



***EUGENE
FIELD***

***SECOND
BOOK
OF TALES***

Eugene Field

Second Book of Tales

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Of all American poets Field, it seems to me, best understood the heart of a child. Other sweet singers have given us the homely life of the Western cabin, the unexpected tenderness of the mountaineer, the loyalty and quaint devotion of the negro servant, but to Field alone, and in preëminent degree, was given that keen insight into child nature, that compassion for its faults, that sympathy with its sorrows and that delight in its joyous innocence which will endear him to his race as long as our language is read.

His poems too always kindle afresh that spark of child-life which still lies smouldering in the hearts of us all, no matter how poor and sorrowful our beginnings. As we read, how the old memories come back to us! Old hopes, rosy with the expectation of the indefinite and unknowable. Old misgivings and fears; old romplings and holidays and precious idle hours. We know them all, and we know how true they are. We remember in our own case the very hour and day, and how it all happened and why, and what came of it,—joys and sorrows as real as our keenest experiences since.

This is a heritage plentiful and noble,—and this heritage is Field's.

In the last paragraphs of that tender prose poem of "Bill—the Lokil Editor"—one of the Profitable Tales—Bill—"alluz fond uv children 'nd birds 'nd flowers"—Bill, who was like the old sycamore that the lightning had struck,—with the vines

spread all around and over it, covering its scars and splintered branches—occurs this passage:

"——That's Bill perhaps as he stands up f'r jedgment—a miserable, tremblin', 'nd unworthy thing, perhaps, but twined about, all over, with singin' and pleadin' little children—and that is pleasin' in God's sight, I know."

If Field had nothing else to bring he could say truthfully as he faced his Master:

"I followed in your footsteps. I loved the children and the children loved me."

F. HOPKINSON SMITH.

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HUMIN NATUR' ON THE HAN'BUL 'ND ST. JO

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Durin' war times the gorillas hed torn up most uv the cypress ties an' used 'em for kindlin' an' stove wood, an' the result wuz that when the war wuz over there wuz n't anythink left uv the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo but the rollin' stock 'nd the two streaks uv rails from one end uv the road to the other. In the spring uv '67 I hed to go out into Kansas; and takin' the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo at Palmyry Junction, I wuz n't long in findin' out that the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo railroad wuz jist about the wust cast of rollin' prairer I ever struck.

There wuz one bunk left when I boarded the sleepin'-car, and I hed presence uv mind 'nuff to ketch on to it. It wuz

then just about dusk, an' the nigger that sort uv run things in the car sez to me: "Boss," sez he, "I 'll have to get you to please not to snore to-night, but to be uncommon quiet."

"What for?" sez I. "Hain't I paid my two dollars, an' hain't I entitled to all the luxuries uv the outfit?"

Then the nigger leant over an' told me that Colonel Elijah Gates, one uv the directors uv the road, an' the richest man in Marion County, wuz aboard, an' it wuz one uv the rules uv the company not to do anythink to bother him or get him to sell his stock.

The nigger pointed out Colonel Gates, 'nd I took a look at him as he sot readin' the "Palmyry Spectator." He wuz one of our kind uv people—long, raw-boned, 'nd husky. He looked to be about sixty—may be not quite on to sixty. He wuz n't bothered with much hair onto his head, 'nd his beard was shaved, all except two rims or fringes uv it that ran down the sides uv his face 'nd met underneath his chin. This fringe filled up his neck so that he did n't hev to wear no collar, 'nd he had n't no jewelry about him excep' a big carnelian bosom pin that hed the picture uv a woman's head on it in white. His specs sot well down on his nose, 'nd I could see his blue eyes over 'em—small eyes, but kind ur good-natured. Between his readin' uv his paper 'nd his eatin' plug terbacker he kep' toler'ble busy till come bedtime. The rest on us kep' as quiet as we could, for we knew it wuz an honor to ride in the same sleepin'-car with the richest man in Marion County 'nd a director uv the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo to boot.

