jubilant place,  
I know he were happy to bid me enshrine  
His memory deep in my heart with your play.*

Ah me! but a love that is sweeter than mine  
Holdeth my boy in its keeping to-day!  
And my heart it is lonely—so, little folk, come,  
March in and make merry with trumpet and drum!\_

Upon his return, Field secured for his family a large and comfortable house on Fullerton Avenue, about four miles from the office, and, though he was encouraged to think that his health was improved, it was noticed by his friends that most of his work was done at home and they saw less of him down town. Naturally the death of Melvin brought him many letters of condolence, and, among others, one from his old friend William C. Buskett, to whom he made immediate reply:

MY DEAR BUSKETT: I was delighted to get your letter. I had been at a loss to account for your long silence. I feared that you might think the rumors of your business reverses had abated my regard for you, and this suspicion made me miserable. I have for so long a time been the victim of poverty that I have come to regard poverty as a sort of trade-mark of virtue, and I



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hail to the ranks of the elect every friend whom misfortune has impoverished. I have a great deal to say to you; I cannot write it—much is of Melvin and his last moments, painful details, yet not without reconciling features, for he met death calmly and bravely. It will gratify you to know that my own health is steadily improving; the others are very hearty. The second edition of my books, issued by Scribner's Sons, is selling like hot-cakes. Four thousand sets have already been disposed of. I intend to publish a new volume of poems next spring.

Ever sincerely yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

December 17th, 1890.

With what diligence and enthusiasm Field threw himself into the work of preparing other books for publication may be gleaned from a letter to Mr. Gray, dated June 7th, 1891:

DEAR MR. GRAY: Your kind and interesting letter should have been answered before this but for many professional duties which have led me to neglect very many of the civilities of life. I have been preparing my translations of the Odes of Horace for publication in book form, and this has required time and care. Roswell has joined me in the task, and will contribute about forty per cent. of the translations. The odes we have treated number about fifty, and they are to be published in fine style by the Cambridge printers. The first edition will be an exceedingly small one; the scheme at present is to print fifty copies only, but a cheap popular edition will soon follow. The expensive publication is undertaken by my friend Francis Wilson, the actor, and he is to give me the plates from which to print the popular edition. It will interest, and we are hoping that it will please, you to know that we shall dedicate this volume to you as a slight, though none the less sincere, token of our regard and affection to you as the friend of our father and as a friend to us. Were our father living, it would please him, we think, to see his sons collaborating as versifiers of the Pagan lyrist whose songs he admired; it would please him, too, we are equally certain, to see us dedicating the result of our enthusiastic toil to so good a man and to so good a friend as you. The lyrics which we have treated are in the majority of cases of a sportive character, those appealing most directly to us and, we think, to the hearts of people of these times. Yet the more serious songs are those which please me best, for in them I find a certain touch which softens my feelings, giving me gentler thoughts and a broader charity. It is my intention to pursue the versification of Horace still further, but whether my plan shall be fulfilled is so very dubious that I set no store by it. I am wanting to print a volume of my miscellaneous poems next fall, dedicating them to Julia, but I have not yet begun to collect the material. On Thursday, the 28th ultimo, we laid Melvin's remains to rest finally in Graceland



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Cemetery. The lot I selected and bought is in a pretty, accessible spot, sheltered by two oak trees, just such spot as the boy himself, with his love for nature, would have chosen. The interment was very private, none being present but the family. Others were in the cemetery making preparations for the observance of Decoration Day. Of this number were many Germans, and these, attracted by the appearance of the pretentious German casket in which our boy's body lay, gathered around wonderingly. They were curious to know the story of that casket, for they had not seen one like it for many years. But the ceremony, however painful, was beautiful—beautiful in the caressing glory of the sunlight that was all around, in the fragrant, velvety verdure that composed the bed to which we consigned the ashes of the beloved one, in the gentle music of the birds that nested hard by and knew no fear, and in the love which we bore him and always shall. You must tell Mrs. Gray that we shall not abandon our purpose to induce her to visit us. We have every facility for keeping warm, although if this atrocious weather continues we shall have to lay in more coal. She would find us comfortably located, and the warmth of our welcome and the cordiality of our attentions would perhaps compensate for the absence of many of her home luxuries, which we cannot of course supply. You should come, too. While I am too wise to undertake to outwalk, outfish, or outrun you, I will venture to contract to keep you entertained diligently and discreetly during your sojourn with us. I have had two very interesting letters from one Mrs. Temperance Moon, of Farmington, Utah, who was nurse-girl in our family in 1852-3. She inquired after the Pomeroy girls and Miss Arabella Reed! She was one of a family of English Mormons who were stranded in St. Louis. My mother taught her to read. She saw my name in a newspaper, and wrote me. We are now as thick as three in a bed. Her husband is a Mormon farmer. They have ten children, and are otherwise prosperous. We all unite in affectionate regards to Mrs. Gray and yourself, and we wish you the choicest of God's blessings.

As ever, sincerely yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

420 Fullerton Ave., Chicago.

Writing on June 28th, Field enclosed the dedication of the "Echoes from the Sabine Farm" to Mr. Gray, asking him to make any alterations therein which his taste or judgment might suggest. "I have made this introductory poem rather playful," he wrote, "with but one touch of sentiment—the reference to your friend, our father." Field took more pride in the form in which the "Echoes" was got out than in the quality of its contents. He was gratified and flattered by the sumptuous manner in which it was being published by Mr. Wilson. "Of the edition of one hundred copies," he wrote to Mr. Gray, "thirty will be printed on Japanese vellum, each copy to contain an original

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drawing by Garrett and an autograph verse by Roswell and myself; the seventy others will be printed on white hand-made paper, and will have no unique feature. All the copies will be handsomely illustrated in vignette by Garrett; the sum of \$2,500 has been expended for illustrations alone. The book will be, I think, the handsomest of the kind ever printed in America." After the special edition had been printed, the plates of this book were most generously transferred to Field by Mr. Wilson.

The fact that Field was far from being a healthy man crops out in all his correspondence about this time. Writing to Mr. Gray under date of December 12th, 1891, I find him saying:

Just at present I am quite overwhelmed with work in the throes of a Christmas story for the Daily News, my only story this year, although I have had many applications for verse and prose. I have promised a story to the Christian Union next Christmas. I have delayed answering the letter you wrote to me some time ago, in the hope that I should see my way clear to accepting your invitation. Alas! I think it will be some time yet before I can visit St. Louis. I am not well yet, and I actually dread going from home whilst feeling ill. I improve in health, but the improvement is slow. I am trying to abandon the tobacco habit. I find it a hard, hard struggle.

Affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

By the time this letter was written, Field's Christmas stories commanded almost any price in reason he was inclined to ask for them—a condition far different from that which provoked his wrath and scorn in the winter of 1886. That year his Christmas contribution to the Morning News was "The Symbol and the Saint"—a story upon which he expended a good month's spare time. In the same issue were contributions from every member of the staff, excepting myself. In the course of time each story-writer received the munificent sum of \$15, the author of the "Symbol and the Saint" the same as the reporter, who turned in the thinnest, flimsiest sort of a sketch. It was a case of levelling all down to a common standard, which Field did not relish. He felt keenly the injustice of estimating the carefully finished product of his month's labor at the same rate as the hurried and rough journeyman work of a local hand, which had not cost more than an hour, all told, in its conception and composition. "I think," he wrote privately to Cowen, under date of January the 9th, 1887, "that things have come to a sweet pass when my work, over which I have toiled for more than three weeks, is to be estimated at the same rate as the local hands." He registered no complaint to headquarters at the time, but consoled himself with executing the following touching sketch and epitaph:

[Illustration: SKETCH AND EPITAPH. *From a drawing by Eugene Field.*



Here lies a mass of mouldering clay  
Who sought in youth a path to glory,  
But dies of age—without his pay  
For writing of a Christmas story



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1886.]

## CHAPTER VII

### IN THE SAINTS' AND SINNERS' CORNER

To those of us who were closely associated with Eugene Field personally or in his work, it was evident during the years from 1887 until after his return from Europe that a radical change was taking place in his methods of life and thought. His friend Cowen has ascribed this change to settling down "in the must and rust of bibliomania"; but I fancy that that settling down was more than half the result of the failing health which warned him that he must conserve his powers. He felt the shadows creeping up the mountain, and realized he had much to do while yet it was day.

In Eugene Field's case it would be difficult to distinguish the line where his bibliomania, that was an inherited infatuation for collecting, ended, and the carefully cultivated affectation of the craze for literary uses began. He was unquestionably a victim of the disease about which he wrote so roguishly and withal so charmingly. But though it was in his blood, it never blinded his sense of literary values or restrained his sallies at the expense of his demented fellows. He had too keen a sense of the ridiculous to go clean daft on the subject. He yielded to the fascinating pursuit of rare and curious editions, of old prints of celebrities, and of personal belongings of distinguished individuals; but how far these impulses were irresistible and how much he was mad only in craft, like Hamlet, it is impossible to say. The bibliomaniacs claim him for their scribe and poet, the defender of their faith, the high-priest of their craft. The scoffers find a grimace in everything he ever wrote upon the subject, from "The Bibliomaniac's Prayer," with its palpable reflection of Watts and its ill-concealed raillery, down to the gentle, yet none the less discernible, mockery of the "Love Affairs." It would be a bootless task to follow the gradual evolution from the frequent authorship of such quatrains as—

*In Cupid's artful toils I roll  
And thrice ten thousand pangs I feel,  
For Susie's eyes have ground my soul  
Beneath their iron heel.*

And:

*O thou, who at the age of three  
Grew faint and weak and ill,  
O'ertaken by the bitter pill  
Of cold adversity!*

which frolic through his column as late as June, 1888; to such bits as this:



*Oh, for a booke and a shady nooke  
Eyther in doore or out,  
With the greene leaves whispering overhead,  
Or the streete cryes all about;  
Where I maie read all at my ease  
Both of the newe and old,  
For a jollie goode booke whereon to looke  
Is better to me than golde!*



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But about September, 1888, his column began to reflect the effects of his mania for and about collecting. For a short time he showed little preference between both “the newe and old” books; but ere 1889 was three months gone, “newe” books, however, “jollie goode” were almost banished from his vocabulary and column. “The Bibliomaniac’s Prayer” (January, 1889) was one of the early symptoms of the transformation that was impending and the paraphrases from Horace which began to appear frequently in the same month indicated that he had entered upon another study that was to exert such a marked influence upon his later style and writings.

As has been indicated in an earlier chapter, Field began to frequent the southwest corner of McClurg’s book-store shortly after he came to Chicago. That section of this “emporium of literature” was presided over by George M. Millard, and contained as fine and, truth to tell, as expensive an assortment of rare and choice books as was to be found outside of the great collections of the land. Mr. Millard made annual or biennial pilgrimages to London in the interests of his house; and when he did not go, General McClurg, who was himself a book fancier of rare good taste and eke business judgment, devoted part of his European vacations to the bookshelves, book-shops, and binderies of Field’s “dear old London.” On the occasion of the former’s return from one of his book-buying excursions, with the spoils of Europe for the spoliation of Chicago’s book-maniacs, Field announced the fact in the following somewhat equivocal but wholly clever lines:

### *GEORGE MILLARD IS HOME!*

Come, ye maniacs, as of yore  
From your musty, dusty hidings,  
And in answer to the tidings  
Crowd the corner full once more,  
Lo, from distant England’s shore,  
Laden down with spoil galore  
Such as bibliopoles adore—  
Books and prints in endless store,  
Treasures singly or in set  
(Labelled “j.k.t.” and “net”),  
All who have the means to buy  
Things that glad the heart and eye.

Ye who seek some rare old tome—  
Maniacs shrewd or imbecilic,  
Urban, pastoral, or idyllic,  
Richly clad or dishabillic,  
Heed the summons bibliophilic—  
“George Millard is home!”\_



Field was not first attracted to Millard's department by its treasures of rare books, sacred and profane, but by its comprehensive stock of early English balladry and a complete line of Bohn's Library. In these he revelled until he had pretty thoroughly comprehended, as he would say, their contents. But during our almost daily visit to McClurg's he formed the acquaintance of a number of such chronic book collectors as Ben. T. Cable, George A. Armour, Charles J. Barnes, James W. Ellsworth, Rev. Frank W. Gunsaulus, the Rev. Frank M. Bristol, the Rev. M. Woolsey Stryker, and others, some with ample wealth to indulge their extravagant tastes, but the majority with lean purses

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coupled with bookish tastes beyond the resources of a Philadelphia mint. Out of these daily meetings and mousings among books and prints was evolved in Field's fancy what he dubbed the "Saints' and Sinners' Corner." The "Saints" may be easily identified by their titles, while the "Sinners" included all those who had neither title nor pretence to holiness, but were simply engaged in breaking the command against coveting their neighbors' possessions. There was no formal organization, no club, no stated meetings, no roll of members, and no gatherings such as after a time were constantly reported in the "Sharps and Flats" column. All the meetings and discussions in the Saints' and Sinners' Corner were held in Field's fertile brain, and only occasionally were the subjects of these meetings suggested by anything that happened at McClurg's.

The earliest reference I have found to this figment of Field's fancy is a casual paragraph in April, 1889, where he speaks of a number of bibliomaniacs having congregated in the Saints' and Sinners' Corner at McClurg's. But the phrase was current among us long before that. It was not until nearly two years had elapsed that Field gravely announced "a sale of pews in the Saints' and Sinners' corner at McClurg's immediately after the regular noontime service next Wednesday" (December 31st, 1890). It is perhaps worthy of a remark that General McClurg for a long time regarded Field's frequent jests and squibs at the expense of the frequenters of his old-book department with anything but an approving eye. He looked upon Field for many years as a ribald mocker of the conventionalities not only of literature but of life. "Culture's Garland" was an offence to his social instincts and literary tastes. Among all the men with whom Field came in frequent converse, the late lamented General Alexander C. McClurg was the last to succumb to the engaging tormentor. Field's lack of reverence for all earthly things, except womankind, was the barrier between these two.

Thus it came about that Field made the Saints' and Sinners' Corner at McClurg's famous throughout the book world against its owner's will, but not against his fortune. For more than six years he advertised its wares and bargains as no book-store had ever been advertised before. All the general and his lieutenant had to do was to provide the books collectors were after, and Field did the rest. He played upon the strings of bibliomaniac acquisitiveness as a skilled musician upon the violin; and whether the music they gave forth was grave or gay, it gave a mocking pleasure to the man who rejoiced that there was so much power in the "subtile" scratching of his pen.

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Among the earliest friends Field made at McClurg's was the late William F. Poole, for many years in charge of the Chicago Public Library, and subsequently of the Newberry Library. Dr. Poole came from Salem, Mass., and his son at one time was catcher for the Yale base-ball nine. Field took advantage of these facts, which appealed to his enjoyment of contradictions to print all manner of odd conceits about Professor Poole's relations to witches, base-ball, and libraries. The doctor could not make a move in public that it did not inspire Field to some new quidity involving his alleged belief in witches, his envy and admiration of his son's prowess at base-ball, and his real and extensive familiarity with libraries and literature. Some idea of the good-natured liberties Field took with the name of Dr. Poole is given in this paragraph of October 8th, 1889:

Dr. William F. Poole, the veteran bibliophile, is now in San Francisco attending the meeting of the National Librarians' Association. While the train bearing the excursionists was *en route* through Arizona, a stop of twenty minutes was made one evening for supper at a rude eating-house, and here Dr. Poole had an exciting experience with a tarantula. The venomous reptile attacked the kindly old gentleman with singular voracity, and but for the high-topped boots which Mr. Poole wore, serious injuries would have been inflicted upon our friend's person. Mr. Fred Hild, our Public Librarian, hearing Dr. Poole's cries for help, ran to the rescue, and with his cane and umbrella succeeded in keeping the tarantula at bay until the keeper of the restaurant fetched his gun and dispatched the malignant monster. The tarantula weighed six pounds. Dr. Poole took the skin to San Francisco and will have it tanned so he can utilize it for the binding of one of his favorite books.

I have introduced Dr. Poole into this narrative because he was really the dean of the interesting group of men who figured in Field's Saints' and Sinners' Corner. Both Field and the venerable doctor had a slight impediment in speech at the beginning of a sentence or in addressing anyone. When they met after such a paragraph as the above had been printed, Dr. Poole would blurt out in the most friendly way, "O-o-o-oh Field! w-w-where did you get that lie from?" To which Field would reply, "L-i-i-ie, d-doctor! W-w-why, F-f-fred Hild [Poole's successor in the public library] g-g-gave me that!" Then the doctor would ejaculate "Nonsense!" and the conversation would drift into some discussion about books, in which all impediments of speech disappeared.



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When McClurg's book-store was gutted by a fire some years ago, in which the precious contents of the Saints' and Sinners' Corner were ruined beyond restoration and the many associations that lingered around them went up in smoke or were drowned out by water, the newspapers were filled with all manner of stories about the Saints' and Sinners' Club that had held its meetings there. The Rev. Dr. Gunsaulus, one of the most widely known Saints, spoke of it as an association "without rules of order or times of meeting." "It consisted," said he, in a published interview, "of the most interesting group of liars ever assembled. For ten years that Saints' and Sinners' Corner was a place where congenial fellows met. We simply feasted our eyes on beautiful books or old manuscripts and chatted with each other after the usual fashion of book-lovers. The stories told were sometimes more amusing than profitable." He also told how Field, on one occasion, saved a book which he greatly coveted by writing on the fly-leaf:

*Swete friend, for Jesus's sake forbear  
To buy ye lake thou findest here,  
For that when I do get ye pelf,  
I meane to buy ye boke my selfe.*

Eugene Field.\_

But the clergymen, doctors and merchants, actors and newspaper-men who met by chance and the one common instinct of book-loving at McClurg's, albeit "the greatest aggregation of liars" one of them had ever "met up with," were a simple, ingenuous, and aimless lot compared to the group which Field assembled in his corner in the "Sharps and Flats" column. Only quotations from some of his reports of their imaginary meetings can do justice to these children of his brain. These I should preface with the explanation that Field always sought to preserve in his fiction some general and distinguishing characteristics of his Saints and Sinners, who were all real persons bearing their real names. His many inventions stopped at bestowing fictitious names upon either his Saints or his Sinners. I have selected "corners" which have not been published between boards. It is, perhaps, needless to say that I am always made to figure as a Philistine in these gatherings, as a penalty for my lack of sympathy with the whole theory of valuing books by their dates, editions, and bindings rather than their "eternal internals."

### SOUVENIRS FROM EGYPT

At a meeting of the bibliomaniacs in the Saints and Sinners Corner yesterday, Mr. E.G. Mason announced that he was about to start for Africa. It was his intention to leave Chicago on the morrow, and sail from New York on Saturday.

Mr. G.M. Millard: "Do you go in the interests of the Newberry Library, or as the agent of Mr. Charles F. Gunther?"



Mr. Mason: "I go for pleasure, but during my absence I shall cast around now and then for relics which I know my good friend, Mr. Poole, desires to possess. For example, I am informed that the Newberry Library is in need of a stock of papyrus, and if I can secure a mummy or two I shall certainly do so. Indeed, I hope to bring back a valise full of relics."

The Rev. Mr. Bristol: "Maybe the gentleman would like to borrow a trunk?"

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In the course of further parley it transpired that Mr. Mason contemplated extending his tour to Syria, and he answered in the affirmative Mr. Slason Thompson's inquiry whether he carried with him from his venerable friend from Evanston (Dr. Poole) a letter of introduction to the Pooles of Siloam and Bethesda. Mr. Mason only agreed to fill the commissions involving procurement of the following precious souvenirs:

An autograph letter of Rameses I, for the Rev. Mr. Bristol.

A quart of chestnuts from the groves of Lebanon, for Colonel J.S. Norton.

One of Cleopatra's needles, for Mrs. F.S. Peabody.

The original Pipe of Pan, for Mr. Cox's collection of Tobacco-ana.

A genuine hieroglyphical epitaph, for Dr. Charles Gilman Smith.

A live unicorn for Mr. W.F. Poole; also the favorite broom-stick of the witch of Endor.

A letter was read from Mr. Francis Wilson, the comedian, announcing that the iniquitous operations of the McKinley act had practically paralyzed the trade in Napoleona. A similar condition obtained in the autograph market, the native mills engaged in manufacturing autographs having doubled their prices since the enforcement of the tariff discriminating against autographs made in foreign factories. A committee, consisting of Messrs. R.M. Dornan, F.H. Head, and R.M. Whipple, was authorized to investigate the alarming rumor that the Rev. Dr. Gunsaulus had publicly offered to donate to one Roberts a certain sum of money that clearly ought to be expended for first editions and Cromwelliana.

Mr. Harry L. Hamlin announced that he had a daughter. (Applause.)

Mr. W.H. Wells: "Give title and date, please."

Mr. Hamlin: "She is entitled Dorothy (first edition), Chicago, 1890, 16mo, handsome frontispiece and beautiful type; I have had her handsomely bound, and I regard her as a priceless specimen of Americana." (Applause.) Various suggestions were offered as to the character of the gift which the Saints and Sinners should formally present to this first babe that had accrued to a member of the organization. Finally, it was determined to present a large silver spoon in behalf of the Saints and Sinners collectively, and Dr. Poole was requested to draft a presentation address.

Mr. Hamlin feelingly thanked his friends; he should guard the token of their friendship jealously and affectionately.

The Rev. Mr. Bristol: "It won't be safe unless you keep it in a trunk—better get a trunk, brother, ere it be too late—better get a trunk!"

The meeting adjourned after singing the beautiful hymn, collected, adapted, and arranged by the Rev. Dr. Stryker, beginning:

*"Though some, benight in sin, delight  
To glut their vandal cravings,  
These hands of mine shall not incline  
To tear out old engravings."*



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January 22d, 1891.\_

### PROPOSED CURE FOR BIBLIOMANIA

A smile of exceeding satisfaction illuminated General McClurg's features as he walked into the corner yesterday noon and found that historic spot crowded with Saints and Sinners. Said he to Mr. Millard: "George, you are a famous angler!"

Mr. Millard assumed a self-deprecatory expression. "I make no pretensions at all," answered he, modestly. "My only claim is that I am not upon earth for my health."

"I see our handsome friend, Guy Magee, here to-day," observed General McClurg. "I thought he had opened out a book-shop of his own."

"So he has," replied Mr. Millard, "at 24 North Clark Street, and a mighty good book-shop it is, too. I visited the place last week, and was surprised to see a number of beautiful books in stock."

