

The Fool's Prayer.

The royal feast was done; the king
Sought out some new sport to banish care,
And to his jester cried: "Sir Fool,
Kneel now, and make for us a prayer."

The jester doffed his cap and bells
And stood the mocking court before;
They could not see the bitter smile
Behind the painted grin he wore.

He bowed his head, and bent his knee
Upon the monarch's silken stool;
His pleading voice arose: "O Lord,
Be merciful to me a fool!"

"Tis not by guilt the onward sweep
Of truth and right, O Lord, we stay;
Tis by our follies that so long
We hold the earth from heaven away.

"No pity, Lord, could change the heart
From red with wrong to white as wool;
The rod must heal the sin; but Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool!"

"These clumsy feet, still in the mire,
Go crushing blossoms without end;
These hard, well meaning hands we thrust
Among the heart-stings of a friend.

"The ill-famed truth we might have kept—
Who knows how sharp it pierced and stung?
The word we had no sense to say—
Who knows how grandly it had rung?"

"Our fault no tenderness should ask,
The chastening stripes must cleanse them all;
But for our blunders—oh, in shame
Before the eyes of heaven we fall.

"Earth bears no balm for mistakes;
Men crown the knave, and scourge the fool;
That did his will; but thou, O Lord,
Be merciful to me, a fool."

EDWARD ROWLAND STEEL.

ACROSS THE COURT.

BY IRENE C. BYRNE.

O'Neill's office was small. He did not need a larger one. Young lawyers seldom do. There are several good reasons why they don't, but that has nothing to do with this story.

The office was also an inside one—that is, it looked out on a court, a great well-like space bounded by four walls—not blind, blank walls, but walls fairly bristling with staring, impudent windows.

Behind those windows myriads of busy men and women worked at schemes by which they hoped to enrich themselves and, sometimes, incidentally to impoverish others; schemes as far reaching in their consequences as the stone which, thrown into a stream, sends a ripple to the farthest shore.

Still, though these schemes may have been interesting to a thoughtful man making a study of the great tragedy of life, neither the walls nor the windows were particularly so. Yet O'Neill passed a large part of his time gazing intently at the window opposite his own.

Time and again when he had seated himself at his desk, determined to add a chapter to the book destined to bring him fame, and what was of even more vital importance, to pay his most pressing bills, he found his glances wandering across the space which separated him from the desire of his eyes.

"I wish she'd move her desk," he muttered half angrily one day as he found himself as usual watching instead of working—watching the slender, modestly-dressed girl who sat in the window working so busily that she had no time to discover that opposite her was a young man whose valuable time she was wasting. Or if she had, she had never revealed the fact. But the ways of a maid with a man are not always simple and she may have been wiser in her generation than he knew.

He had scarcely uttered the wish before he was fearful that it might come to pass, so he cried out hastily, as if anxious to propitiate some jealous eavesdropping god who might take him at his word: "No, I don't. I'll take it all back, dear little saint." In fairy tales men have been granted thoughtless wishes to their own undoing and she was the princess of his fairy tale.

Why, then, did he call her saint? He hardly knew. He certainly could not have told why if asked. Yet he felt that it suited her better than any other name he might have used. Perhaps it was because she never seemed conscious of him—saints have a way of ignoring poor mortals; perhaps because she parted her dark hair, Madonna wise, over her rather pale face in a fashion that added solemnity to its youthful seriousness; perhaps because the man who sometimes stood near her, dictating letters to her, looked such a sinner that by the law of contrast he made one think of saints.

O'Neill, at least, thought he looked like a

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sinner and one for whom there was no hope. "Old satyr!" he growled at him as, watching from the shallow depths of his bare little office, he saw him lay a too familiar hand on the girl's shoulder. "I don't like his polygamous eyebrows. By Jove!" What a scoundrel! For the satyr had suddenly stooped and kissed the saint.

O'Neill saw the start which showed how unexpected the caress was, could almost hear the frightened exclamation with which she sprang to her feet. In another moment she stood with her hat on, covering her typewriter, and then she was gone.

The young lawyer was hot with rage, fiery with righteous indignation. He flung himself into the corridor and started around in blind zeal to do something, anything. The need for action was strong with him. But before he made the first turning he felt how impotent he was, for he realized instinctively that the saint would shrink from the publicity of a scene.

But he was determined that she should work no more for that man if he could help it. Doesn't a saint belong to the one who worships? And have not men of all times and of all nations come forth gladly to death rather than have their idols desecrated?

Adroitly enough, he learned who the man was, a lawyer, a politician, a professional corrupter of legislatures. And the saint? Oh, a little typewriter, Miss Browne, who seemed rather demure for a man like Lawson, who was rather "a good fellow." Strange that when some men say "a good fellow" they are thinking of qualities never found in a summary of the virtues!

Then O'Neill wrote her a letter such as Galahad, had he lived in these strenuous days, might have written. He explained how he had seen the affront to which she had been subjected, regretted deeply that as his own law practice was such a negative quantity he could not give her a regular position as his stenographer, but offered her desk room in his office and assured her that he would secure her work from the other lawyers in the building, who, like himself, needed work done, but whose meager incomes would not permit them to employ a stenographer the entire time.

The answer was a formal little note requesting him to call at her home to meet her mother.