Along 'bout eight o'clock the colonel reckoned he 'd tumble into bed. When he 'd drawed his boots 'nd hung up

his coat 'nd laid in a fresh hunk uv nat'ral leaf, he crawled into the best bunk, 'nd presently we heerd him sleepin'. There wuz nuthin' else for the rest uv us to do but to foller suit, 'nd we did.

It must have been about an hour later—say along about Prairer City—that a woman come aboard with a baby. There war n't no bunk for her, but the nigger allowed that she might set back near the stove, for the baby 'peared to be kind ov sick-like, 'nd the woman looked like she had been cryin'. Whether it wuz the jouncin' uv the car, or whether the young one wuz hungry or hed a colic into it, I did n't know, but anyhow the train had n't pulled out uv Prairer City afore the baby began to take on. The nigger run back as fast as he could, 'nd told the young woman that she 'd have to keep that baby quiet because Colonel 'Lijy Gates, one uv the directors uv the road, wuz in the car 'nd wunt be disturbed. The young woman caught up the baby scart-like, 'nd talked soothin' to it, 'nd covered its little face with her shawl, 'nd done all them things thet women do to make babies go to sleep.

But the baby *would* cry, and, in spite of all the young woman 'nd the nigger could do, Colonel Elijah Gates heard the baby cryin', and so he waked up. First his two blue yarn socks come through the curtains, 'nd then his long legs 'nd long body 'nd long face hove into sight. He come down the car to the young woman, 'nd looked at her over his specs. Did n't seem to be the least bit mad; jest solemn 'nd bizness like.

"My dear madam," sez he to the young woman, "you must do sumpin' to keep that child quiet. These people have

all paid for their bunks, 'nd they are entitled to a good night's sleep. Of course I know how 't is with young children—*will cry sometimes*—have raised 'leven uv 'em myself, 'nd know, all about 'em. But as a director uv the Han'-bul 'nd St. Jo I 've got to pertect the rights of these other folks. So jist keep the baby quiet as you kin."

Now, there war n't nothin' cross in the colonel's tone; the colonel wuz as kind 'nd consid'rit as could be expected uv a man who hed so much responsibility a-restin' onto him. But the young woman was kind uv nervous, 'nd after the colonel went back 'nd got into his bunk the young woman sniffled and worrited and seemed like she had lost her wits, 'nd the baby kep' cryin' jist as hard as ever.

Waal, there wuz n't much sleepin' to be done in that car, for what with the baby cryin', 'nd the young woman a-sayin', "Oh, dear!" 'nd "Oh, my!" and the nigger a-prancin' round like the widder bewitched—with all this goin' on, sleep wuz out uv the question. Folks began to wake up 'nd put their heads outern their bunks to see what wuz the doggone matter. This made things pleasanter for the young woman. The colonel stood it as long as he could, and then he got up a second time 'nd come down the car 'nd looked at the young woman over his specs.

"Now, as I wuz tellin' you afore," sez he, "I hain't makin' no complaint uv myself, for I 've raised a family of 'leven children, 'nd I know all about 'em. But these other folks here in the car have paid for a good night's sleep, 'nd it 's my duty as a director uv the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo to see that they get it. Seems to me like you ought to be able to keep that child quiet—you can't make me believe that there's any use

for a child to be carryin' on so. Sumpin 's hurtin' it—I know sumpin 's hurtin' it by the way it cries. Now, you look 'nd see if there ain't a pin stickin' into it somewhere; I 've raised 'leven children, 'nd that 's jist the way they used to cry when there wuz a pin stickin' em."

He reckoned he 'd find things all right this time, 'nd he went back to his bunk feelin' toler'ble satisfied with himself. But the young woman could n't find no pin stickin' the baby, 'nd, no matter how much she stewed and worrited, the baby kep' right on cryin', jest the same. Holy smoke! but how that baby *did* cry.

Now, I reckoned that the colonel would be gettin' almighty mad if this thing kep' up much longer. A man may raise 'leven children as easy as rollin' off 'n a log, 'nd yet the twelfth one, that is n't his at all, may break him. There is ginerally a last straw, even when it comes to the matter uv children.