"Let's see," said General McClurg, "24 North Clark Street is the other side of the bridge, isn't it?"

"Yes, just the other side—five minutes' walk from the Court House. Magee proposed to cater to the higher class of purchasers only, and with this end in view he has selected a choice line of books; in splendid bindings and in illustrated books he has a particularly large stock. Meanwhile he remains an active member of the noble fraternity that has made this corner famous. On Thanksgiving day we are going in a body to look at his fine things, and to hold what our Saints call a praise-service in the snug, warm, cozy shop."

"That being the case, I will go, too," said General McClurg.

The Saints and Sinners were full of the Christmas spirit yesterday, and they were telling one another what they meant to buy for Christmas gifts. Dr. W.F. Poole said he had designs upon a set of Grose's "Antiquities," bound in turkey-red morocco. In answer to Mr. F.M. Larned's inquiry as to whom he intended to give this splendid present, Dr. Poole said: "To myself, of course! Christmas comes but once a year, and at that time of all times are we justified in gratifying the lusts of the spirit. (Applause.) Nobody can scold us if we choose to be good to ourselves at Christmas." "I think we all have reason to felicitate Brother Poole," said Mr. Charles J. Barnes. "Happening to visit the nord seit the other day, I saw that work was progressing on the Newberry Library. I should like to know when the corner-stone of that splendid edifice is to be laid." "The date has not yet been fixed," answered Dr. Poole, "but when it is laid it will be with the most elaborate

public ceremonies. The corner-stone will be hollowed out, and into this cavity will be placed a number of priceless and curious relics.”

Mr. Millard: “The Saints and Sinners should be represented at those ceremonies and in that hollow corner-stone.”



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Mr. Poole: "Of course. As for myself, I shall contribute the stuffed tarantula which I brought back with me from Arizona."

Dr. F.M. Bristol: "Another interesting relic that should go into that corner-stone is the stump of the cigar which the Rev. Dr. Gunsaulus smoked at camp-meeting."

Dr. Gunsaulus: "I will cheerfully contribute that relic if upon his part Brother Bristol will contribute his portrait of Eliphalet W. Blatchford disguised as Falstaff." (Cheers.)

The Rev. Dr. Stryker: "I have a completed uncut set of 'Monk and Knight,' which I will be happy to devote to the same cause."

Dr. Gunsaulus: "The contributions will be hardly complete without a box of those matches with which Brother Stryker wanted to kindle a bonfire which was to consume the body of the heretical Briggs. But speaking of that novel of mine ('Monk and Knight') reminds me that I wrote a poem on the railway the other day, and I will read it now if there be no objection." (Cries of 'Read it,' 'Go ahead.') "The poem, humble as it is, was suggested by seeing a fellow-passenger fall asleep over his volume of Bion and Moschus. This is the way it goes:

*Wake, wake him not; the book lies in his hands—  
Bion and Moschus smile within his sleep;  
Tired of our world, he lives in other lands—  
Wanders in Greece, where fauns and satyrs leap.*

Dull, even sweet, the rumble of the train—  
'Tis Circe singing near her golden loom;  
No garish lamps afflicted his charmed brain—  
Demeter's poppies brighten o'er her tomb.

But half-awake he looks on starlit trees—  
Sees but the huntress in her eager chase;  
Wake, wake him not upon the fragrant breeze,  
Let horn and hound announce her rapid pace.

Blithe shepherds pipe within the Dorian vales,  
Hellenic airs blow through their sun-bright hair,  
To him alone the wooers whisper tales—  
Bloomed kind Calypso's islet ne'er so fair.

Unbanished gods roam o'er the thymy hills,  
Calm shadows slumber on the purple grapes,



Hid are the dryads near the star-gemmed rills,  
Far through the moonlight wander love-lorn shapes.

Gray olives shade the dancing-naiads' smile,  
Flutes loose their raptures in the murmuring stream,  
These, these are visions modern cares beguil—  
Echoes of the old Greek's dream. \_”

Mr. Stryker: “That is good poetry, Brother Gunsaulus. If you would tone it down a little, and contrive to work in a touch of piety here and there, I would be glad to print it in my next volume of hymns.”



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Mr. H.B. Smith: "I did not suppose that our reverend Brother Gunsaulus ever attempted poetry. His verses have that grace and lilt that are the prime essentials to successful comic-opera libretto writing. When I want a collaborateur, I shall know whom to apply to." Mr. Bristol: "The brother's poem indicates the influence of the Homer school. Can it be possible that our Plymouth Church friend has fallen into the snare spread for him by the designing members of the South Side Hellenic organization?"

Dr. Gunsaulus: "Since Brother Bristol seems so anxious to know, I will admit that I have recently joined the Armour Commandery of the South Side Sons of Homer."

Mr. Slason Thompson, heading off the discussion threatened by Mr. Gunsaulus's declaration, arose and informed the company that he was prepared to confer an inestimable boon upon his brother Saints and brother Sinners. "You are all," said he, "victims to an exacting and fierce mania—a madness that is unremitting in the despotism directing every thought and practice in your waking hours, and filling your brains with gilded fancies during your nocturnal periods of repose. (Applause.) Many of you are so advanced in this mania that the mania itself has become seemingly your very existence—(cheers)—and the feet of others are fast taking hold upon that path which leads down into the hopeless depths of this insanity. (Prolonged applause.) Hitherto bibliomania has been regarded as incurable; humanity has looked upon it as the one malady whose tortures neither salve, elixir, plaster, poultice, nor pill, can ever alleviate; it has been pronounced immedicable, immitigable, and irremediable." "For a long time," continued Mr. Thompson. "I have searched for an antidote against this subtle and terrific poison of bibliomania. At last, heaven be praised! I have found the cure! (Great sensation.) Yes, a certain remedy for this madness is had in Keeley's bichloride of gold bibliomania bolus, a packet of which I now hold in my hand! Through the purging and regenerating influences of this magic antidote, it is possible for every one of you to shake off the evil with which you are cursed, and to restore that manhood which you have lost in your insane pursuit of wretched book fancies. The treatment requires only three weeks' time. You take one of these boluses just before each meal and one before going to bed. In about three days you become aware that your olfactories are losing that keenness of function which has enabled you to nose out old books and to determine the age thereof merely by sniffing at the binding. In a week distaste for book-hunting is exhibited, and this increases until at the end of a fortnight you are ready to burn every volume you can lay hands on. No man can take this remedy for three weeks without being wholly and permanently cured of bibliomania. I have also another gold preparation warranted to



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cure the mania for old prints, old china, old silver, and old furniture.”Mr. Thompson had no sooner ended his remarks when a score of Saints and Sinners sprang up to protest against this ribald quackery. The utmost confusion prevailed for several moments. Finally the venerable Dr. Poole was accorded the floor. “Far be it from me,” said he, solemnly, “to lend my approval to any enterprise that contemplates bibliomania as a disease instead of a crime. (Applause.) I live in Evanston, the home of that saintly woman Miss Willard, and under her teachings I have become convinced that bibliomania is a sin which must be eradicated by piety and not by pills. Rather than be cured by heretical means, I prefer not to be cured at all.” (Great cheering.)Remarks in a similar vein were made by Messrs. Ballantyne, Larned, Hamlin, Smith, Barnes, Cole, Magee, Taylor, and Carpenter. Dr. Gunsaulus seemed rather inclined to try the cure, but he doubted whether he could stick to it for three weeks. Finally, a compromise was effected by the adoption of the following resolutions submitted by the Rev. Dr. Bristol: “Resolved, that we, Saints and Sinners, individually and collectively, defer, postpone, suspend, and delay all experiment and essay with the bichloride bibliomania bolus until after the approaching holiday season, and furthermore,

“Resolved, that at the expiration of this specified interdicted season we will see about it.”

Suspecting treachery, Dr. Gunsaulus secured the adoption of another resolution forbidding any member of the organization to secure or apply for an option on the said boluses before formal action with reference to the vaunted cure had been taken by the Saints and Sinners in regular meeting.

November, 1891.

However, Field did not confine all his attentions to what he called the “book-bandits” to his reports on the proceedings in the Saints’ and Sinners’ Corner. Scattered throughout his writings from 1887 onward were paragraphs, ballads, and jests, praising, berating, and “joshing” the maniac crew who held that “binding’s the surest test,” and who bought books, as some would-be connoisseurs do wine, by the label. With all his professions of sympathy with the maniacs, he never missed an opportunity to make merry over what he regarded as their rivalries and disappointments, and he never wearied of egging them on to imitate his own besetting disposition to buy the curio you covet and “settle when you can,” as indicated in the beautiful hymn that concludes the following paragraph:



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Francis Wilson, the comedian, is the possessor of the chair which Sir Walter Scott used in his library at Abbotsford. A beautiful bit of furniture it is, and well worth, aside from all sentimental consideration, the large price paid by the enterprising and discriminating curio. As we understand it, Bouton, the New York dealer, had this chair on exhibition for several months. Mr. Wilson happened along one day, having just returned from a professional tour in the West. Mr. William Winter, dramatic critic of the Tribune, was looking at the chair; he had been after it for some time, but had been waiting for the price to abate somewhat.

“The Players’ Club should have that chair,” said he to Bouton, “and if you’ll give better terms I’ll get a number of the members to chip in together and buy it.”

To this appeal Bouton sturdily remained deaf. After Mr. Winter had left the place, Wilson said to Bouton, “Send the chair up to my house; here is a check for the money.”

There are rumors to the effect that when Mr. Winter heard of this transaction he rent his garments and gnashed his teeth, and wildly implored somebody to hang a millstone about his neck and cast him into outer darkness. Horace Greeley used to say that the best way to resume was to resume; so, in the science of collecting, it behooves the collector never to put off till to-morrow what he can pick up to-day. This theory has been most succinctly and beautifully set forth in one of the hymns recently compiled by the Archbishop of the North Side (page 217):

*How foolish of a man to wait  
When once his chance is nigh:  
To-morrow it may be too late—  
Some other man may buy.*

Nay, brother, comprehend the boon  
That’s offered in a trice,  
Or else some other all too soon  
Will pay the needful price.

Should some fair book engage your eye,  
Or print invite your glance,  
Oh, trifle not with faith, but buy  
While yet you have the chance!  
Else, glad to do thee grievous wrong,  
Some wolf in human guise—  
Some bibliophil shall snoop along  
And nip that lovely prize!



No gem of purest ray serene  
    Gleams in the depthless sea,  
There is no flower that blooms unseen  
    Upon the distant lea,  
But the same snooping child of sin,  
    With fad or mania curst,  
Will find it out and take it in  
    Unless you get there first.

Though undue haste may be a crime,  
    Procrastination's worse;  
Now—now is the accepted time  
    To eviscerate your purse!  
So buy what finds you find to-day—  
    That is the safest plan;  
And if you find you cannot pay,  
    Why, settle when you can.\_



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As I have said, there was no such organization as a Saints' and Sinners' Club, no roll of membership, and no such meetings as were exploited with such engaging verity by Field. The only formal gathering of any considerable number of the habitués of the Saints' and Sinners' Corner that ever took place was never reported by him. It occurred on New Year's Eve, 1890, and everything appertaining to it, down to the fragrant whiskey punch, was concocted by Field, who explained that his poverty, not his will, consented to the substitution of the wine of America for that of France in the huge iron-stone bowl that answered all the demands of the occasion. About a week before the date all the members whose names had been used without their consent in the Corner in "Sharps and Flats" received a card, on which was written:

Saints' and Sinners' Corner,

December 31, 1890.

Be there 10.30 P.M. Sharp.

The Sinners turned out in full force. The Saints, I suppose, had watch-night services of their own, for they were conspicuous by their absence. Lawyers, doctors, actors, newspaper men, and book-lovers of divers callings and degrees of iniquity were on hand at half-past ten o'clock, or continued to drop in toward midnight. But if there was a doctor of divinity in that hilarious gathering, I fail to recall his presence. If one was present, he failed to exercise a restraining influence on the gaiety of the Sinners. And yet without such presence there was a subtle influence pervading the strange scene, that forbade any approach to boisterousness. Out in the main body of the deserted store all was dark and still. The curtains of the show-windows were drawn down, shutting out the intrusive light of the street-lamps. Field's guests—for we all, even George Millard, acknowledged him as host and high priest of the evening—were assembled in the corner devoted to old books and prints. The congregation, as he styled the meeting, was seated on such chairs, stools, and boxes as the place could afford. The darkness was made visible by a few sickly gas-jets and some half dozen candles in appropriate black glass candlesticks that looked suspiciously like bottles. Field was as busy as a shuttle in a sewing-machine. He announced that Elder Melville E. Stone would "preside over the meetin' and line out the hymns," which Mr. Stone, though no singer, proceeded to do, calling on the mendacious Sinners for brief confessions of their manifold transgressions during the dying year. The tide of experiences was at its height when, on the first stroke of midnight, every light was doused. So suddenly and unexpectedly did darkness swallow us from each other's ken that there was a gasp, and then for a moment a hushed silence. Before this was broken by any other sound out from the impenetrable gloom came a deep sepulchral voice, chanting:

*"From Canaan's beatific coast  
I've come to visit thee,*

*For I am Frognall Dibdin's ghost,"  
Says Dibdin's ghost to me.*



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I bade him welcome, and we twain  
Discussed with buoyant hearts  
The various things that appertain  
To bibliomaniac arts.  
“Since you are fresh from t’other side,  
Pray, tell me of that host  
That treasured books before they died,”  
Says I to Dibdin’s ghost.

“They’ve entered into perfect rest:  
For in the life they’ve won,  
There are no auctions to molest,  
No creditors to dun.

“Their heavenly rapture has no bounds  
Beside that jasper sea;  
It is a joy unknown to Lowndes,”  
Says Dibdin’s ghost to me.\_

You could have heard the proverbial pin drop as Field’s organ-like voice, which all quickly recognized, rolled out the now familiar lines of “Dibdin’s Ghost,” then heard for the first time by everyone in that historic Corner. No point was missed in that weird recitation. I shall never forget the graveyard unction with which he propounded the question and answer of the poem:

*“But what of those who scold at us  
When we would read in bed?  
Or, wanting victuals, make a fuss  
If we buy books instead?  
And what of those who’ve dusted not  
Our motley pride and boast,—  
Shall they profane that sacred spot?”  
Says I to Dibdin’s ghost.*

“Oh, no! they tread that other path  
Which leads where torments roll,  
And worms—yes, bookworms—vent their wrath  
Upon the guilty soul,  
Untouched of bibliomaniac grace,  
That saveth such as we,  
They wallow in that dreadful place,”  
Says Dibdin’s ghost to me.\_



Into these lines Field managed to throw all the exulting fanaticism of the hopeless bibliomaniac without suppressing one jot of the chuckle of the profane scoffer. And then the gas and candles were relit and the punch and sandwiches and apple pie and cheese were served, and with song and story we passed such a night as sinners mark with red letters for saints to envy. If the reader should ever come across Paul du Chaillu, who contributed to the varied pleasures of the occasion, let him inquire of the veracious Paul whether, in all his travels and experiences, he ever knew one man so capable of entertaining a host of wits as Eugene Field proved himself on the eve of New Year, 1891.

## CHAPTER VIII

### POLITICAL RELATIONS

It is due to the numberless friends and acquaintances Field made among the politicians of three states particularly and of the nation generally that this study of his life should take some account of his political writings, if not of his political principles. Those not familiar with political events during the past twenty years may skip this chapter, as it pleases them.

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Field was a Republican by inheritance, and a Missouri Republican at that, which means a Republican who may die but never compromises. The Vermont views and prejudices which he inherited from his father were not weakened, we may be sure, under the tutelage of the women folks at Amherst, or of Dr. Tufts, at Monson. But rock-ribbed as he was in his adherence to the Republican party, he never took the trouble to make a study of its principles, nor did he care to discuss any of the political issues of his day. It was enough that the Democratic party embodied in his mind his twin aversions, slavery and rebellion, against the Union. He was a thorough-going believer in the doctrine, "To the victors belong the spoils," and as he credited the Republican party with the preservation of the Union, he saw no reason why its adherents should not use or abuse its government without let or hindrance from men who had sought to destroy it. This view he has set forth in a scornful bit of verse, which I copy from his rough draft:

### *REFORM*

What means this pewter teapot storm,  
This incoherent yell—  
This boisterous blubber for "reform"  
When everything goes well?  
Why should the good old party cease  
To rule our prosperous land?  
Is not our country blessed with peace  
And wealth on every hand?

The Democrats desired reform  
Two dozen years ago,  
But with our life-blood, red and warm,  
We gave the answer "No."  
We see the same old foe to-day  
We saw in Sixty-one—  
"Deeds of reform," they whining say,  
Must for our land be done!

"Deeds of reform?" And these the men  
Who, in the warful years,  
Starved soldiers in a prison-pen,  
And mocked their dying tears!  
By these our mother's heart was broke—  
By these our father fell—  
These bold "reformers" once awoke  
Our land with rebel yell!

These quondam rebels come to-day  
In penitential form,



And hypocritically say  
The country needs “reform!”  
Out on reformers such as these!  
By Freedom’s sacred pow’rs  
We’ll run the country as we please—  
We saved it, and it’s ours!\_

From this as the rock of all his political prejudices, Field was immovable. But happily, for the pleasure of his friends and the entertainment of his readers, he took politics no more seriously than he did many of the other responsibilities of life. As early as 1873, in a letter already published, he announced that he had “given over all hope of rescuing my torn and bleeding country from Grant and his minions,” and from that time on he devoted his study of politics to the development of satirical and humorous paragraphs at the expense of the two classes of prominent and practical politicians.

[Illustration: OFF TO SPRINGFIELD. *From a drawing by Eugene Field.*]

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For more than a decade, and until he became enamoured of books and bibliomania, Field was the most widely quoted political paragrapher in America. It was not in vain that he mingled with the “statesmen” frequenting the capitals of Missouri, Colorado, and Illinois, attended state and national conventions, and spent many weeks in the lobby of the capitol, and of the lobbies of the hotels in Washington. It was the comprehension of men, and not of measures, he was after, and he got what he sought. In St. Louis, Kansas City, and Denver his sketches, notes, and Primer stories attracted more attention and caused more talk among politicians than all the serious reports and discussions of the issues of the times. He had the gift of putting distorted statements in the form of innocent facts so artfully developed that his victims had difficulty in disputing the often compromising inferences of his paragraphs.

Many a time and oft have I known every one of the paragraphs in Field’s column in the News, sometimes numbering as high as sixty, to relate to something of a political nature, and most of them containing a personal pin-prick. With the assistance of the printer, let me reconstruct here in the type and narrow measure of the Morning News a column of specimens of Field’s political paragraphs. The reader must allow for the lapse of time. Only those referring to persons or matters of national note are, for obvious reasons, preserved. The first one has the peculiar interest of being the initial paragraph in “Sharps and Flats.” In point of time they ran all the way from 1883 to 1895, thus covering the entire period of Field’s work on the News and Record:

### SHARPS AND FLATS

Senator Dawes has been out among the Sioux Indians too. They call him Ne-Ha-Wo-Ne-To—which, according to our office dictionary, is the Indian for Go-To-Sleep-Standing-Up.

Sol Smith Russell, the comedian, is reported to have contributed \$5,000 to the National Prohibition campaign fund.

The suspicion is still rife that when the Democratic party wakes up on Christmas morning it will find S.J. Tilden in its stocking.

[Illustration: Drawing of a flower sitting on a barrel.]

See the Flower. It is sitting on its Barrel derisively Mocking the Eager hands that strive to Pluck it. Oh, beautiful but cruel Flower.

If the mild weather continues Secretary Chandler will be able to get the American Navy out of its winter quarters and on to roller skates by the first of April.



Mr. Charles A. Dana has appeared as the third witch in "Macbeth." He says Roosevelt cannot be Mayor, but may go to Congress, to the Senate, or be elected President.

It is believed that a horizontal reduction in the Democratic statesmen of the time would leave nothing of the Hon. William R. Morrison but a pair of spindle legs, three bunions, and seven corns.



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Russia, always a menace to civilization, is prepared to aid China in her resistance against modern progress, and will not hesitate to fly to the succor of the unspeakable Turk when the opportune moment comes. We do not entirely believe the story that El Mahdi is dead. On the contrary, we confidently expect that this enterprising false prophet will turn up in a reconstructed condition at Washington after the 4th of next March, howling for a post-office. BLUE CUT, TENN., May 2, 1885.—The second section of the train bearing the Illinois legislature to New Orleans was stopped near this station by bandits last night. After relieving the bandits of their watches and money, the excursionists proceeded on their journey with increased enthusiasm. Hamlin Garland has finally crawled out of the populist party and has reappeared in Chicago fiercer than ever for the predominance of realism in literature and art. He regrets to find that during his absence Franklin H. Head has relapsed into romanticism and that the verist's fences generally in these parts are in bad condition. The national Carl Schurz committee will meet in New York on the 1st of April to fix a date and place for the national Carl Schurz convention. As Chicago will make no attempt to secure this convention, we do not mind telling St. Louis, Philadelphia and Cincinnati that the biggest inducement which can be held out to the Carl Schurz party is a diet of oatmeal and skim milk and piano—rent free. "You are looking tough, O Diogenes," quoth Socrates. "Now, by the dog, what have you been doing?" "I have been searching for an honest man in the Chicago City Council," replied the grim philosopher mournfully, "With what result?" inquired the other. "Well, you see," said Diogenes sarcastically, "my pockets are cleaned out and my lantern is gone! I praise Zeus that they left me my girdle!" Major McKinley is being highly commended because he would not allow the Ohio delegation to betray John Sherman in the Republican convention. Other men from other States were perhaps just as loyal, but it is so seldom that an Ohio politician does the decent thing that when one honorable Ohio politician is found he excites quite as much surprise and admiration as a double-headed calf or any other natural curiosity would. Oh, what a beautiful Hill. How it looms up in the Misty Horizon. See the Indians on the hill. They are Tammany braves. The Hill belongs to the Indians. Why are the Indians on the Hill? They are hunting for the flower which they Fondly hope Blooms on the Hill. Not this year—some other Year, but not this year. The Flower is Roosting high. It has resigned. Are the Indians resigned? They are not as Resigned as they Would be if they could Find the Flower. Alas that there should be More Sorrows than Flowers in this World.