He went of course. The mother, soft viced and gentle eyed, explained the saint. She was, indeed, an edition de luxe of her daughter, refined and glorified by life. But the young man was too young, too little of an artist, to appreciate that. Both women were so grateful it was not strange that he went again and often. And he found himself wondering at the truly marvelous way in which women can impart an atmosphere of home and refinement to even a four room flat.

He ceased gazing across the court during his business hours, for was she not enshrined in his own office? She was busy, too, earning more money than when with the satyr, for O'Neill had proved a good solicitor, and he had secured her more work than she could do.

Her unflagging industry aroused his own zeal, shamed him into emulation, and the book, until then only dreamed of, was in the publisher's hands before he dared to tell her how long he had called her the "saint" when her real name was a mystery.

"But, why?" she said, opening wide her big, brown eyes, that perhaps looked more ignorant of his meaning than they really were. "I am not so very good. You know I have an awful temper."

"Good!" he exclaimed. Oh, I could say my prayers to you! If I weren't such a beggar I'd ask"—Then he stopped. How could an unworthy man ask a saint to stoop, save in pity, and he did not want pity!

"I thought beggars were the ones who needed to ask," she said softly.

"But I want so much," he pleaded.

"I am sorry," she faltered, though an acute observer would have thought that the eyes, shining like stars, were brightened by other emotions than sorrow, "for I have but little to give."

"So little! Oh, my saint!"—imploringly—"you can give me heaven—if you only will, if you only will!"

"It isn't mine to give to you, you sacrilegious boy, and if it were I would want to keep it for myself, but," and now he had to bend to hear, for her head was drooping and her voice came softly, tremulously—"but I think we could find it together."

And then—oh, the strange unreasonableness of man!—he did the very thing that he had condemned the satyr for doing. But his eyebrows, to be sure, were not polygamous, and the saint, in her goodness, forgave him; so, perhaps, there was a difference.

O'Neill's work, mostly clever magazine articles and editorials, has been in such demand since his book, "Strikes and Socialism" proved a success that he needs the entire services of the saint, whom his friends call Mrs. O'Neill. And the heaven which they share is colloquially known as "the Happy Flat."

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Spoke too Late.

The good minister of a Scottish parish had once upon a time a great wish for an old couple to become teetotalers, which they were in nowise eager to carry out. After much pressing, however, they consented, laying down as a condition that they should be allowed to keep a bottle of "Auld Kirk" for medicinal purposes. About a fortnight afterward John began to feel his resolution weakening, but he was determined not to be the first to give way.

In another week, however, he collapsed entirely. "Jenny, woman," he said. "I've an awfu' pain in my heid. Ye might gie me a wee drappie an' see gin it'll dee me ony guid."

"Well, gudeman," she replied. "ye're owre late o' askin', for ever sin' that bottle cam' into the troose I've been bothered sae wi' pains i' my heid 't is a' dune, an' there's nae drappie left."

When Trade Was Booming.

It was in the morning hours of bake day in the little out of the way village. The mingled odors of fresh bread, pies and cookies floated out of the open kitchen windows.

From one of the smaller cottages at the end of the street came a barefooted child in a colorless calico dress and slat sunbonnet. With the important air of a heavy buyer she entered the village store and handed across the counter a blue teacup. The proprietor took the cup and said in brisk tones.

"Well, Emmy, what does your ma want today?"

"Please, sir, ma wants an egg's worth of molasses." And she cheerfully placed a large white egg on the counter.

From a stone jug a little molasses was poured and the cup set before the customer.

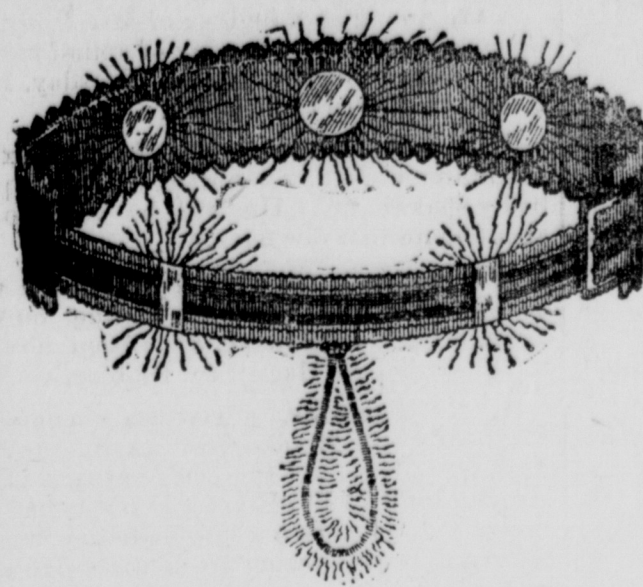
"Mr. Smif," she said as she took her purchase "I'll be back in a little while for some ginger. Ma said to tell you the black hen was on."

And the buyer walked with dignity out the store door and up the village street to her home.—Harper's Magazine.

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the nervousness of the housewife. If the body is carried well poised, upright from the hips, the ball of the foot striking the stair first, the knees being flexible, both in ascending and descending, all the good effects are secured, and if much stair climbing is done there will be a great difference in the feeling of vitality. Ascending stairs rapidly by springing from the ball of one foot to another forms an excellent means of strengthening the ankles and curing a tendency to flat feet.—Good Housekeeping.