So when the colonel riz feet foremost for the third time outern his bunk that night—or, I should say, mornin', for it was mighty near mornin' now—we looked for hail Columby.

"Look a-here, my good woman," sez he to the young woman with the baby, "as I wuz tellin' you afore, you *must* do sumpin to keep that child quiet. It 'll never do to keep all these folks awake like this. They 've paid for a good night's sleep, 'nd it 's my duty as a director uv the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo to pertest ag'in' this disturbance. I 've raised a family uv 'leven children, 'nd I know, as well as I know anythink, that that child is hungry. No child ever cries like that when it is n't hungry, so I insist on your nursin' it 'nd givin' us peace 'nd quiet."

Then the young woman began to sniffle.

"Law me, sir," sez the young woman, "I ain't the baby's mother—I 'm only just tendin' it."

The colonel got pretty mad then; his face got red 'nd his voice kind uv trembled—he wuz so mad.

"Where is its mother?" sez the colonel. "Why is n't she here takin' care uv this hungry 'nd cryin' child like she ought to be?"

"She 's in the front car, sir," sez the young woman, chokin' up. "She 's in the front car—in a box, dead; we 're takin' the body 'nd the baby back home."

Now what would you or me have done—what would *any* man have done then 'nd there? Jest what the colonel done.

The colonel did n't wait for no second thought; he jest reached out his big bony hands 'nd he sez, "Young woman, gi' me that baby"—sez it so quiet 'nd so gentle like that seemed like it wuz the baby's mother that wuz a-speakin'.

The colonel took the baby, and—now, may be you won't believe me—the colonel held that baby 'nd rocked it in his arms 'nd talked to it like it had been his own child. And the baby seemed to know that it lay ag'in' a lovin' heart, for, when it heerd the ol' man's kind voice 'nd saw his smilin' face 'nd felt the soothin' rockin' uv his arms, the baby stopped its grievin' 'nd cryin', 'nd cuddled up close to the colonel's breast, 'nd begun to coo 'nd laff.

The colonel called the nigger. "Jim," sez he, "you go ahead 'nd tell the conductor to stop the train at the first farm-house. We 've got to have some milk for this child—some warm milk with sugar into it; I hain't raised a family uv 'leven children for nothin'."

The baby did n't cry no more that night; leastwise we did n't hear it if it *did* cry. And what if we had heerd it? Blessed if I don't think every last one of us would have got up to help tend that lonesome little thing.

That wuz more 'n twenty years ago, but I kin remember the last words I heerd the colonel say: "No matter if it *does* cry," sez he. "It don't make no more noise than a cricket, nohow; 'nd I reckon that being a director uv the road I kin stop the train 'nd let off anybody that don't like the way the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo does business."

Twenty years ago! Colonel Elijah Gates is sleepin' in the Palmyry buryin'-ground; likely as not the baby has growed up—leastwise the Han'bul 'nd St. Jo has; everythink is different now—everythink has changed—everythink except humin natur', 'nd that is the same, it allus has been, and it allus will be, I reckon.

1888.

THE MOTHER IN PARADISE

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A mother came to the gateway of Heaven. She was aged and weary. Her body was bowed and her face was wrinkled and withered, for her burden had been the burden of care and trouble and sorrow. So she was glad to be done with life and to seek at the gateway of Heaven the fulfilment of the Promise that had been her solace through all the hard, bitter years.

An angel met the Mother at the gateway, and put her arms about the drooping figure, and spoke gracious, tender words.

"Whom seekest thou?" asked the angel.

"I seek my dear ones who came hither before me," answered the Mother. "They are very many—my father, my mother, my husband, my children—they all are here together, and for many and weary years I have lived in my loneliness, with no other thing to cheer me but the thought that I should follow them in good time."

"Yes, they are here and they await thee," said the angel. "Lean upon me, dear Mother, and I will lead thee to them."

Then the angel led the way through the garden of Paradise, and the angel and the Mother talked as they walked together.

"I am not weary now," said the Mother, "and my heart is not troubled."