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The Hon. Thomas B. Reed, of Maine, is to be the leader of the Republican minority in Congress this winter. He is a smart, fat, brilliant, lazy man, with a Shakespearian head and face and clean-cut record. He is a great improvement on the Hon. J. Warren Keifer, of Ohio, who was the Republican leader (so-called) last winter. It would be hard to imagine a more imbecile leader than Keifer was, and it would be hard to find an abler leader than Reed will be, provided his natural physical indolence does not get the better of his splendid intellectual vigor. Marcus A. Hanna has just been elected a delegate to the National Republican Convention in the Tenth Ohio district. He has also just been appointed to a government position by President Cleveland. The National Republican Convention ought to determine, immediately upon assembling, whether its platform and its nominations shall be dictated, even remotely, by a beneficiary of a Democratic administration. Hanna was in 1884 a loudmouthed Blaine follower. He has a happy faculty of always lighting on his feet—after the fashion of the singed cat.

President Cleveland—Rose, are you sure the window-screens are in repair?

Miss Cleveland—Quite sure.

President Cleveland—And are you using that flypaper according to directions?

Miss Cleveland—Yes.

President Cleveland—And you sprinkle the furniture with insect powder every day?

Miss Cleveland—Certainly; why do you ask? Are the mosquitoes troubling you?

President Cleveland—No, not the mosquitoes; but that Second District Congressman from Illinois seems to be just as thick as ever.

We've come from Indiany, five hundred miles or more,  
Supposin' we wuz goin' to git the nominashin shore;  
For Colonel New assured us (in that noospaper o' his)  
That we cud hev the airth, if we'd only tend to biz.  
But here we've been slavin' more like hosees than like men  
To diskiver that the people do not hanker after Ben;  
It is for Jeemes G. Blaine an' not for Harrison they shout  
And the gobble-uns 'el git us  
Ef we  
Don't



Watch  
Out!

“As for me, Daniel, I declined the tickets on the ground that, as President of this great nation, it was beneath my dignity to accept free passes to a show.” “You did quite right, Grover; I, too, declined the passes in my capacity as a cabinet officer.” “Good, good!” “But I accepted them in my capacity as editor of the Albany Argus. I owe it to my profession, Grover, not to surrender any of its rights to a strained sense of the dignity of an employment which is only temporary.” “Ah, yes; I see.” “There must be a dividing line between the Honorable Daniel Manning, cabinet minister, and plain Dan Manning, editor. I draw that line at free show-tickets.” Another instance of the liberality of



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the Hon. William H. English, of Indiana, has just come to light. It seems that that gentleman's venerable father, Deacon Elisha English, lives in Scott County, Ind., where he is a highly esteemed citizen and a bright light in the Methodist church. Not long ago the church people concluded they ought to have some improvements upon their modest temple of worship, and consequently a subscription paper was circulating among the members of the congregation. Deacon English readily signified his willingness to do his share toward the proposed improvements, and he led off the subscription list with the line:

Elisha English \$50.00

The congregation were so much pleased with this that they determined to apply to William H. English, the son, for a donation, and they believed that the liberality of the father would serve as an inducement to the son to display at least a moderate generosity. Accordingly the subscription list was forwarded to Indianapolis, and a prominent Methodist of that city took it around to Mr. English's office. The ex-vice-president hemmed and hawed and fumbled the paper over for quite a while, and finally, with a profound sigh, sat down at his desk and scribbled a few words on the subscription sheet. The triumphant smile on the visiting churchman's face relaxed into an expression of combined amazement and dismay when, upon regaining the paper, he learned that Mr. English had reconstructed the first line, so that it read:

Elisha English and Son \$50.00

This column will serve two purposes—to illustrate the truly American spirit of levity in which Eugene Field regarded politics and politicians, and also the extent and general character of his daily "wood sawing" for nearly twelve years. Although these selections cover a period of many years, they fairly represent the character of his political paragraphs on any one day except in the matter of subjects. These, of course, varied from day to day, from the President of the United States down to the Chicago bridge-tender. What delighted him most was some matter-of-fact announcement such as that which credited Herman H. Kohlsaas, then editor of the Chicago Inter-Ocean and a delegate to the Republican National Convention of 1892, with saying that he had no particular choice for Vice-President, but he favored the nomination of some colored Republican as a fitting recognition of the loyalty of the colored voters to the memory and party of Lincoln. The cunningly foreseen consequence was that what Mr. Kohlsaas gained in popularity with the colored brethren he lost in the estimation of those serious-minded souls who swallowed the hoax. Among the latter were many fire-eating editors in the South who seized upon Field's self-evident absurdity to denounce Mr. Kohlsaas as a violent demagogue who sought to curry favor with black Republicans at the expense of the South. It was also accepted as fairly representing the Northern disposition to

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flout and trample on the most sensitive sensibilities of the South. In the meantime Mr. Kohlsaat's office was besieged by the friends of colored aspirants to the vice-presidency, and Field chuckled in his chair and took every opportunity to add fuel to his confrere's embarrassment and to the flame of Southern indignation. All the while he would meet Mr. Kohlsaat, who was one of his intimate friends, and express to him astonishment that he should feel any annoyance over such a palpable, harmless pleasantry.

Although there is one bit of verse in the foregoing sample column of Field's political paragraphs, it does scant justice to his most effective weapon. His political jingles were the delight or vexation of partisans as they happened to ridicule or scarify this side or that. He was on terms of personal friendship with General John A. Logan, whose admiration for General Grant he shared to the fullest degree. But this never restrained Field from taking all sorts of waggish liberties with General Logan's well-known fondness for mixed metaphors and other perversions of the Queen's English. The general, on one occasion, in a burst of eloquence, had spoken of "the day when the bloody hand of rebellion stalked through the land"; and for a year thereafter that "bloody hand" "stalked" through Field's column. He enjoyed attributing to General Logan all sorts of literary undertakings. Among others, was the writing of a play, to which reference is made in the following paragraph:

Senator John A. Logan's play, "The Spy," is in great demand, a number of theatrical speculators having entered the lists for it, the managers for the Madison Square and Union Square theatres being specially eager to get hold of it. A gentleman who is in the author's confidence assures us he has read the play, and can testify to its high dramatic merits. "It will have to be rewritten," said he, "for Logan has thrown it together with characteristic looseness; but it is full of lively dialogue and exciting situations. In the hands of a thorough playwright it would become a splendid melodrama." The play treats upon certain incidents of the late Civil War, and the romantic experiences of a certain Major Algernon Bellville, U.S.A., who is beloved by Maud Glynne, daughter of a Confederate general. The plot turns upon the young lady's unsuccessful effort to convey intelligence of a proposed sortie to her lover in the Union ranks. She is slain while masking in male attire by Reginald De Courcey, a rejected lover, who is serving as her father's aide-de-camp. This melancholy tragedy is enacted at a spot appointed by the lovers as a rendezvous. Major Bellville rushes in to find his fair idol a corpse. He is wild with grief. The melodrama concludes thus:

De Bell—Aha! Who done this deed?

Lieutenant Smythe—Yonder Reginald De Courcey done it, for I seen him when he done it.



Reginald—'Sdeath! 'Tis a lie upon my honor. I didn't do no such thing.



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De Bell—Thou must die. (Draws his sword.) Prepare to meet thy Maker. (Stabs him.)

Reginald (falling)—I see angels. (Dies.)

De Bell—Now, leave me, good Smythe; I fain would rest. (Exit Smythe.) O Maud, Maud, my spotless pearl, what craven hand has snatched thee from our midst? But I will follow thee. Aha, what have we here? A phial of poison secreted in the stump of this gnarled oak! I thank thee, auspicious heaven, for this sweet boon! (Drinks poison.) Farewell, my native land, I die for thee. (Falls and writhes.) Oh, horror! what if the poison be drugged—no, no—it must not be—I must die—O Maud—O flag—O my sweet country! I reel, I cannot see—my heart is bursting—Oh! (Dies.) (Enter troops.) General Glynne—Aha! My daughter! And Bellville, too! Both dead! How sad—how mortifying. Convey them to yonder cemetery, and bury them side by side under the weeping-willow. They were separated in life—in death let them be united. (Slow curtain.)

During the preliminary campaign of 1884 Field had no end of fun with what he called the “Logan Lyrics,” after this manner:

### *LOGAN'S LAMENT*

We never speak as we pass by—  
Me to Jim Blaine nor him to I;  
'Twi'x't us there floats a cloud of gloom  
Since I have found he's got a boom.

We never speak as we pass by,  
We simply nod and drop our eye;  
Yet I can tell by his strange look  
The reason why he writ that book.

We never speak as we pass by;  
No more we're bound by friendly tie.  
The cause of this is very plain—  
He's not for me; he's for Jim Blaine.\_

As a sequel to the preceding verse, the following touching reminiscence may be read with interest by those familiar with what befell in the fall of 1884:

### *BAR HARBOR: A REMINISCENCE*

Upon the sandy, rock-ribb'd shore  
One year ago sat you and I,  
And heard the sullen breakers roar,  
And saw the stately ships go by;



And wanton ocean breezes fanned  
Your cheeks into a ruddy glow,  
And I—I pressed your fevered hand—  
One year ago.

II

The ocean rose, the mountains fell—  
And those fair castles we had reared  
Were blighted by the breath of hell,  
And every prospect disappeared;  
Revenge incarnate overthrew  
And wrapped in eternal woe  
The mutual, pleasing hopes we knew  
One year ago!

III

I sit to-night in sorrow, and  
I watch the stately ships go by—  
The hand I hold is not your hand—  
Alas! 'tis but a ten-spot high!  
This is the hardest deal of all—  
Oh! why should fate pursue me so,  
To mind me of that cruel fall—  
One year ago!\_





Oh, tell me not of the budding bay,  
Nor the yew by the new-made grave,  
And waft me not in spirit away,  
Where the sorrowing willows wave;  
Let the shag-bark walnut blend its shade  
With the elm on the verdant lea—  
But let us hie to the distant glade,  
Where blossoms the Lambert tree.

The maple reeks with a toothsome sap  
That flavors the brown buckwheat,  
And the oak drops down into earth's green lap,  
Her fruit for the swine to eat;  
But the Lambert tree has a grander scope  
In its home on the distant wold,  
For the sap of the Lambert tree is soap,  
And its beautiful fruit is gold.

So sing no song of the futile fir—  
No song of the tranquil teak,  
Nor the chestnut tree, with its bristling burr,  
Or the paw-paw of Posey creek;  
But fill my soul with a heavenly calm,  
And bring sweet dreams to me  
By singing a psalm of the itching palm  
And the blossoming Lambert tree.\_

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Public sentiment within the Democratic party prevented the consummation of the deal to supplant Morrison with Tree, the death of a Democratic assemblyman enabled the Republicans to steal a march on their opponents in a by-election, and the deadlock was finally broken by Logan securing the bare 103 votes necessary to election. How Field rejoiced over this outcome, to which he contributed so powerfully, may be inferred from the pictorial and poetic outburst shown on the opposite page:

\$ \$- - \$- - \$- - \$- - \$- - \$- - \$- -         -----	\$ \$- - \$- - \$- - \$- - \$- - \$- - \$- -         -----
BEFORE.	AFTER.

*There came a burst of thunder sound,  
 The judge—oh, where was he?  
 His twigs were strewn for miles around—  
 He was a blasted tree.*

Field was never in sympathy with the independent lines upon which the Morning News was edited. As I have said, he was a thorough-going partisan Republican, and he preferred a straight-out Democrat to an independent—or Mugwump, as the independents have been styled since 1884, when they bolted Blaine. To his mind the entire Mugwump movement revolved around Grover Cleveland and opposition to the election of Mr. Blaine. The former was not only the idol, but the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the decalogue to many of Field's Mugwump friends whom he cherished personally, but detested and lampooned politically. It pleased him to represent the Mugwump party of Chicago as consisting of General McClurg, John W. Ela, now president of the Chicago Civil Service Commission; Melville E. Stone, Franklin MacVeagh, and myself; and as late as 1892 he took delight in reporting its meetings after this fashion:

When the Mugump party of Chicago met in General McClurg's office yesterday, considerable agitation was caused by Mr. Slason Thompson's suggestion that a committee be appointed to investigate the report that John W. Ela was soliciting funds in



the East for the purpose of electing the Democratic ticket in Illinois. General McClurg thought that a serious mistake had been made. As he understood, Colonel Ela was soliciting subscriptions, but not to promote Democratic success. What funds Colonel Ela secured would be used toward the election of the great white-souled Cleveland, and that would be all right. (Applause.) The use of money otherwise would be offensive partisanship; devoted to the holy cause of Cleveland and Reform, it would be simply a patriotic, not to say a religious, duty.

Mr. Thompson said he was glad to hear this explanation. It was eminently satisfactory, and he hoped to have it disseminated through Illinois.



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On motion of Mr. M.E. Stone, Colonel Ela was instructed to deposit all campaign funds he might collect in the Globe National Bank.

Mr. Thompson then introduced Mr. Franklin H. Head, who, he said, was a Mugwump.

“Are you a Mugwump?” asked General McClurg.

Mr. Head: “I am, and I wish to join the party in Chicago.”

General McClurg: “Do you declare your unalterable belief in the Mugwump doctrine of free-will and election?”

Mr. Head: “As I understand it, I do.”

General McClurg: “The Mugwump doctrine of free-will argues that every voter may vote as he chooses, irrespective of party, so long as his vote involves the election of Grover Cleveland.”

Mr. Head: “I am a Mugwump to the extent of voting as I choose, and irrespective of party, but I draw the line at Grover Cleveland this time.” (Great sensation.)

Mr. Stone: “I guess you’ve got into the wrong ’bus, my friend, and I’m rather glad of it, for one vice-president of a bank is all the Mugwump party can stand.”

Mr. Thompson: “I supposed he was all right, or I wouldn’t have brought him in.”

General McClurg: “No, he is far from the truth. Upon the vital, the essential point, he is fatally weak. Go back, erring brother—go back into the outer darkness; it is not for you to sit with the elect.” Mr. Stone invited the party to a grand gala picnic which he proposed to give in August in Melville Park, Glencoe. He would order a basket of chicken sandwiches, a gallon of iced tea, and three pink umbrellas, and they would have a royal time of it. Mr. Thompson moved, out of respect to the Greatest of Modern Fishermen, to strike out “chicken” and insert “sardine.” Mr. Stone accepted the suggestion, and thus amended, the invitation was hilariously accepted.

After adopting a resolution instructing Mr. Stone to buy the sardines and tea at Brother Franklin MacVeagh’s, the party adjourned for one week.

Field was very fond of describing himself as a martyr to the Mugwump vapors and megrims that prevailed in the editorial rooms of the Daily News. He would say that the



imperishable crowns won by the heroes of Fox's "Book of Martyrs" were nothing to what he, a stanch Republican partisan, earned by enduring and associating daily with the piping, puling independents who infested that "ranch." He said that he expected a place high up in the dictionary of latter-day saints and in the encyclopedia of nineteenth-century tribulations, because of the Christian fortitude with which he endured and forgave the stings and jibes of his puny tormentors.

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There was a great scene in the reporters' room of the Morning News the day after Cleveland's first election. The News had been one of the first of the independent newspapers of the country to bolt the nomination of Mr. Blaine. It had favored the renomination of President Arthur, and had convincing evidence of a shameful deal by which certain members of the Illinois delegation, elected as Arthur men, were seduced into the Blaine camp. But this alone would not have decided the course of the paper—that was dictated by the widespread mistrust felt throughout the country as to Mr. Blaine's entire impeccability in the matter of the Little Rock bonds. Field, throughout the campaign, stood by Blaine and Logan and defied the Mugwumps to do their worst. So on the morning after the election he was in a thoroughly disgusted mood. He scoffed at the idea of becoming a Mugwump, but declared himself ready to renounce his Republicanism and become a Democrat. To that end he prepared a formal renunciation. It consisted of a flamboyant denunciation of the past glories and present virtues of the Republican party and an enthusiastic eulogy of the crimes, blunders, and base methods of the Democratic party. Field announced that he preferred to be enrolled as a Democrat, and to accept his share in all the obloquy which he laid at the Democratic door rather than affiliate with the Mugwump bolters. He said that he would rather be classed as a thoroughbred donkey than be feared as a mule without pride of pedigree or hope of posterity, whose only virtue lay in its heels. Then he swathed himself in a shroud of newspapers and laid himself out in the centre of the floor in the role of a martyred Republican. He bade the rest of us form a procession and walk over him, taking care not to step on the corpse. After the ceremony was carried out he rose up, a Jacksonian Democrat in name, but a bluer Republican than ever.

There was a sequel to this scene, for which it will serve as an introduction. In May, 1888, Mr. Stone sold out his interest in the Morning and Daily News and retired from the editorship of the former. Under Mr. Lawson, who succeeded him in sole control, both papers retained their independence, but became less aggressive in the maintenance of their views. Mr. Lawson sought to make them impartial purveyors of unbiased news to all parties. Hardly had the blue pencil of supervision dropped from Mr. Stone's fingers before Field made an opportunity to unburden his soul upon the subject of his martyrdom in the following extraordinary and highly entertaining screed:

The second letter which Mr. Blaine has written saying that he will, under no circumstances, become a candidate for the presidency refreshes a sad, yet a glorious, memory.



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Just about five years ago five members of the editorial staff of this paper were gathered together in the library. Blaine had just been nominated for the presidency by the National Republican Convention. For months the Daily News had advocated the renomination of Arthur, but now within an hour it beheld its teachings go for naught, its ambitions swept ruthlessly away, and its hopes cruelly, irrevivably crushed; Mr. Stone was then editor of the paper; he was in the convention hall when Blaine's nomination was secured. His editorial associates waited with serious agitation his return, and his instructions as to the course which the paper would pursue in the emergency which had been presented. There were different opinions as to what Mr. Stone would be likely to do, but there was a general feeling that he would be likely to antagonize Blaine. One of the editorial writers, a Canadian, who had just taken out his last naturalization papers, expressed determination that the paper must fight Blaine. He hated Blaine, and he had reason to; for Blaine had, during his short career as prime minister, evinced a strong disposition to clutch all Canadians who were caught fishing for tomcod in American waters. Therefore, Carthage *delenda est*. The debate ran high, yet every word was spoken softly, for the most violent excitement always precipitates a hush. Even the newsboys in the alley caught the awful infection; they stole in and out noiselessly and with less violence than usual, as if, in sooth, the dumb wheels revered the dismal sanctity of the hour. The elevator crept silently down with the five o'clock forms, so decently and so composedly as scarcely to jar the bottle of green ink on the Austin landholder's table. All at once the door opened and in stalked M.E. Stone, silent, pallid, portentous. His wan eye comprehended the scene instantaneously, but no twitch or tremor in his lavender lips betrayed the emotions (whatever they might have been) that surged beneath the clothes he wore. Cervantes tells how that Don Quixote, in the course of one of his memorable adventures, was shown a talking head—a head set upon a table and capable of uttering human speech, but in so hollow and tube-like a tone as to give one the impression that the voice came from far away. A somewhat similar device is now exhibited in our museums, where, upon payment of a trifling fee, you may hear the head discourse in a voice which sounds as though it might emanate from the tomb and from the very time of the first Pharaoh. Mr. Stone looked and Mr. Stone spoke like a "talking head" when he came in upon us that awful day. His face had the inhuman pallor, his eyes the lack-lustre expression, and his tones the distant, hollow, metallic cadence of the inexplicable machine that astounds the patrons of dime-museums. He seemed to take in the situation at once; knew as surely as though he had been told what we were talking

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about and how terribly we were wrought up. His right arm moved mechanically through some such gesture as Canute is supposed to have made when he bade the ocean retire before him, and from his bloodless lips came the memorable words—hollow, metallic, but memorable words—“Gentlemen, be calm! be calm!”

The calmness of this man in that supreme moment was simply awful.

He had been betrayed by one who should have been bound to him by every tie of gratitude. He had seen his political idol overthrown. He had witnessed the defeat and humiliation of what he believed to be the pure and patriotic spirit of American manhood. His highest ambition had been foiled, his sweetest hopes frustrated. Yet he was calm. Ever and anon the sky that arches the Neapolitan landscape reaches down its lips, they say, and kisses the bald summit of Vesuvius; as if it recognized the grand impressiveness of this scene, the Mediterranean at such times hushes its voice and lies tranquil as a slumbering child; all nature stands silent before the communion of the clouds and the Titans. But this ineffable peace, this majestic repose, is portentous. To rest succeeds activity; after calm comes tempest; out of placid dream bursts reality. Mr. Stone's calmness, like the whittler's stick, tapered up instead down. He who had, at five o'clock on that never-to-be-forgotten day, come upon us with the insinuating placidity of hunyadi janos—he who had addressed us in the tone of prehistoric centuries—he who bade us be calm, and at the same time gave us the finest tableau of human calmness human eye ever contemplated—he it was whom we found at eleven o'clock that very night, frothing at the mouth, biting chunks out of the hard-wood furniture, and tearing the bowels out of everything that came his way. This singular madness has raged, unabated, for four years. It was so infectious that his associates caught it—all but three. The men about the Daily News office who clung to the Republican party through thick and thin, who endured, therefore, every scoff, jibe, and taunt which sin could devise, and who, preferring honorable death to the rewards of treachery, proudly cast their votes for the nominees of the grand old party,—these three men are entitled to places in the foremost rank of Christian martyrs. Two of them were Joe Bingham and Morgan Bates. Bingham is dead now; peace to his dust. He never was his old hearty self after the defeat of Blaine; and when, upon the heels of this calamity, he moved to Indianapolis, Ind., he could stand it no longer and yielded up his life. He was a stanch soldier in a holy cause; and there is consolation in the fact that he is now at last enjoying the eternal rewards that are prepared for all true Republicans. As for Morgan Bates, he got somewhat even with his malicious persecutors by writing and producing plays; but retaliation is never satisfactory to



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a man of noble impulses, and Bates would not pursue it long. He preferred to go into voluntary exile at Des Moines, Iowa; and in that glorious Republican harvest-field he accomplished a great and good work, which being done, symmetrized and concinnated, he returned to this Gomorrah of Mugwumpery and identified himself with that sterling trade journal, the Hide and Leather Criterion. Next November the two surviving members of the old guard of three will march, arm in arm, to the polls, and will then and there cast their individual votes for the nominees of the Republican party—it matters not whether they be statesmen or tobacco-signs, so long as they be nominees. As the blasts do but root a tree more firmly in mother earth, so have the trials to which we Republicans of the Daily News have been subjected for the four years riveted us all the more securely to the faith. We have been forced in the line of professional duty to turn humorous paragraphs upon the alleged insincerity of our beloved political leader, but every paragraph so turned shall eventually come home d.v. (and we hope d.q.) to roost, like an Ossa, upon the Pelion of Infamy, which shall surely mark the grave of Mugwumpery. Every poem which we persecuted defenders of the faith have been bulldozed into weaving for the regalement of our persecutors shall be sung again when the other shore is reached, and when the horse and the rider are thrown into the sea. Never for a moment during the trials of these four years have we doubted (and when we say “we,” Bates is included)—never have we doubted that there was a promised land, and that we should get there in due time. What we have needed was a Moses; to be candid, we still need a Moses; and we need him badly. We care naught where he comes from—it matters not whither, from the New York Central or from the Western Reserve or from Dubuque, so long as he be a Moses, and that kind of an improved Moses, too, that will not fall just this side of the line. O brother Republican, what rewards, what joys, what delights are in store for us twain! Lift up your eyes and see in the East the dawn of the new day. Its warmth and its splendor will soon be over and about us. And, mindful of our martyrdom and contemplating its rewards, with great force comes to us just now the lines of the inspired Watts, wherein he portrays the eventual felicity of such as we:

*What bliss will thrill the ransomed souls  
When they in glory dwell,  
To see the sinner as he rolls  
In quenchless flames of hell.*

Never did a cheerful sinner extract such entertaining enjoyment for himself and his friends from a fictitious martyrdom as Field did from these political tribulations. That he never lost his waggish or satirical interest in politics is evidenced by the following parody on his own “Jest ’fore Christmas,” written in December, 1894, being at the expense of the then mayor of Chicago:



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### *JEST 'FORE ELECTION*

My henchmen say "Your Honor," as on their knees they drop;  
Some people call me Hopkins, but to most I'm known as Hop!  
For pretty nigh a year I've run the City Hall machine,  
Protecting my policemen and the gamblers on the green.  
Love to boss, an' fool the pious people with my tricks—  
Hate to take the medicine I got November 6!  
Most all the time the whole year round there ain't no flies on me,  
But jest 'fore election I'm as good as I can be!

Gran'ma Ela says she hopes to see me snug and warm  
In the bosom of Mugwumpery, whose motto is reform;  
But Gran'ma Ela he has never known the filling joys  
Of bossing "boodle" candidates and training with the boys;  
Of posing as a gentleman although at heart a tough;  
Of being sometimes out of scalps while some are out of stuff—  
Or else he'd know that bossing things are good enough for me,  
Except jest 'fore election I'm as good as I can be!

When poor Rubens, wondering why I've left my gum-games drop,  
Inquires with rueful accent: "What's the matter with Hoppy Hop?"  
The Civic Federation comes from out its hiding-place  
And allows that Mayor Hopkins is chock-full of saving grace!  
And I appear so penitent and wear so long a phiz  
That some folks say: "Good gracious! how improved our mayor is!"  
But others tumble to my racket and suspicion me,  
When jest 'fore election I'm as good as I can be!

For candidates who hope to get there on election day  
Must mind their p's and q's right sharp in all they do and say,  
So clean the streets, assess the boys for everything they're worth,  
Jine all the federations, and promise them the earth!  
Say "yes 'um" to the ladies, and "yes sur" to the men,  
And when reform is mentioned, roll your eyes and yell "Amen!"  
No matter what the past has been—jest watch me now and see  
How jest 'fore election I'm as good as I can be!\_

I will conclude this exposition of the attitude of Eugene Field to politics, public affairs, and public men with a whimsical bit of his verse, descriptive of how business and politics are mixed in a country store, premising it with the note that Colonel Bunn has since become a national character:

### *A STATESMAN'S SORROW*



'Twas in a Springfield grocery store,  
Not many years ago,  
That Colonel Bunn patrolled the floor,  
The paragon of woe.  
Though all the people of the town  
Were gathered there to buy,  
Good Colonel Bunn walked up and down  
With many a doleful sigh.

He vented off a dismal groan,  
And grunt of sorry kind,  
And murmured in a hollow tone  
The thoughts that vexed his mind.  
"Alas! how pitiful," he said,  
"And oh! how wondrous vain,  
To run a party at whose head  
Stands such a man as Blaine.



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“Tis here, with eager hearts and legs,  
Folks come to buy their teas—  
Their coffee, sugar, butter, eggs,  
Molasses, flour, and cheese—  
And every article I keep,  
As all good grocers do,  
They purchase here amazing cheap—  
The very finest, too.

“Yet when a canvass must be won,  
He, who presides it o’er,  
Is sadly qualified to run  
A country grocery store;  
His soul, once mesmerized by Blaine,  
Is very ill at ease  
When lowered to the humble plane  
Of butter, eggs, and teas!

“But what precipitates my woe,  
And fills my heart with fear,  
Is all this happy, human flow,  
With not a word of cheer;  
They purchase goods of various styles,  
Yet, as they swell my gain,  
They mention Cleveland’s name with smiles,  
But never speak of Blaine!” \_

Of serious views on political questions Field had none. The same may be truthfully said of his attitude on all social and economic problems. He eschewed controversy and controversial subjects. His study was literature and the domestic side and social amenities of life; and he left the salvation of the republic and the amelioration of the general condition of mankind to those who felt themselves “sealed” to such missions.

## CHAPTER IX

### HIS “AUTO-ANALYSIS”

In the introduction I have said that if Eugene Field had only written his autobiography, as was once his intention, it would probably have been one of the greatest works of fiction by an American. Early in his career he was the victim of that craze that covets the signatures and manuscript sentiments of persons who have achieved distinction, which later he did so much to foster by precept and practice. He was an inveterate autograph-hunter, and toward the close of his life he paid the penalty of harping on the joys of the



collector by the receipt of a perfect avalanche of requests for autographs and extracts from his poems in his own handwriting. The nature of his most popular verses also excited widespread curiosity as to the life, habits, and views of the author of "Little Boy Blue" and "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod." The importunities of this last class of admirers became so numerous that during the winter of 1894 he wrote and had printed what he called his "Auto-Analysis." "I give these facts, confessions, and observations," wrote he, "for the information of those who, for one reason or another, are applying constantly to me for biographical data concerning myself." Such was its author's humor, that behind almost every fact in this "Auto-Analysis" lurks either an error or a hoax. Its confessions are half-truths, and its whimsical observations are purposely designed to lead the reader to false conclusions. And withal the whole document is written with the ingeniousness of a mind without guile, which was one of Field's most highly developed literary accomplishments. No study of Field's character and methods would be complete without giving this very "human document":



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### AN AUTO-ANALYSIS

I was born in St. Louis, Mo., September 3d, 1850, the second and oldest surviving son of Roswell Martin and Frances (Reed) Field, both natives of Windham County, Vt. Upon the death of my mother (1856), I was put in the care of my (paternal) cousin, Miss Mary Field French, at Amherst, Mass. In 1865 I entered the private school of Rev. James Tufts, Monson, Mass., and there fitted for Williams College, which institution I entered as a freshman in 1868. Upon my father's death, in 1869, I entered the sophomore class of Knox College, Galesburg, Ill., my guardian, John W. Burgess, now of Columbia College, being then a professor in that institution. But in 1870 I went to Columbia, Mo., and entered the State University there, and completed my junior year with my brother. In 1872 I visited Europe, spending six months and my patrimony in France, Italy, Ireland, and England. In May, 1873, I became a reporter on the St. Louis Evening Journal. In October of that year I married Miss Julia Sutherland Comstock (born in Chenango County, N.Y.), of St. Joseph, Mo., at that time a girl of sixteen. We have had eight children—three daughters and five sons. Ill-health compelled me to visit Europe in 1889; there I remained fourteen months, that time being divided between England, Germany, Holland, and Belgium. My residence at present is in Buena Park, a north-shore suburb of Chicago. My newspaper connections have been as follows: 1875-76, city editor of the St. Joseph (Mo.) Gazette; 1876-80, editorial writer on the St. Louis Journal and St. Louis Times-Journal; 1880-81, managing editor of the Kansas City Times; 1881-83, managing editor of the Denver Tribune. Since 1883 I have been a contributor to the Chicago Record (formerly Morning News). I wrote and published my first bit of verse in 1879; it was entitled "Christmas Treasures" (see "Little Book of Western Verse"). Just ten years later I began suddenly to write verse very frequently; meanwhile (1883-89) I had labored diligently at writing short stories and tales. Most of these I revised half a dozen times. One, "The Were-Wolf," as yet unpublished, I have rewritten eight times during the last eight years.

My publications have been, chronologically, as follows:

1. "The Tribune Primer," Denver, 1882. (Out of print, very scarce.) ("The Model Primer," illustrated by Hoppin, Treadway, Brooklyn, 1882. A pirate edition.)
2. "Culture's Garland," Ticknor, Boston, 1887. (Out of print.) "A Little Book of Western Verse," Chicago, 1889. (Large paper, privately printed, and limited.) "A Little Book of Profitable Tales," Chicago, 1889. (Large paper, privately printed, and limited.)
3. "A Little Book of Western Verse," Scribners, New York, 1890.
4. "A Little Book of Profitable Tales," Scribners, New York, 1890.



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5. "With Trumpet and Drum," Scribners, New York, 1892.
6. "Second Book of Verse," Scribners, New York, 1893.
7. "Echoes from the Sabine Farm" (translations of Horace), McClurg, Chicago, 1893. (In collaboration with my brother, Roswell Martin Field.)
8. Introduction to Stone's "First Editions of American Authors," Cambridge, 1893.
9. "The Holy Cross and Other Tales," Stone & Kimball, Cambridge, 1893.

I have a miscellaneous collection of books, numbering 3,500, and I am fond of the quaint and curious in every line. I am very fond of dogs, birds, and all small pets—a passion not approved by my wife.

My favorite flower is the carnation, and I adore dolls.

My favorite hymn is "Bounding Billows."

My favorites in fiction are Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," "Don Quixote," and "Pilgrim's Progress."

I greatly love Hans Andersen's "Tales," and I am deeply interested in folk-lore and fairy-tales. I believe in ghosts, in witches, and in fairies.

I should like to own a big astronomical telescope and a twenty-four-tune music-box.

My heroes in history are Martin Luther, Mademoiselle Lamballe, Abraham Lincoln; my favorite poems are Koerner's "Battle Prayer," Wordsworth's "We are Seven," Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light," Luther's "Hymn," Schiller's "The Diver," Horace's "Fons Bandusiae," and Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night." I dislike Dante and Byron. I should like to have known Jeremiah, the prophet, old man Poggio, Walter Scott, Bonaparte, Hawthorne, Mademoiselle Sontag, Sir John Herschel, Hans Andersen.

My favorite actor is Henry Irving; actress, Mademoiselle Modjeska.

I dislike "politics," so called.

I should like to have the privilege of voting extended to women.



I favor a system of pensions for noble services in literature, art, science, *etc.* I approve of compulsory education.

If I had my way, I should make the abuse of horses, dogs, and cattle, a penal offence; I should abolish all dog laws and dog catchers, and I would punish severely everybody who caught and caged birds.

I dislike all exercise, and play all games indifferently.

I love to read in bed.

I believe in churches and schools; I hate wars, armies, soldiers, guns, and fireworks.

I like music (limited).

I have been a great theatre-goer.

I enjoy the society of doctors and clergymen.

My favorite color is red.

I do not care particularly for sculpture or for paintings; I try not to become interested in them, for the reason that if I were to cultivate a taste for them I should presently become hopelessly bankrupt.

I am extravagantly fond of perfumes.



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I am a poor diner, and I drink no wine or spirits of any kind; I do not smoke tobacco.

I dislike crowds, and I abominate functions.

I am six feet in height, am of spare build, weigh 160 pounds, and have shocking taste in dress.

But I like to have well-dressed people about me.

My eyes are blue, my complexion pale, my face is shaven, and I incline to baldness.

It is only when I look and see how young, and fair, and sweet my wife is that I have a good opinion of myself.

I am fond of companionship of women, and I have no unconquerable prejudice against feminine beauty. I recall with pride that in twenty-two years of active journalism I have always written in reverential praise of womankind.

I favor early marriage.

I do not love all children.

I have tried to analyze my feelings toward children, and I think I discover that I love them, in so far as I can make pets of them.

I believe that, if I live, I shall do my best literary work when I am a grandfather.

So cleverly are truth and fiction dove-tailed together in this "Auto-Analysis" that it would puzzle a jury of his intimate friends to say where Field was attempting to state facts and where he was laughing in his sleeve. Even the enumeration of his publications is amazingly inaccurate for a bibliomaniac's reply to the inquiries of his own guild. Francis Wilson's sumptuous edition of "Echoes from the Sabine Farm" preceded that of McClurg, Chicago, 1893, by more than two years, and a limited edition of the "Second Book of Verse" was published privately by Melville E. Stone, Chicago, 1892, more than a year before it was published by the Scribners, as stated in Field's chronological order.

Under ordinary circumstances such lapses in a list of a writer's published works would be a venial fault, and not worth mentioning; but in the case of one who set such store on "special large paper limited editions," they would be inexplicable—if that writer had not been Eugene Field. With him they were simply a notification to his intimates that the whole thing was not to be taken as a serious bibliography of his works or index of his character.



So far as the cyclopedic narrative of his life is concerned, it is intended to be fairly accurate; but Field's notion that he suddenly began to write verse very frequently in 1889 runs contrary to the record in Denver and Chicago from 1881 to 1888, inclusive. The intentional waggery of misinformation masquerading as truth begins where Field leaves the recital of his life to give what purports to be an analysis of his character and sentiments. Here he lets his "winged fancy loose." He mingles fact with his fiction even as

*The instruments of darkness tell us truths;  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's  
In deepest consequence.*



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Not that Field had any deep design to betray anyone lurking behind the fictitious and facetious candor of this apparent self-revelation. This “Auto-Analysis” was written in response to the almost innumerable questions which, about that time, were being propounded in the newspapers and on the leaves of sentiment autograph albums. Hence the forms of Field’s replies. For instance, to “What is your favorite flower?” he answered, “My favorite flower is the carnation;”—and with utter irrelevancy, added—“and I adore dolls!” Now Field was not particularly fond of flowers, and if he had a favorite, it was the rose, the pansy, or the violet.

Of his three favorites in fiction “Don Quixote” is the only one to which he gave a second thought, although early familiarity with “Pilgrim’s Progress” undoubtedly left its impression on his retentive memory. A more truthful answer would have been “The New England Primer,” “The Complete Angler,” and Father Prout. To another inquirer he said, “My favorite authors of prose are Cervantes, Hawthorne, Andersen, Sir Thomas Mallory,” a very much more accurate statement. His love for the fairy-tales of Andersen and Grimm survived from the knee of his little Mormon nurse to the last tale he wrote; but his belief in ghosts, witches, and fairies was all in his literary mind’s eye. He took the same delight in employing them in his works as he did flim-flams, flub-dubs, and catamarans. They were a part of his stock in trade, just as wooden animals were of Caleb Plummer’s toy-shop. I think Field cherished a genuine admiration for Abraham Lincoln, whose whole life, nature, personal appearance, unaffected greatness, manner of speech, and fate appealed to his idea of what “the first American” should be. But strike the names of Newman, Horace, old man Poggio, Walter Scott, and Hans Andersen from the list of his favorites that follow the name of Lincoln, and it gains in truth as it shrinks in length.

Upon the question of extending the right to vote to women, Field wasted no more thought than he did on “Politics,” whether so called or not. This was a springe to catch the “wimmen folks, God bless them.” He seldom took the trouble to vote himself, and ridiculed the idea of women demeaning themselves to enter the dirty strife for public office—as he regarded the beginning, middle, and end of all politics.

Field had the strongest possible aversion to violence or brutality of any kind. He considered capital punishment as barbarous. He was not opposed to it because he regarded it as ineffective as a punishment or a deterrent of crime, but simply because taking life, and especially human life, was abhorrent to him. Hence his “hatred” of wars, armies, soldiers, and guns.

Something more than a paragraph is needed to explain that word “limited” after Field’s declaration “I like music.” “Like” is a feeble word in this connection, and “limited” by his sense of the absurdity of reducing its enjoyment to an intellectual pursuit. He loved the music that appealed to the heart, the mind, the emotions through the ear. But for years he scoffed at and ridiculed the attempt to convey by the “harmony of sweet sounds” or alternating discords impressions or sentiments of things than can only be

comprehended through the eye. He loved both vocal and instrumental music, and was a constant attendant on opera and concert.



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I have a unique documentary proof of Eugene Field's taste in music. Written on the folded back of a sheet of foolscap, which, on its face, preserves his original manuscript of "A Noon Tide Hymn," are three suggestions for the "request programmes" with which Theodore Thomas used to vary his concerts in the old Exposition Building in Chicago. Field seldom missed these concerts, and he always made a point of forwarding his choice for the next "request night." This one was as follows:

1. Invitation to Dance Weber 2. Spring Song Mendelssohn 3. Largho Handel 4. Rhapsody Hongroise(2) Liszt1. Vorspiel Lohengrin 2. Waltz movement Volkman 3. Serenade Schubert 4. Ride of Walkures

1. Sylvia
- 2.
3. Ave Maria Bach-Gounod  
Intro. }
4. Nap. } Wagner.  
March. }

The only limitation to a liking for music such as is revealed here is that it be good music. Mr. Thomas in those days scarcely ever made up a programme without including in it one of Field's favorites.

Referring to music recalls the fact that Field once seriously contemplated writing a comic opera; and he only failed to carry out his purpose because he could not get the dialogue to suit him; moreover, he realized that he had but a limited grasp of the dramatic action and situations necessary in such work. How completely he had this work mapped out may be judged from the following memoranda, the manuscript of which is before me:

### THE BUCCANEERS

Fernando, the Begum—basso.  
Paquita, his daughter—soprano.  
Christopher, the buccaneer—baritone.  
Mercedes, his sister—contralto.  
Carlos, a Peruvian lieutenant—tenor.  
Gonzales, Begum of Ohnos.  
Buccaneers, maidens, ballet, servants, *etc.*

Time of action—three days, 1860.

Scenes: First and third acts, in garden adjoining Fernando's mansion, suburbs of Piura.



Second act, on board the ship "Perdita," port of Payla.

FIRST ACT

Fernando, the Begum, is about to give a moonlight fete in honor of his daughter's betrothal to Carlos. The young people are not particularly overjoyed at the prospect of their union, Carlos having given his heart, some years previously, to Mercedes, who is now married to a captain in the Chilian army, and Paquita having fallen desperately in love with a handsome young stranger whom she has, upon several occasions, met upon the sea-shore. This stranger is Christopher, who, for his participation in a petty revolt, has been declared an outlaw, and has taken to the life of a buccaneer, joined by numerous lively companions. Overcome by love of Paquita, Christopher manages to get himself and his band introduced at the fete, and in the midst of the festivities the young women are seized and carried aboard the buccaneers' ship.

SECOND ACT



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Carlos, who has been taken prisoner with the girls, discovers that Mercedes, the buccaneer captain's sister, is his old fiancée, and is now a widow; explanations ensue and a reconciliation takes place. While debating how they shall advise Paquita of the truth, they overhear a conversation between Christopher and Paquita. Paquita declares that if Christopher really *loves* her, he will come and woo her as an honorable man should. Christopher is about to release the captives, when Mercedes suggests, that to ensure the safety of the buccaneers Carlos be detained as a hostage. Carlos indorses the suggestion. The young ladies are permitted to go ashore.

### THIRD ACT

While Fernando storms over the retention of Carlos, Paquita sadly broods over her love for Christopher. As she soliloquizes at her window Christopher appears. He cannot remain away from the object of his love. A scene ensues between the two. In the meantime Carlos and Mercedes have secretly stolen from the ship and been married by the village priest. They appear while Paquita and Christopher are conversing. (Quartette.) Fernando hears the commotion. (Quintette.) Christopher is discovered and apprehended. The buccaneers appear to rescue their long-absent captain. Explanations. Fernando informs the buccaneers that under the amnesty act of the king they are no longer outlaws. Christopher's estates await him. Carlos and Mercedes appear. Fernando gives Paquita to Christopher.

It will be perceived that the spirited action of this "argument," as Field styled it, practically ends with the first act, a fault which the veriest neophyte in the art of libretto writing knows is fatal. But the most interesting feature of this opera in embryo is the list of songs which Field had planned for it. They were:

### SONGS

"Begum of Piura."

"The Crazy Quilt."

"My Life is One Continuous Lie."

"By Day Upon the Billowy Sea."

Lullaby—"Do Not Wake the Baby."

"The Good Old Way."

Barcarolle—"I've Come Across the Water."

### TRIO

"He Really Does Not Seem to Know."

### DUETS



“My Love Was Fair.”  
“To the Sea, O Love!”  
“O Dearest Love, Through all the Years.”  
“Into God’s Hands.”

FEMALE CHORUS

“Down the Forest Pathway.”

MALE CHORUS

“From the Farms.”  
“We are a Band of Gallant Tars.”

MIXED CHORUS

“Hail, O Happy Nuptial Day!”  
“Ah!”  
“Where Turtle Doves are Cooing.”  
“The Spanish Dance.”  
“They’re Delightful.”  
“Oh, Can Such Wonders Be?”  
“How Sweet to Fly.”  
“He Really Must Be Ailing.”  
“Adieu, Sweet Love.”

QUARTETTE

“The Old Love.”  
“The Parent’s Voice.”

QUINTETTE

“Oh, What Were Life.”



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Field always insisted that Messrs. Smith and DeKoven got the title, if not some of the inspiration, for their opera "The Begum" from the argument of his "Buccaneer," the scheme of which he showed to Harry B. Smith, then a member of the Morning News staff. But the reason for his failure to carry out his operatic venture is obvious in the argument itself. It is intrinsically deficient in the elements of surprise, novel situations, and dramatic action necessary for stage effect. Field would have made it rich in lyrics, but as has been often proved, lyrics alone cannot make a successful opera. He quickly appreciated this and abandoned the work with "Oh, What Were Life?"

There never was any doubt of Field's "shocking taste in dress," and he never sought to cultivate or reform it. But what will those who knew him say of the statement, "I am a poor diner, and I drink no wine or spirits of any kind; I do not smoke tobacco." Field was, by the common verdict of those who had the pleasure of meeting him at any dinner company, the best diner-out they ever knew. He had a keen enjoyment of the pleasures of the table, and but for that wretched stomach would have been as much of an authority on eating as he came to be on collecting. He loved to discuss the art of dining, although he was forbidden to practise it heartily.