"It is the grace of Heaven that restoreth thee, dear Mother," quoth the angel. "Presently thou shalt be filled with the new life, and thou shalt be young again; and thou shalt sing with rapture, and thy soul shall know the endless ecstasy of Heaven."

"Alas, I care not to be young again," saith the Mother. "I care only to find and to be forever with my beloved ones."

As they journeyed in their way a company came to meet them. Then the Mother saw and knew her dear ones—even though the heavenly life had glorified their countenances, the Mother knew them, and she ran to greet them, and there was great joy to her and to them. Meanwhile the angel kept steadfastly at her side.

Now the Mother, when she had embraced her dear ones, looked at each of them separately once more, and then she said: "Ye are indeed my beloved—my mother, my father, my husband, and my children! But there is one who should be of your company whom I do not see—my babe, my little helpless babe that came hither alone so many, many years ago. My heart fainteth, my breast yearneth for that dear little lamb of mine! Come, let us go together and search for her; or await me here under these pleasant trees while I search and call in this fair garden for my dear, lost little babe!"

The others answered never a word, but the angel said: "I will go with thee, Mother, and together we shall find thy child."

As they went on their way the angel said: "Shall I tell thee of myself? For I was a little helpless babe when I came hither to this fair garden and into this heavenly life."

"Perchance thou knowest her, my precious lambkin!" cried the Mother.

"I was a babe when I came hither," said the angel. "See how I am grown and what happiness hath been mine! The compassion of divinity hath protected and fostered me, and hath led me all these years in the peace that passeth all human understanding. God hath instructed me in wisdom, and He shall instruct thee, too; for all who come hither are as children in His sight, and they shall grow in wisdom and in grace eternally."

"But my babe—my own lost little one whom I have not held in these arms for so many weary years—shall she not

still be my little babe, and shall I not cradle her in my bosom?" asked the Mother.

"Thy child shall be restored to thee," said the angel; "for she yearneth for thee even as thou yearnest for her. Only with this difference, dear Mother: Thy child hath known, in the grace of heavenly wisdom, that at the last thy earthly sorrow should surely be rewarded with the joys of the endless reunion in Paradise!"

"Then she hath thought of me and longed for me to come!" cried the Mother. "And my lost babe shall be restored and shall know her mother again!"

"Ay, she loveth thee fondly," said the angel, "and she hath awaited thy coming, lo, these many years. Presently thine eyes shall be opened and thou shalt see her standing before thee in her heavenly raiment whiter than snow, and around her neck thou shalt see her wearing most precious pearls—the tears which thou hast shed, oh lonely Mother! and which are the pearls the little ones in Heaven gather up and cherish as an adornment most pleasing unto God and them."

Then the Mother felt that her eyes were opened, and she turned and looked upon the angel. And the Mother saw that the angel was her lost beloved child whom she was seeking: not the helpless babe that she had thought to find, but a maiden of such heavenly beauty and gentleness as only the dwellers in Paradise behold and know. And the Mother spread her arms, and gave a great cry of joy, and folded her very dear one to her bosom.

Then presently they returned together to the others. And there was rapturous acclaim in Paradise, and it was to God's

sweet pleasance that it was so. For a Mother and her beloved communed in the holy companionship of love everlasting.

MR. AND MRS. BLOSSOM

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The name we meant to call her was Annette, for that was a name I always liked. 'Way back, before I got married, I made up my mind that if I ever had a daughter I should call her Annette. My intention was good enough, but circumstances of a peculiar nature led me to abandon the idea which in anticipation afforded me really a lot of pleasure. My circumstances have always been humble. I say this in no spirit of complaint. We have very much to be thankful for, and we are particularly grateful for the blessing which heaven has bestowed upon us in the person of our dear child—our daughter who comes from school to-night to spend Thanksgiving with us and with our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Blossom. I must tell you how we became acquainted with the Blossoms.

When our baby was two years old I used to sit of mornings, before going to my work, on the front steps, watching the baby playing on the sidewalk. This pleasantest half-hour of the day I divided between the little one and my pipe. One morning, as I sat there smoking and as the little one was toddling to and fro on the sidewalk, a portly, nice-looking old gentleman came down the street, and, as luck