His favorite gift-books "appertained" to the art of cooking, in one of which (Hazlitt's "Old Cooking Books") I find inscribed to Mrs. Thompson:

*Big bokes with nony love I send  
To those by whom I set no store—  
But see, I give to you, sweete friend,  
A lyttel boke and love gallore!*

E.F.\_

Field gave up drinking wine and all kinds of alcoholic liquors, as has been related, before coming to Chicago. And yet I have seen him sniff the bouquet of some rare wine or liquor with the quivering nostril of a connoisseur, but—and this was the marvel to his associates—without "the ruby," as Dick Swiveller termed it, being the least temptation to his lips.

Eugene Field "not smoke tobacco"! He was one of the most inveterate smokers in America. If he had been given his choice between giving up pie or tobacco, I verily believe he would have thrown away the pie and stuck to the soothing weed out of which he sucked daily and hourly comfort. He had acquired the Yankee habit of ruminating with a small quid of tobacco in his cheek when a good cigar was not between his teeth. He consumed not only all the cigars that fell to his share in a profession where cigars are the invariable concomitants of every chance meeting, every social gathering, and every public function, but also those that in the usual round of our life fell to me. And I was not his only abetter in despoiling the Egyptians who thought to work the freedom of the press with a few passes of the narcotic weed. It is a curious fact that Field's

pretended aversion to tobacco persists through all his writings, from the Denver Primer sketches down. In those we find him attributing the authorship of this warning to children to S.J. Tilden:



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*Oh, children, you Must never chew  
Tobacco—it is Awful!  
The Juice will Quickly make you Sick  
If once you get your Maw Full.*

He never ceased having discussions with himself over the wording or authorship of the famous lines attributed to “Little Robert Reed,” as in the following:

Lo and behold! This is the way the St. Louis Republican mangles an old, quaint, beautiful, and popular poem:

*“I would not use tobacco,” said  
Little Robert Reed.  
“I would not use tobacco, for  
’Tis a nasty weed.”*

We protest against this brutal mutilization of a grand old classic. The quatrain should read, as in the original, thus:

*“I’ll never chew tobacco—no,  
It is a filthy weed;  
I’ll never put it in my mouth,”  
Said little Robert Reed.*

By the way, who was the author of the poem of which the foregoing is the first stanza?

I need scarcely refer the reader to Field’s confession in his letter of December 12th, 1891, to Mr. Gray of his struggle to give up the use of tobacco, and to the photograph of Field at work, to indicate that his “I do not smoke tobacco” was but one more of those harmless hoaxes he took such pains to carry through at the expense of an ever-credulous public.

Only one more point in regard to the “Auto-Analysis,” and I am through with that whimsical concoction; and that is in reference to his attitude toward children. Knowing full well that his inquiring admirers expected him to rhapsodize upon his love for children, he deliberately set about disappointing them with:

I do not love all children.

I have tried to analyze my feelings toward children, and I think I discover that I love them in so far as I can make pets of them.

Of course this was received with a chorus of incredulity—as it was intended it should be. The autograph hunters who had formed their conception of Field from his lullabies,



his “Little Boy Blue,” his “Krinken,” his “Wynken,” and his score of other poems, all proving his mastery over the strings that vibrate with the rocking of the cradle, at once pronounced this the most delicious hit of their author’s humor. They knew that such songs could only emanate from a man whose heart overflowed with the warmest sentiment to all childhood. They were convinced that Field must love all children, and nothing he could say could change their conviction.

[Illustration: FIELD THE COMEDIAN.]

And yet those words, “I do not love all children,” are the truest six words in his “Auto-Analysis.” Field not only did not love all children, he truly loved very few children. His own children were very dear to him, both those that came in his early wedded life and the two who were born to him after his return from Europe. They were a never-failing source of interest and enjoyment to him. They



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were the human documents he loved best to study. They wore no masks to conceal their emotions, and he hated masks—on others. But above all, they were bone of his bone and flesh of his love, the pledges and hostages he had given to fortune, and they were the children of her to whom he had vowed eternal faith “when their two lives were young.” But Field’s fondness for other people’s children was like that of an entomologist for bugs—for purposes of study, dissection, and classification. He delighted to see the varying shades of emotion chase each other across their little tell-tale faces. This man, who could not have set his foot on a worm, who shrank from the sight of pain inflicted on any dumb animal, took almost as much delight in making a child cry, that he might study its little face in dismay or fright, as in making it laugh, that he might observe its method of manifesting pleasure. He read the construction of child-nature in the unreserved expressions of childish emotions as he provoked or evoked them. Thus he grew to know children as few have known them, and his exceptional gift of writing for and about them was the result of deliberate study rather than of personal sympathy. That his own children were sometimes a trial to their “devoted mother” and “fond father,” as he described their parents, may be inferred from the facts which were the basis of such bits of confidence between Field and the readers of his “Sharps and Flats” as this: An honest old gentleman living on the North Side has two young sons, who, like too many sons of honest gentlemen, are given much to boyish worldliness, such as playing “hookey” and manufacturing yarns to keep themselves from under the maternal slipper. The other day the two boys started out, ostensibly for school, but as they did not come home to dinner and were not seen by their little sister about the school-grounds, the awful suspicion entered the good mother’s mind that they had again been truant. Along about dark one of them, the younger, came in blue with cold.

“Why, Pinny,” said the mother, “where have you been?”

“Oh, down by the lake, getting warm,” said the youngster.

“Down by the lake?”

“Yes; we were cold, and we saw the smoke coming up from the lake, so we went down there to get warm. And,” he continued, in a propitiatory tone, “we thought we’d catch some fish for supper.”

“Fish?” exclaimed the mother.

“Yes; Melvin’s comin’ with the fish.”

At this juncture the elder boy walked in triumphantly holding up a dried herring tied to the end of a yard or so of twine.



That night, when the honest old gentleman reached home, the young men got a warming without having to go to the steaming lake.

But all of Field's keen analytical comprehension of child-nature is purified and exalted in his writings by his unalloyed reverence for motherhood. The child is the theme, but it is almost always for the mother he sings. Even here, however, he could not always resist the temptation to relieve sentiment with a piece of humor, as in the following clever congratulations to a friend on the birth of a son:



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*A handsome and lively, though wee body  
Is the son of my friend, Mrs. Peabody—  
It affords me great joy  
That her son is a boy,  
And not an absurd little she-body.*

More than thirty years since the late Professor John Fiske, when asked to write out an account of his daily life for publication, did very much the same thing as Field palmed off on his correspondents in his "Auto-Analysis." He gave some "sure-enough" facts as to his birth, education, and manner of life, but mixed in with the truth such a medley of grotesque falsehoods about his habits of study, eating, and drinking, that he supposed the whole farrago would be thrown into the waste-paper basket. For thirty years he lived in the serene belief that such had been its fate. But one day he was unpleasantly reminded of his mistake. The old manuscript had been resurrected "from the worm-hole of forgotten years," and he was published widecast as a glutton, not only of work, but in eating, drinking, and sleeping. A man who defied all the laws of hygiene, of moderation, and of rest. And when he died, from heat prostration—an untimely death, that robbed his country of its greatest student mind, while yet his energies were boundless—that thoughtless story of thirty years ago was revived, to justify the "I told you sos" of the public press.

His "Auto-Analysis" was not the only hoax of this description in which Eugene Field indulged. In 1893 Hamlin Garland contributed an article to McClure's Magazine, entitled, "A Dialogue Between Eugene Field and Hamlin Garland." It purported to be an interview which the latter had with the former in his "attic study" in Chicago. Field was represented surrounded by "a museum of old books, rare books, Indian relics, dramatic souvenirs, and bric-a-brac indescribable." The result is a most remarkable jumble of misinformation and fiction, with which Field plied Garland to the top of his bent. What Garland thought were bottom facts were really sky-scraping fiction. As if this were not enough, Garland made Field talk in an approach to an illiterate dialect, such as he never employed and cordially detested. Garland represented Field as discussing social and economic problems—why not the "musical glasses," deponent saith not. The really great and characteristic point in the dialogue was where something Field said caused "Garland to lay down his pad and lift his big fist in the air like a maul. His enthusiasm rose like a flood." The whole interview was a serious piece of business to the serious-minded realist. To Field, at the time, and for months after, it was a huge and memorable joke.

But there are thousands who accept the Eugene Field of the "Auto-Analysis" and of the Garland dialogue as the true presentment of the man, when the real man is only laughing in his sleeve at the reader and the interviewer in both of them.

## CHAPTER X



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### LAST YEARS

If this were a record of a life, and not a study of character, with the side-lights bearing upon its development and idiosyncrasies, there would remain much to write of Eugene Field after his return from abroad. Much came to him in fame, in fortune, in his friendships, and in his home. Two more children were born to brighten his hearthstone and refresh his memories of childhood and the enchanting ways of children. The elder of these two, a son, was named Roswell Francis, a combination of the names of Field's father and mother, with the change of a vowel to suit his sex; the younger, his second daughter, was christened Ruth, after Mrs. Gray, in whose home Field had found, more than a score of years before, the disinterested affection of a mother, "a refuge from temptation, care, and vexation."

Although immediately upon getting back Field resumed his daily grind of "Sharps and Flats" for the Chicago Record, his paragraphs showed more and more the effects of his reading and his withdrawal from the activities and associations of men. Mankind continued to interest him as much as ever, but books wearied him less, and in his home were more easily within reach. This home was now at 420 Fullerton Avenue, an old-fashioned house on the northern limit of old Chicago, rather off the beaten track. It was the fifth place the Field household had set up its lares and penates since coming to Chicago. In consequence of his collecting mania, his impedimenta had become a puzzle to house and a domestic cataclysm to move.

By 1891 Field realized, as none of his family or friends did, that his health would never be better, and that it behooved him to put his house in order and make the most of the strength remaining. If he needed the words of a mentor to warn him, he could have found them in the brief memoir his uncle, Charles Kellogg, had written of his father. In that I find this remarkable anticipation of what befell his son, written of Roswell M. Field—who, be it remembered, started in life with a healthy and vigorous body, whereas uncertain health and a rebellious stomach were Eugene Field's portion all the days of his life.

He [Field's father] made the perusal of the Greek and Latin classics his most delightful pastime. In fact, he resorted to this scientific research, particularly in the department of mathematics, for his chief mental recreation. It is greatly to be regretted that he neglected to combine, with his cessation from professional labor, some employment which would have revived and strengthened his physical frame. He was averse to active exercise, and for some years before his death he lived a life of studious seclusion which would have been philosophical had he not violated, in the little care he took of his health, one of the most important lessons which philosophy teaches. At a comparatively early age he died of physical exhaustion, a deterioration of the bodily

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organs, and an incapacity, on their part, to discharge the vital functions—a wearing out of the machine before the end of the term for which its duration was designed. He was eminently qualified to serve, as well as to adorn, society, and in all likelihood he would have found in a greater variety of occupation some relief from the monotonous strain under which his energies prematurely gave way.

But the conditions that confronted Eugene Field at the age of forty-one were very different from those under which his father succumbed prematurely at sixty-one. He had made a name and fame for himself, but had not stored any of the harvest his writings were beginning to yield. He could write, as he did, that he expected to do his best literary work when a grandfather, but he had no belief that he would live to enjoy that happy Indian summer of paternity. He was tired of being moved from rented flat to rented house with his accumulated belongings, and he yearned with the “sot” New England yearning for a permanent home, a roof-tree that he could call his own, a patch of earth in which he could “slosh around,” with no landlord to importune for grudging repairs.

And so Field’s life during his last years has to be considered as a struggle with physical exhaustion, fighting off the inevitable reckoning until he could provide himself and his family with a home and leave to his dear ones the means of retaining it, with the opportunities of education for the juniors. And bravely and cheerily he faced the situation. Neither in his social relations nor in his daily task was there observable any trace of the tax he was putting upon his over-strained energy. He could not afford to make the study of classics a delightful pastime, as his father did, but he made it contribute a constant and delightful fund of reference and allusion in his column. His first books were selling steadily, and he worked assiduously to make hay while the sun was still above the horizon. In quick succession, “Echoes from the Sabine Farm,” “With Trumpet and Drum,” the “Second Book of Verse,” “The Holy Cross and Other Tales,” and “Love Songs of Childhood,” with few exceptions, collected from his daily contributions to the Chicago Record, were issued from the press in both limited and popular editions.

On the top of his regular work, which in collected form began to be productive beyond his fondest expectations, Field allowed himself to be over-persuaded into entering the platform field. The managers of reading-bureaus had been after him for years; but he had resisted their alluring offers, because he would not make a show of himself, and the exertion fagged him. But in the later years of his life they came at him again, with the promise of more pay per night than he could get by writing in a week, and he reluctantly made occasional engagements, which were a drain on his vitality as well as an offence to his peculiar notions of personal dignity. After each of these excursions into the platform field, either in the triple alliance with “Bill” Nye and James Whitcomb Riley, or with George W. Cable, in a most effective combination, Field returned to his home in

Chicago richer in pocket and interesting experiences, but distinctly poorer in the vital reserve necessary to prolong the battle with that rebellious stomach.



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The presidential campaign of 1892 quite revived his interest in politics and politicians, and drew him away from the association with books at home and with the Saints and Sinners at McClurg's. For a time it looked as if he had been weaned from the circle of collectors, and never had his column held up to ridicule so fiercely the humbug and hypocrisy of political methods as during that summer. One day after the nomination of Harrison and Reid, at Minneapolis, his column contained no fewer than forty-one political paragraphs, each one "ringing the bell" of mirth or scorn, as the subject warranted.

In the following winter there came the first hiatus in his regular contributions to the Record. But he resumed work in May, his return being heralded by a paragraph beginning, "This is a beautiful world, and life herein is very sweet," a note theretofore seldom heard in his paragraphs, though often struck in his "Profitable Tales"; and thenceforward in his daily work his thoughts recur to the beauty of the world and his gladness to be in it. Thus in the following July he wrote:

What beautiful weather this is! How full of ozone the atmosphere is; how bright the sunshine is, and how blue this noble lake of ours lies under the cloudless sky! It is simply ideal weather. Who does not rejoice in the change from the oppressive heat of last week? Vigor is restored to all. Commerce revives, and humanity is hopeful and cheering again. And what lovely nights we are having! The moonlight was never more glorious. Unhappy is that man, old or young, who hath not a sweetheart to share with him the poetic grace of our satellite! And such nights for sleep! Morning comes before it is welcome.

Yes, this world of ours is very beautiful, and we are glad that we are in and of it.

The summer of 1893, with the crowds and various excitements of the World's Fair, was very exhausting to Field, albeit he enjoyed the wonder and beauty of the Columbian Exposition with all the intent eagerness of a twelve-year-old lad at a country circus. Everything that happened down at Jackson Park that memorable season, especially the social rivalries of the different managing bodies, was fair game for his roguish wit. The liberties which he took with the names and reputations of public men showed that the old spirit of waggery was not dead within him. This is illustrated in such verses as these:

*The shades of night were falling fast  
As through the world's fair portal passed  
A certain Adlai Stevenson,  
Whose bead-like eyes were fixed upon*

*The Midway.* He was the very favorite son  
Of proud, immortal Bloomington:

And, hankering for forbidden joys,  
He pined to whoop up with the boys

The Midway



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“Try not those fakes,” a stranger said,  
 “Unless you’re hankering to be bled!”  
 Alas, these words were all for naught—  
 With still more fervor Adlai sought

The Midway. “Beware the divers games of chance,  
 Beware that Street in Cairo dance!”  
 All, all in vain, the warning cry—  
 Adlai whooped, as he sailed by:

“The Midway!” But why pursue this harrowing tale?  
 Far better we should drop the veil  
 Of secrecy before begin  
 His exploits in that Vale of Sin,

The Midway.\_

In the spring of 1892 Field was fortunate enough to find a house in Buena Park, a northern suburb of Chicago, which, besides having the convenience of a trolley connection with the centre of the city, had the incalculable advantage of overlooking the extensive and beautiful private grounds justly celebrated in “The Delectable Ballad of the Waller Lot”:

*Up yonder in Buena Park  
 There is a famous spot,  
 In legend and in history  
 Yclept the Waller Lot.*

There children play in daytime  
 And lovers stroll by dark,  
 For ’tis the goodliest trysting place  
 In all Buena Park.\_

Next to owning a homestead, with rolling lawns and groves of old trees and family associations, Field enjoyed having someone else bear the burden of their maintenance for his immediate personal delectation, and the Waller homestead, with its park effects, afforded him that inexpensive pleasure. His windows looked out upon a truly sylvan scene, the gates to which were always invitingly open, southern fashion, to congenial wayfarers. The more Field saw of the Waller lot, the more completely did the old New England hankering after a homestead, with acres instead of square feet of lawn and trees, take possession of him; and the spectre of ten years’ rent for inconvenient flats and houses rose in his memory and urged him to buy land and build for himself. This finally resulted in the following letter to the old friend to whom he always went in any financial emergency, and from whom he never came empty handed away:



DEAR MR. GRAY: An experience of a good many years has convinced me that the best way to deal with one's fellow-creatures, and particularly with one's friends, is directly and candidly. This is one of the several considerations which lead me to write to you now asking you whether it be within your power (and also whether it be your willingness) to help me buy a home in Chicago. Julia has been at me for a year to ask this of you. I have hesitated to do so in the fear that the application might seem to be an attempt to take advantage of your friendship for me—a friendship manifested in many ways and covering a period of many years. Perhaps, however, we can now look at the matter



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more as a business proposition than would have been possible a year or two ago, for I am at last in a position to pay interest promptly on a considerable amount of money. To be more explicit, the sum of One Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$150) is set aside monthly by the Record toward what Mr. Lawson calls my "building fund," which sum the Record is prepared to guarantee and pay to anybody making me the loan of money necessary to secure the home I want. I am very anxious for a habitation of my own. The desire is one that gives me no peace, and I see no other way to its fulfilment than through the liberality of any friend, or friends, with money to lend. Before setting my heart upon any locality, or upon any particular spot, it is wise that I should know whether and where the assistance I need can be had. My first application is to you, and I make it timidly, for, as I have said, it is very distasteful to me to do that which may look like imposing upon friendship. In case you found it possible and feasible to aid me, I should want you to come to Chicago and take a look over the field with Julia and me.

We are fairly well. With every cordial regard,

Yours affectionately,

EUGENE FIELD.

Buena Park, September 16th, 1893.

There had ever been but one response from Mr. Gray to such an appeal as this from his quondam ward, and Field was not disappointed this time. But *l'homme propose et Dieu dispose*; and in this case there was no woman to intervene, as in the Spanish version of the proverb, to "discompose" the disposition of Deity. Before the project contemplated in Field's letter took tangible shape, however, he was laid on his back by a severe cold, which developed into pneumonia. On his recovery, the doctor advised that he should go to California; and on November 8th he wrote to Mr. Gray, asking him if he and his niece could not be ready to accompany him about the 1st of December. Concluding a very brief note, he said: "Writing makes me very tired, so pray pardon my brutal brevity. I send very much love to you and yours. Many, many times have I thought of you, dear friend, during the last three painful weeks, and I have wished that you were here, that I might speak with you." Mr. Gray arranged to join Field on the trip, which the latter outlined in a letter to him December 4th, 1893:

I shall probably be ready to start for Los Angeles the latter part of this week. My plans at present are very limited, extending only to Los Angeles and San Diego. At the latter point it will be wise for me to remain three weeks. That will practically make me a well man. It is said to be a lovely spot. From there I shall want to go for a week or ten days to Madame Modjeska's ranch, located ten miles from the railway, half-way between San Diego and Los Angeles. It is a large ranch—1,000 acres. Madame Modjeska has put it at my disposal, and Lynch and you must



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help me bear the responsibility thereof. Later in the winter we will go up to San Francisco and visit Henry Field awhile. I will let you know when we start, and if you can't join us at Kansas City, suppose you come on as soon as you can and join me at San Diego. We go to Los Angeles by the Santa Fe. On receipt of this, telegraph me if you can leave Saturday or Sunday. If you are cramped for finances, what sort of a fix do you suppose I'm in? But we must all live; we cannot afford to die just yet. I went down to dinner for the first time on Thursday; I am feeling pretty brisk. Love to Miss Eva.

Ever affectionately yours, with a sore finger,

EUGENE FIELD.

Field did not find in California the "glorious climate" which the well-meant advice of his physicians had led him to expect. His going up to San Francisco in winter to visit his cousin was a mistake, which he quickly regretted, as the following testifies:

DEAR MR. GRAY: I am very tired of freezing to death, and I have made up my mind to get into a country where I can at least *keep warm*. Ever since I got to California I have shivered, and shivered, and shivered, and there seem to be no facilities for ameliorating this unpleasant condition here. I am told that in six months or a year the new-comer becomes acclimated; I do not regard that as encouraging. So I am heading for New Orleans. But we drop off at Los Angeles to admit of my being with you long enough to write the memoir of dear Mrs. Gray—a duty to which I shall apply myself with melancholy pleasure. I think we shall arrive Thursday morning. I hope you are all well, and that Miss Eva has not yet been carried off by any pirate or Philadelphia brewer. I continue to gain in weight.

Affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

Alameda, Cal.,

January 6th, 1894, Saturday evening.

Field kept the promise of this letter, and the memoir of Mrs. Gray then written is a genuine work of love, composed amid "environments," as he wrote, "conducive to the sincerity and the enthusiasm which should characterize such a noble task." Here is his picture of the surroundings, redolent of the incense of sunshine and flowers that fills that favored clime:

A glorious panorama is spread before me—such a picture as the latitude of southern California presents at the time when elsewhere upon this continent of ours the resentment of winter is visited. All around me is the mellow grace of sunshine, roses,



lilies, heliotropes, carnations, marigolds, nasturtiums, marguerites, and geraniums are a-bloom; and as far as the eye can reach, the green velvet of billowing acres is blended with the passion of wild poppies; the olive, the orange, and the lemon abound; yonder a vineyard lies fast asleep in the glorious noonday; the giant rubber trees in all this remarkable fairy-land are close at hand; and the pepper, the eucalyptus,



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the live oak, and the palm are here, and there, and everywhere. A city is in the distance; the smoke that curls up therefrom makes dim fantastic figures against the beautiful blue of the sky. There is toil in that place, and the din of busy humanity; but upon this faraway hillside, with the sweetest gifts of Nature about me, I care not for these things. I am soothed by the melodies of wild birds, and by the music of the gentle winds that come from the great white ocean beyond the valleys and the hills, away off there where the ships go sailing. Perhaps Ruskin, the great artist-master of word-painting, might have produced as perfect a gem of English description as this. But who besides of our contemporaries has? To my mind, it is the proof of the perfection of the technical skill in expression to which Field arrived through arduous years, softened and refined by the emotions of affection and gratitude which swept over him as he thought of her who had been a mother to him. It has its counterpart in the succeeding description of the Pelham hills, in which "the yonder glimpse of the Pacific becomes the silver thread of the Connecticut," which I have already quoted in a previous chapter.

Evidently, too, the glorious climate of California was a blessing which brightened as Field took his flight toward the East. Early in February he was back in the harness in Chicago, celebrating his return with characteristic gayety in "Lyrics of a Convalescent." But his contributions to the paper through the winter and early spring of 1894 were confined to occasional verse. After a short trip to New Orleans, in April, he resumed active work the first week in May; and for the remainder of the year his column gave daily evidence of his mental activity and cheerfulness.

It was while in New Orleans in the spring of 1894 that the following incident, illustrative of the boyish freaks that still engaged Field's ingenuity, occurred. I quote from a letter of one of the participants, Cyrus K. Drew, of Louisville: "I met Field on one of his pilgrimages for old bottles, pewter ware, and any old thing in the junk line. Some friends of mine introduced our party to Mr. Field and Wilson Barrett and members of his company then playing an engagement in New Orleans. Mr. Field's greatest delight was in teasing Miss Maude Jeffries, a Mississippi girl, then leading lady in Mr. Barrett's company. She was very sensitive and modest, and it delighted Field greatly when he could playfully embarrass her. One day I found him in his room busy on the floor pasting large sheets of brown paper together. He had written a poem to Miss Jeffries in the centre of a large sheet of this wrapping paper in his characteristic small hand—indeed, much smaller than usual. On the edges of this sheet I found him pasting others of equal size, so that the whole when complete made a single sheet about eight feet square. This he carefully folded up



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to fit an improvised envelope about the size of a Mardi Gras souvenir, then being distributed about the city. With the joyousness of a boy about to play a prank, he chased down-stairs at the noon hour when he knew Miss Jeffries was at lunch with Mr. Barrett in the cafe of the Grunewald. Calling a waiter, he sent the huge envelope in to her table. She glanced at it a moment and then gradually drew the package from its envelope, while Field and I stood watching behind the entrance. It spread all over the table as she continued to unfold the enormous sheet, and its rustle attracted the attention of nearly every one in the room. When it had spread itself all over Mr. Barrett, who meanwhile was laughing heartily, Miss Jeffries discovered the poem in Field's hand, and, although blushing crimson, joined in the laughter, for she knew he was somewhere about enjoying her discomfort."

By August of this same year he had his "Love Songs of Childhood" in shape for the publishers, and had once more taken up the project of acquiring a home. What Field was doing, as well as thinking about, a little later is pretty accurately reflected in the following letter to Mr. Gray:

DEAR MR. GRAY: Ever since your return from the East I have been intending to write to you. I have time and again reproached myself for my neglect to do so. I have not been very well. About the first of September I had one of my old dyspeptic attacks, and since then my stomach has troubled me more or less, reducing me in weight and making me despondent. I think, however, I am now on the upgrade once more. After you left here Julia was quite sick for a spell. She was on the verge of nervous prostration. I packed her off to Lynch's for a month, and she came back very much improved, and now she weighs more than ever before. The children are well. Trotty attends a day school near by. Pinny has gone back to his military school, and is doing *very well*. I would like to send Daisy to the same school, for he is not doing well at public school; but my expenses have been so large the last year that I cannot incur any further expense. The babies are doing finely. The boy is as fat as butter, and handsome as ever. Little Ruth cut her first tooth to-day. I never loved a baby as I love her. She is very well now; her flesh has become solid and she is gaining in weight. She is playful and good-natured, sure prognostics of good health. Roswell and Etta went East the 9th of September, and were gone fifteen days; they visited Amherst, Boston, New York, Greenfield, Brattleboro, and Newfane. Roswell regretted not knowing your whereabouts, for he wanted to have you along for a sentimental journey in Vermont. Etta is now with us. She returns to Kansas City next Sunday night. I am pained to hear of Dr. Johnson's illness; pray, give him my love and tell him that he ought to be less frisky if he hopes to keep his limbs sound. I am not surprised that you have got to go South. And I am glad



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of it. Yes, I am glad to know that you will get away from business and that implacable crowd who are constantly trying to bleed you of money. I want to see you enjoying life as far as you can, and I want to see *you* getting actual benefit from the money which you have earned by your many years of conscientious industry. To me there is no other spectacle in the world so humiliating as that of people laying themselves out to extort money from others. Do tear yourself away from the sponges. You and Miss Eva ought to have a quiet winter in a congenial climate. I hope you will go to Florida, and, after doing Jacksonville and St. Augustine, why not rent a little furnished cottage and keep house for the winter? Along in February I will run down and make you a visit. Now, think this over, and let me know what you think of it. Mr. Gray, there is no need of there being any sentimentality between us; there never has been. Yet there is every reason why the bond of affection should be a very strong one. My father and you were associates many years, and at his death he very wisely constituted you the guardian (to a great extent) of his two boys. I feel that you have more than executed his wishes; I feel that you have fulfilled those hopes which he surely had that you would be a kind of second father to us, counselling us prudently and succoring us in a timely and generous manner, for which we—for I speak for us both—are deeply, affectionately grateful. It would please me so very much to have you promise me that if ever you are ill or if ever you feel that my presence would relieve your loneliness you will apprise me and let me come to you. If I could afford to do so, I would cheerfully abandon my daily work and go to live with you, doing such purely literary work as delights me; that would, indeed, be very pleasant to me. One of my great regrets is that circumstances compel me to grind away at ephemeral work which is wholly averse to my tastes. But enough of this. Within a month my new book, "Love Songs of Childhood," will be out. I regard it as my best work so far, and am hoping it will be profitable. I do occasional readings. This afternoon I appeared at the Art Institute with Joseph Jefferson, Sol Smith Russell, Octave Thanet, and Hamlin Garland. I recited "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod," "Seein' Things at Night," and "Our Two Opinions," and was heartily encored, but declined to do anything further. Julia, Ida, Posie, and I may drop in on you Saturday morning to spend Sunday. Would you like it? Would the child be too much for the peace and dignity of the household? Dear Mr. Gray, do be good to *yourself*. Don't let the rest of creation worry you one bit. You are about the only man I have to depend upon, for you know the good that is in me, as well as the folly. Our love to the Butterflyish Miss Eva, and more love to you—God bless you! Ever affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.  
1033 Evanston Ave., Station X, Chicago,  
October 25th, 1894.

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This is the most soberly, self-revealing letter written by Eugene Field that has come within my ken. Through it the reader is taken into the confidence which existed between the writer and his constant friend—a confidence further extended in the following letter which reports progress in the attainment of “the house”:

DEAR MR. GRAY: Our deal was closed last evening (Monday). It would have been closed Saturday but for a clerical error, which put the whole matter off over Sunday. I have told the cashier at the Record office to pay you One Hundred Dollars a month, beginning in May. She will communicate with you as to how you desire remittances made. Julia and I feel deeply obligated to you for your prompt and cordial action, without which we might have been seriously embarrassed. The plans we have at present are to introduce gas into the house, to add two rooms, and to have a bath-room and laundry tubs put in. We shall do nothing about a heating apparatus until late in the summer. This will enable us not to borrow any money until August; by that time we shall be able to see our way clearer than we do now. Mr. Stone wants to help us somewhat, and he has told us to send the bill for house-painting to him. We shall be compelled to go to the expense of a new cooking range, and I have enough balance at the Record office to pay for that. I am hoping that we shall be able to move into the new quarters by May 1. The children are well. Pinny comes home next Monday for a fortnight's vacation, and we shall be glad to see him. I had a letter from Carter, *alias* Rolling-pin, the other day, and he renews his entreaty for me to join him in his publication venture in St. Louis—but that is wholly impossible. You have probably seen by the newspapers how savagely the Republicans swept the board in Chicago at the elections; the affair was practically unanimous. I can't see that there is much left of the party which Emory Storrs once designated “an organized appetite.” We all unite in affectionate remembrances to you and Miss Eva. We shall be able and glad this summer to have you with us for a while.

Affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

1033 Evanston Ave., Station X, Chicago,  
April 9th, 1895.

“The house” upon which Field devoted so much thought at this time, and every dollar he could raise by forestalling his income, was a commodious, old-fashioned building in Buena Park, which stood well back from Clarendon Avenue in a grove of native oaks within sight of Lake Michigan. Its yard was mostly a sand waste, which needed a liberal top dressing of black earth to produce the semblance to a lawn. The remodelling of the house and the process of converting sand into a green sward with flower-beds and a kitchen garden furnished light employment and a never-failing subject for quips and bucolic absurdities to its owner, to whom land ownership seemed to give a new grip on life. The story of the remaking of this building



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into a comfortable modern house and of converting the sandy soil surrounding it into a land of horticulture promise is told by Field in whimsical style in "The House," a work unfinished at the time of his death. The first instalment of this story appeared in "Sharps and Flats" on May 15th. Eighteen chapters followed on successive days without a break. By August 15th, when the last instalment was printed, a vexatious series of disappointments had robbed Field's humor of its natural buoyancy. He therefore dropped the story in about the same unfinished stage as he found his new home when his impatience finally took possession of it before the carpenters and painters were all out. On May 14th he wrote to his aged Maecenas:

DEAR MR. GRAY: I returned from my St. Joseph's trip last Saturday and found your draft awaiting me here. The men have begun to push work on the house, and it is expected that the plastering will be done this week. I have no doubt that we shall be able to move into our new home the first of June, although the place may not be in complete trim at that time. I cannot tell you how pleasurably I anticipate life in the house which I can call a permanent home. I expect to do better work now than ever before. And I want you to understand that Julia and I keenly appreciate that but for you the important move we have made could hardly have been undertaken. We are hoping that you will run up here for a day or two early in June. Our love to you and Miss Eva.  
Affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

The next and last letter which I shall quote from this interesting correspondence has the unique distinction of being the only one from him of all that passed between them that is not in Field's own chirography. In inditing this, he substituted the serviceable typewriter for the pen, that had been his companion for so many years, and that had served him "so diligently," as he so beautifully acknowledged in the apostrophe to it addressed to his brother Roswell. It bears date July 2d, and testifies to the writer's failure to realize the bright anticipation of getting into his new home during the early days of the leafy month of June:

Chicago, July 3d, 1895.

DEAR MR GRAY: For the last two weeks I have been deferring writing to you, hoping from day to day that I would be able to announce our removal into the new house, but it seems as though the Fates are conspired against us. First it was one thing to delay our removal, then it was another, and finally everything. Here it is the first of the month, and we are still in our rented quarters. We intended to begin moving yesterday, and up to the very last moment on Saturday hoped to be able to do so, but the painters, and carpenters, and the plumbers combined against us, and we are in the spot where you saw us when last in Chicago. From this beginning you will gather that the new house is in rather a sad plight. It



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is not altogether so. The paper-hangers and painters are nearly through with the second-story, and have done considerable work down-stairs. I suppose that if everything was ready for them they could get through in two days. The work that remains for the carpenters and for the plumbers to do is of a pottering character, just enough and of just such a character as to be slow, and, consequently, exasperating. I presume to say that we will be in the house at the end of this week, but another week must elapse before we are in anything like order. Meanwhile the painters have nearly completed painting the outside of the building, which, with its new fresh coat of white paint and its green blinds is going to look quite stunning, we think. The front lawn has engaged my attention pretty much all of the time since you were here, and I have brought it around into a state of subjection, although I am told—and I think—that it will not be at its best before another year. The neighbors have been very kind, and have provided me with plants and flowers, and other green growing things, and the consequence is that I have a fine lot of flowers, roses, nasturtiums, and poppies. I have devoted about five square feet of ground to pop-corn, and, not knowing anything about the habits of the creature, planted it in a bunch. I have now enough pop-corn to do the whole State of Illinois for the next two years. It grows so fast that I seem almost to hear it grow. I also have thirty hills of potatoes which I planted myself. I dug them up every day to see how they were getting along. The neighbors made all sorts of fun, and said the potatoes would not live. They are not only living, but flourishing. All that I fear now is that the potato-bug will put in an appearance, and thus blast my first and fondest agricultural hope. You see I am so devoted to the garden and to the lawn that I am likely to neglect telling you what you are probably most anxious to know about—the interior of the house. We have extended a porch from the front side around to the north side of the house, so that when you come here next (and I hope that will be soon), you will be able to step from your room out through a French window upon the north side to the porch. This change we did not have in view when you were here, but our friends tell us it is a vast improvement upon the original plan. The front door is a very imposing affair. It is of solid oak, very tasteful in design and very imposing in appearance. We are going to hang our best brass knocker upon it, and this ornamentation will enhance its beauty. The front hall is completed, and so is the parlor, through which you go to enter your room. The large front room on the ground floor, which we call the library, is now in the hands of the cabinetmaker. By this you are to understand that we are having the oak trimming stained very dark so as to match the permanent book-cases which the cabinetmaker has constructed for us, and



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which will be set up this week. These book-cases extend around three sides of the room, and will be capable of containing about twelve hundred books. They are very handsome pieces of furniture. We had them constructed in such a way as to be able to add glass doors when we think we can afford to do so. We shall not put any mantel either in the library or in Julia's room until the financial outlook clears, for, as you surmised when you were here, the funds with which you provided us are not sufficient to do all that we want to do. The roof to the old house will have to be patched up some. Then I think we ought to have a roadway constructed from the front gate to the house. The road at present is pretty nearly impassable. My idea is that we ought to have a road-bed of coal cinders rolled down and covered with fine gravel. This kind of road in private grounds is, I understand, practically everlasting. Then, we have got to have a front gate, the old affair having gone all to pieces. It is not at all necessary to have a new fence for some time to come. I am told that a roadway such as we want will cost \$50. This means, I suppose, \$75. Mr. Stone is going to pay for the exterior painting of the house. I suppose we ought to have the shingle roof painted. One coat would be sufficient, and would involve a cost of \$35 at the outside. So far we have done pretty well, I think, with the means at our disposal. What we have put into the house is of a good and durable quality. Of course I understand, and so do you, that if we had the same work to do over again doubtless we could do it cheaper, if not better. There are also changes which have suggested themselves as we went along which we did not deem it wise to make, inasmuch as they were not absolutely necessary, and would have involved an expenditure which we did not feel justified in making. I am hoping that you will find it possible to spend your birthday with us. If you will send me the date of the auspicious anniversary I will gladly send passes for you and Miss Eva to come, and we shall try to make your stay pleasant. You asked me in your letter what plans I had for a summer trip. I have no plans at all. It is so cool here that I do not feel disposed to go away from home. Then, again, I am so much interested in the new premises that I find in that interest another reason for staying home. It has occurred to me that it might be both wise for you and Miss Eva to make this point a base for operations this summer. Why can't you both come here, and from here make such excursions into Wisconsin and Michigan as may suggest themselves to you from week to week as pleasant and profitable. It is possible that either Julia or I, or maybe both of us, may be able to join some of these little desultory trips with you. Roswell has been called to an editorial position on the Times-Herald, and he will begin



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work on the first of August, arriving here, however, about the middle of July, and devoting a fortnight to getting settled in quarters of some kind or another, and perhaps taking a few days' rest in Wisconsin. So you see, if you can arrange to be here on your birthday we shall all have a nice family visit together.

Trotty has been in Kansas City nearly three months. She will be home in a day or two accompanied by her Aunt Etta, who comes ahead of Roswell to hunt up quarters.

The children are well. Julia looks well, but I think she is pretty well fagged out, having worried a good deal about the house, and being unaccustomed to the contrary ways of workmen. I am feeling better now than I have felt for five years, which fact I impute very largely to the out-of-door exercise which I am taking in the garden and upon the bicycle. I am doing good work and am feeling generally encouraged. Give my love to Miss Eva, and as for yourself, be assured always that we appreciate your very great kindness, and that we are very grateful for it. Let us hear from you very soon, and be sure to get your affairs in such condition that you can be here upon your birthday.

Always affectionately yours,

EUGENE FIELD.

A postscript by pen informed Mr. Gray that the Record office held \$200 for him on account, for which a draft would be sent as soon as the cashier returned from a brief vacation.

During the years here passing in review Field entered upon a new role—that of entertaining distinguished visitors for the Record. While Mr. Stone was editor of the Morning News this important incident of metropolitan journalism fell to his lot, and with Field as his first lieutenant, he enjoyed it. Mr. Lawson, when he assumed the duties of editorship in addition to the details of publishing, had no time to waste on such social amenities, and thereafter delegated to Field the task of representing the Record on all such occasions. As Field exercised his own choice of occasions, as well as guests, the task was entirely congenial to his nature, and as Mr. Lawson paid the bills, fully within the narrow limits of his purse. One of the most memorable of the entertainments that followed from this happy arrangement was a luncheon at the Union League Club, in honor of Edward Everett Hale. The company invited to meet the liberal divine consisted of a few Saints, more Sinners, and a fair proportion of the daughters of Eve. Field prepared the menu with infinite care, and to the carnal eye it read like a dinner fit for the gods. But in reality it consisted of typical New England dishes, in honor of our New England guest, masquerading in the gay and frivolous lingo of the French capital. Codfish-balls, with huge rashers of bacon, boiled corned beef and cabbage, pork and

beans, with slices of soggy Boston brown-bread, corn-bread and doughnuts, the whole topped off with apple-pie and cheese, were



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served with difficult gravity by the waiters to an appreciative company. The bill promised some rare and appropriate wine for each course, and the table flashed with the club's full equipment of cut glass for each plate. But alas and alack-a-day! when the waiters came to serve the choicest vintages from the correctly labelled bottles, they gave forth nothing but Waukesha spring water. Not even "lemonade of a watery grade" did we have to wash down our luncheon, where every dish was seasoned to the taste of a salted codfish. But we had all the water we could drink, and before we were through we needed it. Sol Smith Russell was among the guests that day, and he and Field gave imitations of each other, which left the company in doubt as to which was the original.

It was on an occasion somewhat similar to this, given in the early winter, that Field perpetrated one of his most characteristic jokes, with the assistance of Mr. Stone, by this time manager of the Associated Press. The latter, at no little trouble, had provided as luscious a dessert of strawberries as the tooth of epicure ever watered over. They were the first of the season, and fragrant with the fragrance that has given the berry premiership in the estimation of others besides Isaac Walton. While everybody was proving that the berries tasted even better than they looked, and exclaiming over the treat, Field was observed to push his saucer out of range of temptation. At last Stone remarked Field's action, and asked: "What's the matter, Gene, don't you like strawberries?"

"Like them?" said Field; "I fairly adore strawberries! They are the only fruit I prefer to pie."

"Then why don't you eat yours?" queried Stone.

"B-because," answered Field, with a deep quaver in his voice, "b-because I'm afraid it would s-s-spoil my appetite for p-prunes."

Through these years Field was also the central figure in the entertainments of the Fellowship Club, and contributed more to the reputation these attained for wit and mirth-provoking scenes than all other participators combined. But he had begun to weary of the somewhat forced play of such gatherings, and found more pleasure watching the children romping in the Waller lot, or pottering about and overseeing the planting in his own new front yard. He had arrived at the time when he wanted to get away from the city and into the country as far as the engagements of his profession would permit. This spirit is dominant in these lines to his friend Louis Auer:

*The August days are very hot, the vengeance of the sky  
Has sapped the groves' vitality and browned the meadows dry;  
Creation droops, and languishes, one cannot sleep or eat—  
Dead is the city market-place, and dead the city street!  
It is the noontime of the year, when men should seek repose  
Where rustic lakes go rippling and the water-lily*

*grows; Come, let us swerve a season from the dusty urban track, And off with Louis Auer to his Lake*



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### *Pewaukee shack!*

Upon a slight declivity that quiet refuge lies,  
Where stately forest-trees observe the hot of cloudy skies!  
The shack is back a goodly distance from the mighty lake  
Whose waters on the pebbly beach with pretty music break;  
Boats go a-sailing to and fro, and fishermen are there  
With schemes to tempt the pike or bass or pickerel from their lair—  
Oh with sailing, shooting, fishing, you can fancy there's no lack  
Of fun with Louis Auer at his Lake Pewaukee shack.

The shack is wide and rangey, with bunks built up around,  
While on the walls the trophies of the flood and field abound;  
The horns of elk and moose, the skins of foxes, beavers, mink,  
Keep glossy guard above the horde that gaily eat and drink;  
It's oh, the famous yarns we tell and famous yarns we hear,  
And we taste the grateful viands or we quaff the foaming beer;  
And many a lively song we sing and many a joke we crack  
When we're guests of Louis Auer at his Lake Pewaukee shack.

No wonder that too swiftly speed the happy hours away  
In the company of Silverman and Underwood and Shea;  
Of Yenowine, McNaughten, Kipp, Peck, Lush, and General Falk—  
Eight noble men in action, but nobler yet in talk!  
These are the genial spirits to be met with in that spot.  
Where are winters never chilly and summers never hot!  
And a fellow having been there always hankers to get back  
With those friends of Louis Auer's in that Lake Pewaukee shack.

To this o'ercrowded city for the nonce let's say goodbye,  
And northward to the lake of Pewaukee let us hie!  
To-night we'll lay us down to dreams of calm and cool delight,  
Where owls and dogs and Kipp make solemn music all the night;  
But with our fill of satisfying, big voluptuous cakes,  
Such only as that prince of cooks friend Louis Auer makes,  
We'll sleep and dream sweet dreams despite that roaring pack,  
So come, let's off with Auer to his Lake Pewaukee shack.\_

## CHAPTER XI

### LAST DAYS



At last (July, 1895) Field was in his own house, provided, as he said, with all the modern conveniences, including an ample veranda and a genial mortgage. About it were the oaks, in whose branches the birds had built their nests before Chicago was a frontier post. He could sit upon the “front stoop” and look across vacant lots to where Lake Michigan beat upon the sandy shore with ceaseless rhythm. Inside, the house was roomy and cheery with God’s own sunlight pouring in through generous windows. Reversing the usual order of things in this climate of the southwest wind, the porch was on the northeast exposure of the house. The best room in it was the library, and here, for the first time in his career, Field had the opportunity to provide shelf-room for his books and cabinets for his curios. An artist



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would have said that their arrangement was crude and ineffective; but from the collector's point of view the arrangement could scarcely have been bettered. Everything seemed to have settled in its appropriate niche, according to its value in the collector's eye, irrespective of its value in the dealer's catalogue. Of his collection before it was moved from the house on Evanston Avenue, adjoining the Waller lot, his friend Julian Ralph wrote:

"He had cabinets and closets filled with the wreckage of England, New England, Holland, and Louisiana; walls littered with mugs, and prints, and pictures, plates, and warming-pans; shelves crowded with such things, and mantel-pieces likewise loaded, through two stories of his house. All were curios of value, or else beauty, for he was no ignoramus in his madness. His den above stairs, where he sat surrounded by a great and valuable collection of first editions and other prized books, was part of the museum. There hung the axe Mr. Gladstone gave him at Hawarden, and the shears that Charles A. Dana used during a quarter of a century. These two prizes he cherished most. He had been to Mr. Dana and begged the shears, receiving the promise that he should have them left to him in Mr. Dana's will. He waited five years, grew impatient, past endurance, and then came on to New York and got the shears from Paul Dana."

To his new home, which he christened "The Sabine Farm," were moved all the accumulated treasures of his mania for curiosities and antiques. "I do not think he thought much of art," wrote Edward Everett Hale in his introduction to "A Little Book of Profitable Tales"; and the motley, albeit fascinating, aggregation of rare and outlandish chattels in Eugene Field's house justified that conclusion. Of what the world calls art, whether the creation of the brush, the chisel, the loom, or the potter's oven, he had the most rudimentary conception. His eye was ever alert for things queer, rare, and "out of print." Of these he was a connoisseur beyond compare, a collector without a peer. He valued prints, not for their beauty or the art of the engraver, but for some peculiarity in the plate, or because of the difficulties overcome in their "comprehension." He knew all that was to be known of the delightful art of the binder, but his most cherished specimen would always be one where a master had made some slip in tooling. For oddities and rarities in all the range of the collector's fever, from books and prints to pewter mugs and rag dolls, his mania was omnivorous and catholic. And strange as it may seem, with his mania was mingled a shrewd appreciation of the commercial side of it all. This is what Mr. Ralph means when he says Field was no ignoramus in his madness.



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Therefore it is not to be wondered at that his collection of strange and fantastic, odd and curious, things filled his library and overflowed and clustered every nook and corner of the Sabine Farm. Here was a “thumb” Bible, there the smallest dictionary in the world. In one corner was stacked a freakish lot of canes—some bought because they were freaks, some with a story behind their acquisition, and more presented to him because Field let it be known that he had a penchant for canes—which, by the way, he never carried. In one room there was a shelf of empty bottles of every conceivable shape, size, and “previous condition of servitude”; in another was a perfect menagerie of mechanical toy animals. As he could not decide which he liked best, hideous pewter mugs or delicate china dishes, he “annexed” them indiscriminately, and stored them cheek by jowl, much to the annoyance of his more orderly wife. The old New England pie-plate was a dearer article of vertu to him than the most fragile vase, unless the latter was a rare specimen of a forgotten art. He had a genuine affection for clocks of high and low degree. He loved them for their friendly faces, and endowed them with personal idiosyncrasies, according to their tickings, by which he distinguished them. And so the Sabine Farm had old-fashioned clocks and new-fangled clocks in the halls and bedrooms, on the stairs and mantels, in the cellars beneath and in the garret above—all ticking merrily or sedately, as became their respective makes and natures. But keeping time? Never!

Of books there was no end. Books he had inherited, books he had bought with money pinched from household expenses, and presentation books by the score. All were jumbled together in a confusion that delighted him, but which would have been the despair of an orderly mind. His rare and well-nigh complete collection of books on Horace and of editions of the poet had the place of honor in his library, with the rest nowhere in particular and everywhere in general. Hundreds of his books bear the autographs of their respective authors, while the walls of the house were covered with autograph letters from many of the celebrities and not a few of the notorieties of the world. Even the nonentities found lodgement there. Such another collection as Field’s is not to be met with under any roof in this country; nor could its like be duplicated anywhere, because it reflects the man in all his personal contradictions and predispositions. It is queer and *sui generis*—but mostly “queer”—which word to him always conveyed a sense of inimitable incongruity.

When Field returned from Holland he wore on his third finger a hideous silver ring, that looked like pewter, in which shone, but did not sparkle, a huge green crystal. It was a gorgeous travesty on an emerald. Beauty it had none, nor even quaintness of design. It was just plain ugly; but he had become attached to it because it was conspicuous and had some association with Dutch life connected with it. From this it may be inferred that Field’s taste in jewelry was barbaric; but, happily for Mrs. Field, it was a taste he seldom indulged.



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Besides the pleasure of sitting down amid the spoils of two continents and of two decades of collecting, Field fairly revelled in the, to him, novel sensation of land proprietorship. He did not miss or feel the drain of the weekly deductions from his salary that went to the reduction of his building debt. When that had been arranged for between the Record office and Mr. Gray, Field took no more account of it. It came out of Mrs. Field's allowance. What was that to him? He only recognized the fact that he was his own landlord, and paid taxes, and was exempt from the payment of rent.

[Illustration: EUGENE FIELD WITH HIS DUTCH RING.]

So enamoured was he of these novel sensations of the Sabine Farm that he found it hard to tear himself away from the communion with the trees, and birds, and bees, out of doors, and with books, and curios, and visitors indoors. Dearly did he love to show his treasures to his friends, who came, not single spies, but in troops, to warm his chairs and congratulate him upon the attainment of his heart's desire. Never did he appear to better advantage than here, except when outside under the trees, surrounded by groups of little children, to whom he discoursed on wonders in natural history more wonderful than all the amazing works of nature set down in their nature study-books. All the animals, and birds, and creeping things in his natural history could talk and sing, could romp and play, could eat and drink—not infrequently too much—and in every way were superior to their kind to be met with among the dry leaves of their school-books. He peopled the world with the trolls, elves, and nixies of fairy-land for his own and his neighbors' babes of all ages.

Is it any wonder that his trips down town became less frequent, that he preferred to do his work at home, and subsidized one of his sons to be his regular messenger to bear his copy to the office? Is it surprising that, along in August, 1895, we find him writing:

Yes, there is no doubt that these rains which we have had in such plenty for the last three days have interrupted and otherwise interfered with the sports of many people. Yet none of us should sulk or complain when he comes to consider how badly we needed the rain, and what a vast amount of good these refreshing down-pourings have done. Vegetation was in a bad, sad way; the trees had begun to have a withered look, and the grass was turning brown. What a change has been wrought by the grace of the rain! Nature smiles once more; the lawns are green, the trees are reviving; the roadsides are beautiful with the grasses, the ferns, and the wild flowers, among which insectivorous life makes cheery music. The rain has arrayed old Mother Earth in a bright new garb. The month of September is close at hand; the conditions of its coming are favorable. There is fun ahead for all us sentimental people. A beautiful moon is waiting rather impatiently for



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the clouds to roll by; the moon is always at her best in the full summer-time.

How good it is to live in this beautiful world of ours; how varied and countless are the blessings bestowed upon us; how sweet is the beneficence of Nature; how dear is the companionship of humanity!

“The companionship of humanity!” Nothing could make up to him any narrowing of that. His friends became dearer to him than ever. He could send his copy down to the printer, but when his friends did not come out in sufficient numbers to Buena Park he made the long trip to town to meet them at luncheon or in the Saints’ and Sinners’ Corner at McClurg’s. Here he held almost daily court, and mulled over the materials for “The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac”—the opening chapter of which appeared in his “Sharps and Flats” on August 30th. Here he confided to a few that the grasshopper had “become a burden,” by reason of the weariness of his long convalescence. Here he had those meetings with the Rev. Frank W. Gunsaulus which resulted in the frequent transfer of poems from the latter’s pocket to the “Sharps and Flats” column, without initial or sign to intimate that they were other than Field’s own vintage, only from a new press. Here, too, his whole bearing and conversation were so uniformly hopeful, hearty, and light-hearted, that they deceived all his associates into confidence that the new home had instilled new life into our friend’s gaunt frame.

His column, too, reflected the genial, mellow spirit that played through all his speech and ways during the early autumn days of 1895. No other work that he had done so completely satisfied him as “The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac.” He was steeped in the lore of the cult. He had yielded to its fascinations while preserving the keenest appreciation of its whims and weaknesses. And so the story meandered on through September and October with an ever-increasing charm of mingled sentiment and sweet satire; and so it seemed as if it might meander on forever.

But he did not attempt to write a chapter of this exquisite reminiscing every day. It was sandwiched in between columns of paragraphs and verse such as had earned for him his great vogue with the readers of the Record. He could still surprise and pain the “first literary circles of Chicago” with such literary notes as:

It is officially announced by the official board of managers of the National Federation of Realists that Hamlin Garland put on his light-weight flannels last week.

In the north branch recently was found a turtle having upon its back the letters P.B.S.—the initials of the revered name of the immortal Percy Bysshe Shelley.

And he did not fail to keep Chicago informed of the latest Buena Park news in such rural journal notes as these:

Among the many improvements to be noticed in the Park this spring is the handsome new collar with which the ever-enterprising William Clow, Esq., has provided his St. Bernard dog.



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A dessert of sliced bananas and oranges is all the rage in the Park this season. Tapioca pudding is a thing of the past. How true it is that humanity is ever variable and fickle!

But there was very much less of this sort of thing and of the daily badinage of the paragrapher than in the days of Field's primacy in that line. He was reserving all that was freshest, and sweetest, and most delicate in his fancy for the "Love Affairs."

I spent the summer of 1895 in Evanston, and one night in October, just as the family was thinking of retiring, I was called to the telephone by Field, who asked if we had any pie in the house, for he was coming up to get a slice from the pantry of my Vermont mother-in-law. He was gladly bidden to come along. In a few minutes in he walked, and was made welcome to whatever the pantry afforded—whether it was pie, pickles, or plain cheese and crackers, I do not now recall. It appeared that he had been in Evanston that night, giving a reading for the benefit of a social and literary club such as were always drawing drafts upon his good-nature and powers of entertaining. I never knew Field in better spirits than he was that night. He told of several humorous incidents that happened at the reading, and then recited one or two of the things he had read there. He sat at the piano and crooned songs and caressed the ivory keys as he told stories and we talked of the "Love Affairs" and of his prospects, which were never brighter. None who were present that memorable night will forget his reading of "The Night Wind." We turned the lights down low and listened, while with that wonderful voice he brought "the night that broods outside" into the darkened room, with that weird and ghostly:

Yooooooooo!  
Yooooooooo!  
Yooooooooo!

Not until there was barely time to catch the last electric-car for Buena Park did Field tear himself away from that appreciative company; and then he insisted that I should go with him to the cars. And so we "walked and talked," as of old, until the last south-bound car came. And as he boarded it, it seemed as if ten years had been wiped off the record, and I should see him at the office next morning. And that was the last time I ever saw Eugene Field alive.

For a few mornings after that I read his column in the Record. A few more chapters were added to the "Love Affairs," and then:

On Saturday morning, November 2d, Field spoke to the readers of the Record, through his accustomed column and in his accustomed spirit of human sympathy and genial humor. It led off with the little shot at his native city:

No matter what else it did, if the earthquake shock waked up St. Louis, there should be no complaint.



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And it concluded with a loyal defence of his old friend and associate, "Bill" Nye, who, having aroused the ire of an audience at Paterson, N.J., had been roughly set upon and egged by a turbulent crowd of men while on his way to the railroad station. Field indignantly repelled the suggestion that Nye's indiscretion was due to inebriety, but traced it to his bad health. "Only the utmost caution," he wrote, "and the most scrupulous observance of the rules laid down by his physician have enabled Nye to go ahead with his work. This work in itself has been arduous. If there is anything more vexatious or more wearing than travelling about the country in all kinds of weather and at the mercy of railroads, and lecture-bureaus, and hotel-keepers, we do not know it."

And yet, at the very moment Field wrote this he, a more delicately organized invalid than "Bill" Nye, had his ticket bought, his state-room engaged, and his trunk packed to leave for Kansas City, where he was to give a reading on the evening of Monday, November 4th. He felt so indisposed on Saturday that he did not leave his bed. That, however, did not prevent his finishing Chapter XIX of the "Love Affairs." As it was no unusual thing for him to write, as well as read, in bed, this occasioned no alarm in the family circle. But that evening he decided to give up the Kansas City trip, and asked his brother Roswell to wire the management of the affair to that effect. On Sunday he was still indisposed, but received numerous visitors. To one of them, who remarked that it was a perfect November day, Field said: "Yes, it is a lovely day, but this is the season of the year when things die, and this fine weather may mean death to a thousand people. We may hear of many deaths to-morrow."

In the evening he complained of a pain in his head; and as he was feeling a little feverish, Dr. Hedges, who lived near by, was called in. He came about half-past ten o'clock; and after taking Field's temperature, which was only slightly above normal, said it was due to weakness, and probably resulted from the excitement of seeing so many visitors. Field joked with the doctor, told him several stories, and was assured that he was getting on all right. Before leaving, the doctor said that if it was fine on Monday it would do Field good to get out and take some exercise. Shortly before midnight a message came from Kansas City, asking when he would be able to appear there. He dictated an answer, saying that he would come November 16th. Then wishing everybody goodnight, he turned over and went to sleep as peacefully as any little child in one of his stories.

An hour before daylight the sleeper turned in his bed and groaned. His second son, "Daisy," who always slept with his father, spoke to him, but got no answer. Then he reached over and touched him; but there was not the usual response of a word or a caress. In terror-stricken recognition of the awful presence, Daisy alarmed the whole household with his cry, "Come quick! I believe papa is dead!"



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And so it was. Death had stolen upon Eugene Field as he slept. And so they found him, lying in a natural position, his hands clasped over his heart, his head turned to one side, and his lips half parted, as if about to speak.

It was just such a death as he had often said would be his choice. Just a dropping to sleep here and an awakening yonder. The doctor said it was heart-failure, resulting from a sudden spasm of pain. But the face bore no trace of pain. The moan that wakened Daisy was probably that sigh with which mortal parts with mortality—the parting breath between life and death, which will scarcely stir a feather and yet will awaken the soundest sleeper. To my mind Eugene Field died as his father, “of physical exhaustion, a deterioration of the bodily organs, and an incapacity on their part to discharge the vital functions—a wearing out of the machine before the end of the term for which its duration was designed.”

And thus there passed from the midst of us as gentle and genial a spirit as ever walked the earth. I know not why his death should recall that memorable scene of Mallory's, the death of Launcelot, unless it be that Field considered it the most beautiful passage in English literature:

So when sir Bors and his fellowes came to his bed, they found him starke dead, and hee lay as hee had smiled, and the sweetest savour about him that ever they smelled. Then was there weeping and wringing of hands, and the greatest dole they made that ever made men....

Then went sir Bors unto sir Ector, and told him how there lay his brother sir Launcelot dead. And then sir Ector threw his shield, his sword, and his helme from him; and when hee beheld sir Launcelot's visage hee fell down in a sowne, and when hee awaked it were hard for any tongue to tell the dolefull complaints that hee made for his brother. “Ah, sir Launcelot,” said hee, “thou were head of all Christian knights! And now, I dare say,” said sir Ector, “that, sir Launcelot there thou liest, thou were never matched of none earthly knights hands; and thou were the curtiest that ever beare shield; and thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrood horse, and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman; and thou were the kindest man that ever strooke with sword; and thou were the goodliest person that ever came among presse of knights; and thou were the meekest man and the gentlest that ever eate in hall among ladies; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortall foe that ever put speare in the rest.”

Then there was weeping and dolour out of measure.



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If I have interpreted the story of “The Good Knight’s” life aright, the reader will comprehend the relation there is in my mind between the scene at the death of the knightliest knight of romance and that of him who moved in our modern life, steeped and imbued with the thoughts, fancies, and speech of the age of chivalry. For the age of shield, and spear, and tourney, he would have been the unlikeliest man ever born of woman; but with his “sweet pen” he waged unceasing battle for all things beautiful, and true, and pure in this modern world. That is why his best songs sing of mother’s love and childhood and of the eternal bond between them. He hated sham, and humbug, and false pretence, and that is why his daily paragraphs gleam and sparkle with the relentless satire and ridicule; he detested the solemn dulness of conventional life, and that is why he scourged society with the “knotted lash of sarcasm” and dissipated melancholy with the unchecked effrontery of his mirth. And so his songs were full of sweetness, and his words were words of strength; and his last message to the children of his pen was:

Go forth, little lyrics, and sing to the hearts of men. This beautiful world is full of song, and thy voices may not be heard of all—but sing on, children of ours; sing to the hearts of men, and thy song shall at least swell the universal harmony that bespeaketh God’s love and the sweetness of humanity.

And so is it any wonder that when the tidings of his death was borne throughout the land “there was weeping and dolour out of measure,” and that a wave of sympathy swept over the country for the bereft family of the silent singer?

I have often been asked what was Eugene Field’s religious belief—a question I cannot answer better than in the language of the Rev. Frank M. Bristol in his funeral address:

I have said of my dear friend that he had a creed. His creed was love. He had a religion. His religion was kindness. He belonged to the church—the church of the common brotherhood of man. With all the changes that came to his definitions and formulas, he never lost from his heart of hearts the reverence for sacred things learned in childhood, and inherited from a sturdy Puritan ancestry. From that deep store of love and faith and reverence sprang the streams of his happy songs, and ever was he putting into his tender verses those ideas of the living God, the blessed Christ, the ministering angels of immortal love, the happiness of heaven, which were instilled into his-heart when but a boy.

Those who gathered at his house on the day of the funeral and looked upon the form of the “Good Knight” in his last sleep saw a large white rose in one of his hands. There was a touching story connected with that rose: On the preceding afternoon a lady, who was a friend of Field’s, went to a florist’s to order some flowers for the grave. A poorly clad little girl was looking wistfully in at the window and followed the lady into the store.



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“Are those flowers for Mr. Field?” she asked. “Oh, I wish I could send him just one. Won’t you, please, give me one flower?”

The florist placed a beautiful white rose in her little hand. Then she turned and gave it to the lady, with the request: “Please put it near Mr. Field with your flowers.” And the little girl’s single rose—the gift of love without money and without price—was given the place of honor that day beyond the wealth of flowers that filled house and church with the incense of affection for the dead.

The funeral was a memorable demonstration of the common regard in which Field was held by all classes of citizens. The services took place in the Fourth Presbyterian Church, from which hundreds turned sorrowfully away, because they could not gain admission. The Rev. Thomas C. Hall, who had recently succeeded Dr. Stryker, one of Field’s intimate friends, who had been called to the presidency of Hamilton College, conducted the formal ceremonies, in which he was assisted by the Rev. Frank M. Bristol, who delivered the address, and the Rev. Frank W. Gunsaulus, who embodied his tribute to his friend in a poem remarkable for the felicity with which it passed in review many of the more noteworthy of Field’s lyrics. Its opening stanzas read:

*’Midst rustling of leaves in the rich autumn air,  
At eve when man’s life is an unuttered prayer,  
There came through the dusk, each with torch shining bright,  
From far and from near, in his sorrow bedight,  
The old earth’s lone pilgrim o’er land and o’er wave.  
Who gathered around their dear poet’s loved grave.*

With trumpet and drum, but in silence, they came—  
Their paths were illumed by their torches’ mild flame,  
Whose soft lambent streams by love’s glory were lit;  
And where fairy knights and bright elves used to flit  
Across the wan world when the lights quivered dim,  
These watched at the grave, and were mourning for him.\_

That the spirit of those funeral services was neither local nor ephemeral is proved by the following poem, which, by a strange coincidence, came in a round-about way to my desk in the Record-Herald office from their author in Texarkana, Texas, the very day I transcribed the above lines from Dr. Gunsaulus’s “Songs of Night and Morning” into the manuscript of this book:

*EUGENE FIELD*

1.



Sleep well, dear poet of the heart!  
In dreamless rest by cares unbroken;  
Thy mission filled, in peace depart.  
Thy message to the world is spoken.

2.

Thy song the weary heart beguiles;  
Like generous wine it soothes and cheers,  
Yet oftentimes, amid our smiles,  
Thy pathos melts a soul to tears.

3.

In "Casey's Tabble-Dote" no more  
Thy kindly humor will be heard;  
In silence now we must deplore  
The horrors of that "small hot bird."



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4.

The "Restauraw" is silent now,  
The "Conversazzhyony's" over;  
And "Red Hoss Mountain's" gloomy brow  
Looks down where lies "Three-fingered Hoover."

5.

Our friend "Perfesser Vere de Blaw"  
No longer on the "Steenway" prances  
With "Mizzer-Reery" "Opry-Boof,"  
And old familiar songs and dances.

6.

Old "Red floss Mountain's" wrapped in gloom,  
And "Silas Pettibone's shef-doover"  
Has long since vanished from the room  
With "Casey" and "Three-fingered Hoover."

7.

Yet will they live! Though Field depart;  
Thousands his memory will cherish;  
The gentle poet of the heart  
Shall live till life and language perish.

C.S.T.\_

The initials are those of Mr. Charles S. Todd, of Texarkana, Texas; and the poem, besides testifying to the wide-spread sorrow over Field's death, bears witness to the fact that his western dialect verse had a hold on the popular heart only second to his lullabies and poems of childhood.

From the Fourth Presbyterian Church Field's body was borne to its last resting-place, in Graceland cemetery. It is a quiet spot where the poet is interred, in a lovely little glade, away from the sorrowful processions of the main driveways. Leafy branches wave above his grave, shielding it from the glare of the sun in summer and the rude sweep of the winds in winter. The birds flit across it from tree to tree, casting "strange, flutterin' shadders" over the grave of him who loved them so well. And there, one day in the early summer, another bird-lover, Edward B. Clark, heard a wood-thrush, the sweetest of American songsters, singing its vesper hymn, and was moved out of his wont himself to sing:



*THE TRIBUTE OF THE THRUSH*

A bird voice comes from the maple  
Across the green of the sod,  
Breaking the silence of evening  
That rests on this "acre of God."  
'Tis the note of the bird of the woodland,  
Of thickets and sunless retreats;  
Yet the plashing of sunlit waters  
Is the sound of the song it repeats.

Why sing you here in the open,  
O gold-tongued bird of the shade;  
What spirit moves you to echo  
This hymn from the angels strayed?  
And then as the shadows lengthened,  
The thrush made its answer clear:  
"There was void in the world of music,  
A singer lies voiceless here."\_

Thus endeth this inadequate study of my gentle and joyous friend, "the good knight,  
*sans peur et sans monnaie.*"

**APPENDIX**



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The two articles by Eugene Field which follow here are not to be taken as particularly illuminating examples of his literary art or style. For those the reader is referred to his collected works; especially those tales and poems published during his lifetime and to "The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac." These are given to illustrate the liberties Field took with his living friends and with the verities of literary history. There was no such book as the "Ten Years of a Song Bird: Memoirs of a Busy Life," by Emma Abbott; and "The Discoverer of Shakespeare," by Franklin H. Head, was equally a creation of Field's lively fancy. I reproduce the latter review from the copy which Field cut from the Record and sent in pamphlet form to Mr. Head with the following note:

DEAR MR. HEAD: The printers jumbled my review of your essay so fearfully to-day that I make bold to send you the review straightened out in seemly wise. Now, I shall expect you to send me a copy of the book when it is printed, and then I shall feel amply compensated for the worry which the hotch-potch in the Daily News of this morning has given me.

Ever sincerely yours,

EUGENE FIELD.  
May 21st, 1891.

### WHO DISCOVERED SHAKESPEARE?

Mr. Franklin H. Head is about to publish his scholarly and ingenious essay upon "The Discoverer of Shakespeare." Mr. Head is as enthusiastic a Shakespeare student as we have in the West, and his enthusiasm is tempered by a certain reverence which has led him to view with dismay, if not with horror, the exploits of latter-day iconoclasts, who would fain convince the credulous that what has been was not and that he who once wrought never existed. It was Mr. Head who gave to the world several years ago the charming brochure wherein Shakespeare's relations and experience with insomnia were so pleasantly set forth, and now the public is to be favored with a second essay, one of greater value to the Shakespearian student, in that it deals directly and intimately and explicitly with the earlier years of the poet's life. This essay was read before the Chicago Literary Club several weeks ago, and would doubtless not have been published but for the earnest solicitations of General McClurg, the Rev. Dr. Herrick Johnson, Colonel J.S. Norton, and other local literary patrons, who recognized Mr. Head's work as a distinctly valuable contribution to Shakespeariana. Answering the importunities of these sagacious critics, the author will publish the essay, supplementing it with notes and appendices. Of the interesting narrative given by Mr. Head, it is our present purpose to make as complete a review as the limits afforded us this morning will allow, and we enter into the task with genuine timidity, for it is no easy thing to give in so small a compass a fair sketch of the tale and the argument which Mr. Head has presented so entertainingly, so elegantly, and so persuasively.



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Before his courtship of, and marriage with, Anne Hathaway, Shakespeare was comparatively unknown. By a few boon companions he was recognized as a gay and talented young fellow, not wholly averse to hazardous adventure, as his famous connection with a certain poaching affair demonstrated. Shakespeare's father was a pious man, who was properly revered by his neighbors. The son was not held in such high estimation by these simple folk. "Willie, thee beest a merry fellow," quoth the parson to the young player when he first came back from London, "but thee shall never be soche a man as thy father." Down in London his friends were of the rollicking, happy-go-lucky kind; they divided their time between the play-houses and the pot-houses; they lived by their wits, and they were not the first to demonstrate that he who would enjoy immortality must first have learned to live by his wits among mortals. It was while he led this irresponsible bachelor life in London that Shakespeare met one Elizabeth Frum, or Thrum, and with this young woman he appears to have fallen in love. The affair did not last very long, but it was fierce while it was on. Anne Hathaway was temporarily forgotten, and Mistress Frum (whose father kept the Bell and Canister) engaged—aye, absorbed—the attentions of the frisky young poet. At that time Shakespeare was spare of figure, melancholy of visage, but lively of demeanor; an inclination to baldness had already begun to exhibit itself, a predisposition hastened and encouraged doubtless by that disordered digestion to which the poet at an early age became a prey by reason of his excesses. Elizabeth Frum was deeply enamoured of Willie, but the young man soon wearied of the girl and returned to his first love. Curiously enough, Elizabeth subsequently was married to Andrew Wilwhite of Stratford-on-Avon, and lived up to the day of her death (1636) in the house next to the cottage occupied by Anne Hathaway Shakespeare and her children! Wilwhite was two years younger than Shakespeare; he was the son of a farmer, was fairly well-to-do, and had been properly educated. Perhaps more for the amusement than for the glory or for the financial remuneration there was in it, he printed a modest weekly paper which he named "The Tidings"—"an Instrument for the Spreading of Proper New Arts and Philosophies, and for the Indication and Diffusion of What Haps and Hearsays Soever Are Meet for Chronicling Withal." This journal was of unpretentious appearance, and its editorial tone was modest to a degree. The size of the paper was eight by twelve inches, four pages, with two columns to the page. The type used in the printing was large and coarse, but the paper and ink seem to have been of the best quality. A complete file of The Tidings does not survive. The British Museum has all but the third, eleventh, twelfth, and seventeenth volumes; the Newberry Library of Chicago has secured the first, seventh, sixteenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth volumes,



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and the Duke of Devonshire has half-a-dozen volumes. Aside from these copies none other is known to be in existence. Wilwhite was an ardent and life-long admirer of Shakespeare. It is not improbable that after her marriage Elizabeth Frum, proud of her former relations with the poet, encouraged her husband in those cordial offices which helped to promote Shakespeare's contemporaneous fame. At any rate, *The Tidings* was the first public print to recognize Shakespeare's genius, and Andrew Wilwhite was the first of Shakespeare's contemporaries to give public expression to his admiration and abiding faith in the talents of the poet. "We print in our supplement to-day a sonnet from the pen of Willie Shakespeare, son of our esteemed townsman, Squire John Shakespeare. Willie is now located in London, and is recognized as one of the brightest constellations in the literary galaxy of the metropolis."—*The Tidings*, May 18th, 1587. "Mistress Shakespeare laid an egg on our table yesterday measuring eleven inches in circumference. The amiable and accomplished wench informs us that her husband, whose poetic genius frequently illuminates these columns, will visit our midst next month. William, here is our [hand pointing to the right]."—*The Tidings*, June 13th, 1587. "The gifted W. Shaxpur honored this office with a call last Thursday. He was smiling all over. It is a boy, and weighs ten pounds. Thanks, Willie, for the cigar; it was a daisy."—*The Tidings*, July 9th, 1587.

"The fireworks on Squire Shakespere's lawn last Fourth of July night were the finest ever witnessed in the county. They were brought up from London by the Squire's son William, the famous poet."—*Ibid*.

"If you want to make Bill Shaxpeare hopping mad, just ask him how much venison is a pound. All joking aside, Willie is the leading poet of the age."—*The Tidings*, July 16th, 1587.

Two years later the following references were made by Wilwhite to the dramatic prodigy:

"We would acknowledge the receipt (from Isaac Jaggard and Edward Blount, the well-known publishers) of a volume entitled, 'The First Part of King Henry the Sixt,' the same being a dramatic poem by Willie Shaxper, formerly of this town. Critique of the work is deferred."—April 23d, 1589.

"Our London exchanges agree that Willie Shaksper's new play is the greatest thing of the season. We knew that Willie would get there sooner or later. There are no flies on him."—April 23d, 1589.



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“The Thespian Amateur association of the Congregational church will give a performance of ‘King Henry Sixt’ in the town hall next Thursday evening. Reuben Bobbin, our talented tinsmith, enacting the role of his majesty. This play, being written by one of our townsmen and the greatest poet of the age; should be patronized by all. Ice-cream will be served inter actes.”—November 6th, 1589. “We print elsewhere to-day an excerpt from the Sadler’s Wells Daily Blowpipe, critically examining into the literary work of W. Shakspeyr, late of this village. The conclusion reached by our discriminating and able exchange is that Mr. Shackspeere is without question a mighty genius. We have said so all along, and we have known him ten years. Now that the Metropolitan press indorses us, we wonder what will the doddering dotard of the Avon Palladium have to say for his festering and flyblown self.”—December 14th, 1589. In 1592 the Palladium reprinted an opinion given by Robert Greene: “Here is an upstart crow,” said Greene of Shakespeare, “beautified with our feathers, that supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the rest of you, and, being an absolute Johannes factotum, is, in his own conceit, the only shake-scene in the country.” Another contemporaneous critic said of the scene between Brutus and Cassius in “Julius Caesar”: “They are put there to play the bully and the buffoon, to show their activity of face and muscles. They are to play a prize, a trial of skill and hugging and swaggering, like two drunken Hectors, for a two-penny reckoning.” Shakespeare’s contemporaries—or, at least, many of them—sought to belittle his work in this wise. Why, even in later years so acute a critic as John Dennis declared that “his lines are utterly void of celestial fire,” and Shaftesbury spoke of his “rude, unpolished style and antiquated phrase and wit.”

In the year 1600, having written his *chef d’oeuvre*, the poet retired to Stratford for a brief period of rest.

“Our distinguished poet-townsmen, Shakespyr, accompanied us on an angling last Thursday, and ye editor returned well-laden with spoils. Two-score trouts and a multitude of dace and chubs were taken. Spending the night at the Rose and Crown, we were hospitably entertained by Jerry Sellars and his estimable lady, who have recently added a buttery to their hostelry, and otherwise adorned the premises. Over our brew in the evening the poet regaled us with reminiscences of life in London, and recited certain passages from his melancholy history of Hamlet, prince of Denmark, the same being a new and full mournful tragicomic of mightie excellence.”—The Tidings, May 13th, 1600. In the London News-Letter, September 6th, 1600, there occurred this personal notice: “At the Sweet Briar coffee-house Mr. A. Wilwhite, from Stratford-on-Avon, sojourneth as the guest of



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William Shack-speyr, player.” About the same time Ben Jonson wrote to Dick Craven at Canterbury: “Andrew Wilwhite hath been with us amid great cheer and merriment, the same being that he saith he was the one that discovered our master, Will Shackpur, and that I do for a verity believe, for that Shakspur is vastly beholden unto him, and speaketh of him as he were a twin-brother or one by some great office bounden unto him.” Wilwhite went on Shakespeare’s bond in 1604, in certain property transfers involving what was then regarded as a considerable sum of money. The same year an infant Shakespeare was named after Wilwhite, the second daughter in the family having already been christened Elizabeth Wilwhite. From 1605 up to the time of the poet’s death, eleven years later, nearly every issue of *The Tidings* bristled with friendly notices of “our eminent townsman,” “our world-famed Shakespeare,” and “our immortal poet.” Shakespeare lived in Stratford those last years; he was well-to-do; he had prospered, and his last days were passed serenely. The musty files of that rurally candid little paper bear pleasing testimony to the Arcadian simplicity of the noble bard’s declining years. They tell us with severe brevity of the trifling duties and recreations that engaged the poet. We learn that “a new and handsome front gate has been put up on the premises of our famous Shakspear”; that “our honored townsman-poet hath graciously contributed three-and-sixpence toward the mending of the town pump”; that “a gloom hath been cast over the entire community by the bone-felon upon Mr. Shaikspur’s left thumb”; that “our immortal Shakespeere hath well discharged the onerous offices of road-overseer for the year past”; that “our sweete friend, Will Shakespear, will go fishing for trouts to-morrow with his good gossip, Ben Jonson, that hath come to be his guest a little season”; that “Master W. Shackspur hath a barrow that upon the slaughtering did weigh 400 weight”; that “the laylocks in the Shaxpur yard being now in bloom filleth the air with delectable smells, whereby the poet is mightily joyed in that he did plant and nurture the same,” *etc., etc.* “Sweet were those declining years,” writes the essayist; “sweet in their homely moderate delights, sweet in their wholesome employments, sweet in their peacefulness and repose. But sweeter and holier yet were they in the loyalty of a friendship that, covering a long period of endeavor, of struggle and adversity, survived to illumine and to glorify, as it has been a quenchless flame, the evening of the poet’s life. An o’erturned stone, upon which the ivy seeks to hide the ravages which time has made, marks the spot where Wilwhite sleeps the last gracious sleep of humanity. Now and again wayfarers, straying thence, wonder whose dust it is that mingles with the warmth of Mother Earth beneath that broken tablet. And while they wonder there amid the hush, which only the music of the birds profanes, and with the fragrance of wild flowers all around, love is fulfilled and loyalty perfected; for beyond the compass of years they that wrought together and were true abide in sweet companionship eternally.”

EUGENE FIELD.  
May 20th, 1891.



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The review of Miss Abbott's fictitious autobiography needs no further introduction, save the statement that the only parts of it that are based on fact are those which refer to the high esteem in which its subject—or shall I say its victim?—was held by Field and the names and relations of the parties mentioned. If the reader cares to compare some of the phrases used in this autobiography with others quoted from the proceedings in the Vermont litigation in the early chapters of this book, he will find striking evidence of the persistence of literary expression in the Field family:

### REVIEW OF THE MEMOIRS OF MISS EMMA ABBOTT.

The advance sheets of Miss Abbott's biography have been sent to us by the publishers. This volume, consisting of 868 pages, is entitled, "Ten Years a Song Bird: Memoirs of a Busy Life, by Emma Abbott." It will be put upon the market in time to catch what is called the holiday trade, and we hope it will have that enormous sale to which its merits entitle it. It is altogether a charming book—it reads like a woman's letters, so full is it of confidence couched in the artless, easy, unpretentious language of femininity. The style is so unconscious that at times it really seems as if, attired in wrapper and slippers, the fair narrator were lolling back in an easy-chair talking these interesting things into your friendly ear. Miss Abbott is a lady for whom we have had for a number of years—ever since her debut as a public singer—the highest esteem. She is one of the most conscientious of women in her private walk, conscientious in every relationship and duty and practice that go to make the sum of her daily life. This conscientiousness, involving patience, humility, perseverance, and integrity, has been, we think, the real secret of her success. And no one who has watched her steady rise from poverty to affluence, and from obscurity to fame, will deny the proposition that the woman is genuinely successful; and successful, too, in the best sense, and by hard American methods. However, it shall be our attempt not to suffer our warm personal regard for this admirable lady to color too highly our professional estimate of the literary work now before us. Although the "Memoirs of a Busy Life" purports to be a review merely of the period of Miss Abbott's career as a prima donna, there are three prefatory chapters wherein are detailed quite elaborately the incidents of her girl-life and of her early struggles. This we view with particular approval, the more in especial because, since Miss Abbott's achievement of fame, a number of hitherto obscure localities have claimed distinction as being the place of her birth. Miss Abbott records this historical fact: "It was on the first day of June, 1858, the month of flowers, of song and of bridals, in the then quiet hamlet of Peoria, whose shores are laved by the waters of the peaceful Illinois river and whose sun-kissed



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hills melt away into the clouds—it was then and there that I was ushered into life.” The old family nurse, one Barbara Deacon (for whom the grateful cantatrice has abundantly provided), recalls that at the very moment of the infant’s birth a strangely beautiful bird fluttered down from a pear-tree, alighting upon the window-sill, and caroled forth a wondrous song, hearing which the infant (*mirabile dictu!*) turned over in its crib and accompanied the winged songster’s melody with an accurate second alto. This incident Miss Abbott repeats as one of the many legends bearing upon her infancy; but, with that admirable practical sense so truly characteristic of her, she adds: “Of course I repose no confidence in this story—I have always taken this bird’s tale *cum grano salis*.” In early childhood Emma exhibited a passion for music; at three years of age she discoursed upon the piano-forte in such a manner as to excite the marvel of all auditors. The teacher of the village school at that time was one Eugene F. Baldwin, who, being somewhat of a musician and an accomplished tenor singer of the old school, discovered the genius of this child, and did all he could to develop and encourage it. When she began to go to school Emma indicated that she had an apt, acquisitive, and retentive mind; she progressed rapidly in her studies, but her health was totally inadequate, so at the age of twelve years she was compelled to abandon her studies. Shortly thereafter she removed with her family to Chicago. In this city Emma lived for four years, during most of which time she received instruction in vocalism from the venerable Professor Perkins. On several occasions she sang in public, and the papers complimented her as the “Child Patti.” When she was sixteen years old Emma went East with the determination to make her own living. All she had she carried in a homely carpet-bag —“nay, not all,” she adds, “for I had a strong heart and a willing hand.” Her mother had taught her to do well whatsoever she did.” I could cook well, and scrub well, and sew well,” she says, “and now I was resolved to learn to sing well. At any rate, I was going to make a living, for if I failed at all else I could cook or sew or scrub.” That’s pluck of the noblest kind! Emma was a devoutly religious girl; she joined the Rev. Dr. Bellow’s church soon after her arrival in Brooklyn, and presently secured a position in the choir of the church. The members of the congregation soon began to take more than a passing interest in her, being attracted more and more by the sweetness of her singing and the saintliness of her beauty and by the circumspection and modesty of her demeanor. One member of the congregation (and we now come to an interesting period in our heroine’s life) was a young druggist named Wetherell—Eugene Wetherell—who became deeply enamoured of the spirituelle choir-singer. He was handsome, talented, and pious, and to these charms Emma very



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properly was not wholly insensible. With commendable candor she told young Wetherell that she had certain high ambitions or duties which she was determined to follow at the sacrifice of every selfish consideration; if he were willing to wait for her until she saw her way clear to the accomplishment of those duties, she would then link her destiny indissolubly with his. To this the young druggist acceded. In 1877 Emma was enabled to go to Paris to perfect her music studies. Certain wealthy members of Dr. Bellow's church provided her with the financial means, which she accepted as a loan, to be paid in due season. In chapter four of the memoirs we are regaled with an instructive record of Emma's voyage across the Atlantic, her admiration of the magnitude of the ocean, her consciousness of man's utter helplessness should storms arise and drive the ship upon hidden rocks, *etc.*, *etc.* In the next chapter she laments the exceeding depravity of Paris, and expresses wonderment that in so fair a city humanity should abandon itself to such godless and damnable practices. These things we refer to because they show the serious, not to say pious, trend of the young woman's mind. In one place she says: "I thank God that my Eugene is tending a drug-store in Brooklyn instead of being surrounded by the divers temptations of this modern Babylon; for, circumspect and pure though he may be by nature, hardly could he be environed by all this wretchedness without receiving some taint therein." While she was in Paris she became acquainted with the great Gounod and with the brilliant but erratic Offenbach. Gounod introduced her to many of the greatest composers and singers. Among her friendliest acquaintances she numbered Wagner and Liszt. The latter wrote her a sonata to sing, and Wagner tried to get her permission for him to introduce her into the trilogy he was then at work upon. Meissonier made an exquisite study of her, and the younger Dumas made her the heroine of one of his brightest comedies, "La Petite Americaine." There was one man, however, whom our heroine would not suffer to be introduced to her; that man was Zola. She would never recognize in her list of acquaintances, so she told Gounod with an angry stamp of her tiny foot, any man who debased his God-given talents to smut and lubricity. In 1879 Miss Abbott returned to her native land, fully prepared to engage in the profession of a public singer. Her first tour of the country was a continuous round of ovations. The public hailed her as the queen of American song; the press was generous in its appreciation. The next year she embarked in opera. This cost her a season of severe self-struggle. She dreaded to expose herself to the temptations of the stage. In her memoirs she assures us with all gravity that she prayed long and earnestly for courage to put on and wear the short dress required in the performance



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of the "Bohemian Girl." We may smile at this feminine squeamishness; yet, after all, we cannot help admiring the possessor of it wherever we find her. Miss Abbott says that she was particularly fortunate in having secured Mr. James W. Morrissey for her manager. This young man was full of energy and of device; moreover, he was personally acquainted with many of the journalists throughout the country. He was with Miss Abbott three years, and she acknowledges herself under great obligations to him. "It is pleasant," she writes, "to feel that our friendship still exists, as hearty and as generous as ever; and that it will abide to the end I doubt not, for, by naming his little son Abbott in honor of me, my dear, good, kind Jimmy Morrissey has simply welded more closely the bonds of friendship uniting us." These words are characteristic of honest Emma Abbott's candor. In these memoirs there is a chapter devoted to the newspaper critics, and it is interesting to note the good-nature with which the sprightly cantatrice handles these touchy gentlemen. Not an unkind word is said; occasionally a foible or a trait is hit off, but all is done cleverly and in the most genial temper. Considerable space is devoted to the Chicago critics—Messrs. Upton, Mathews, McConnell, and Gleason—who, Miss Abbott says, have helped her with what they have written about her. Messrs. Moore, Johns, and Jennings, of St. Louis; R.M. Field, of Kansas City; William Stapleton, of Denver; Alf Sorenson, of Cincinnati, are prominent among the western critics whom she specifies as her "dear, good friends." She calls upon heaven to bless them. There is a chapter (the thirteenth) which tells how a public singer should dress; we wish we had the space for liberal quotations from this interesting essay, because this is a subject which all the ladies are anxious to know all about. Miss Abbott ridicules the idea that the small-waisted dress is harmful to the wearer. Women breathe with their lungs, and do not enlist the co-operation of the diaphragm, as men do. So, therefore, it matters not how tight a woman laces her waist so long as she insists that her gown be made ample about the bust; nay, the fair author maintains that the singer has a better command of her powers, and is more capable of sustained exertion, when her waist is girt and cinched to the very limit. Of course, knowing nothing whatsoever of this thing, we are wholly incompetent to discuss the subject. It interests us to know that Miss Abbott's theory is indorsed by Worth, Madame Demorest, Dr. Hamilton, and other recognized authorities. Of her married life the famous prima donna speaks tenderly and at length; she is evidently of a domestic nature; she says she pines for the day when she can retire to a quiet little home, and devote herself to children and to household duties. An affectionate tribute is paid to her husband,



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Mr. Wetherell, to whom she was wedded just before her debut in opera; he has been a constant solace and help, she says, and no disagreement or harshness has ruffled the felicity of their holy relation. In the appendix to the memoirs are to be found letters addressed at different times to Miss Abbott by Patti, Gounod, Kellogg, Longfellow, Jenny Lind, Nilsson, Wagner, Dumas, Brignoli, Liszt, and other notables. Numerous fine steel portraits add value to the volume. In a word, this book serves as a delightful history of the time of which it treats. It gives us pictures of places, manners, and morals, and chats with distinguished men and women. Better than this, it is the reflex of an earnest life and of a staunch, pure heart, challenging our admiration, and worthy of our emulation.

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