

Just Another Statistic — By Henry Paulick

The old man gazed at his image in the mirror. He studied the white-whiskered face, contemplating the unpleasant task of shaving in cold water. His eyes stared intently at the sad face being reflected in the mirror. Slowly, his mind wandered back into the valley of memories. He re-lived the many happy moments that memories bring. How the years did fly by! It seemed as if it was only yesterday that he was only seventeen, and running away from home to go to sea. The sea intrigued him, so for thirty five years he sailed far and wide. There were many memories, that came into his mind. One of them was the day he went to see his family. It was five years after he left home. This was a bitter memory, because he learned that his parents had died. He was the only son. There were no relatives, and he was all alone in the world. So back to sea went Bill Tidley, until he was retired, that was almost three years ago.

The door of the room opened suddenly, and an irritating feminine voice brought Bill back to reality. The land-lady, Mrs. Peters, came in to perform her daily pretense at cleaning the shabby, meagerly furnished room. In her cracked voice, Mrs. Peters began to grumble and complain of worldly ills, including her own health. Bill hurriedly put on his battered hat and coat, excused himself and left. It was torture for him to listen to the incessant grumbings of his land-lady. He yearned for someone to tell his troubles to, but no one would listen. When he tried to tell the land-lady, she immediately retorted with a series of her burdens. All of the other roomers were elderly men like himself. There was no use trying to talk to them. They would all have troubles ten times as great as his, and besides, they were always trying to borrow what little money he had.

Bill left his rooming house as quickly as he could. He hated the sight of the dirty, dilapidated, old building. The inside was as filthy as the outside. How he wanted to leave, and get a room elsewhere, but he couldn't afford anything better. He had a very small income, and he had to cut meals to pay for the cheap room.

It was pretty tough to be old and helpless, all alone in the world, without a friend. There was nothing for you to do, but roam the streets, sit in a pool-room, or on a park bench. You couldn't afford a movie. No one wanted to sit and talk with you because you were old. All you could do is walk the streets, and talk to yourself as you walked.

This is just what Bill would do. Up and down the streets he would walk, all the time talking to himself. The children in the neighborhood thought this was silly. So silly in fact, that they would make fun of Bill. They would jeer at him, and skip up and down alongside of him, laughing at him. When they saw that he was ignoring them, they would become irritated, and gather stones to throw at him.

In order to escape the barrage of stones, Bill would seek refuge in the corner pool-room. Of course he wasn't welcomed here because he had no money to spend, but Bill would seek refuge in the men's room. Here he would gaze at the sorrowful figure of himself reflected in the mirror. There was no one to comfort him, so he would talk to his image in the mirror, complaining of the cruelties inflicted upon him during the course of the day. Here in this rendezvous, he would pour out his sorrows to his reflection, until one of the older boys heard him and started to tease him. Now he would leave amidst the jeers of the older boys in the pool-room. He would have to go out into the street again, to find another place of refuge.

Bill walked down the street to a cheap restaurant. He walked in and took his usual seat, in a far corner, against the wall. Here he sat quietly waiting for the waiter to serve him. The waiter was well aware of Bill's presence, but this was an every day sequence, where the waiter kept Bill waiting in order to discourage future visits. Finally, the sneering waiter served Bill his meager meal.

After eating, Bill left the restaurant, and started to walk the streets again. Now the sky was slowly becoming dark, and tiny drops of water began to fall intermittently. Bill headed for his room, to get out of the rain.

Back at the rooming house, Bill paced back and forth in his room. The rain was pouring down now. Once again Bill found himself thinking of the bitterness of life. He tried to rid himself of this attack of *Weltschmerz*, but he couldn't. All he could think of was all the unkindness he had been subjected to since his retirement. Then with grim determination he walked over to the dresser, removed a pistol from under a pile of clothing, pressed the barrel behind his right ear, and pulled the trigger. There was a sharp report from the pistol, and Bill slumped forward. The gun fell to the floor with a loud thud, and Bill's body slowly settled on top of the gun.

Downstairs, Mrs. Peters heard the noise and rushed up to Bill's room. When she found the lifeless body on the floor, she uttered a shrill scream. In a matter of minutes, the room was a bee-hive of activity, with the land-lady and roomers rushing in and out of the dead man's room.

Someone managed to call the police, and they made the usual investigation to determine the means of death. Mrs. Peters kept up an incessant prattle explaining how ungrateful the man was, to do such a thing in her rooming house, after all she had done for him. The police managed to squeeze a few sensible answers to their questions from the loquacious land-lady, then removed the body to the morgue. Later, all of the known facts concerning the death of Bill Tidley were typewritten on a prepared form, sent to the proper bureau, and became another statistic on a wall chart.

Margwarth Announces Dance Committees

The Women's Club is sponsoring a Blue Jeans Dance on Friday, March 30, at St. John's Hall. The dance, which will feature modern and square dancing, will be an informal affair. Dance music will be furnished by Scotty Parson's Orchestra from 9 to 12. Syd Rudman will be on hand to call the square dances. Punch and cookies will be served by Women's Club members.

Jane Margwarth, president, has announced the following committees for the dance.

Regulations Committee—Mary Lou Gagliardi, chairman; Candida Ramaviglia; Josephine Donish; Beverly Morgan; Helen Honsberger; Loretta Romanofsky; and Dorothy Romanofsky

Decorations Committee — Betty Perna, chairman; Paul Williams; Ruth Bones; Shirley Petchel; and Milly Romanell

Refreshments Committee — Jane Margwarth, chairman; Irene Rondish; Pearl Paternoster; Betty Harlor; Charlotte Boddin; Josephine Magagna; Dolores Svenson; and Rita Bradish.

All students are requested to drag out their blue jeans or overalls, lumber shirts, and straw hats. Syd will be calling "swing your partner and circle round." Let's all turn out for the ladies' club and make their dance a booming success. Remember, the greeting is "Howdy, partner," and the dress is informal.

Hershey Cites Plan To Defer Students

(Continued from page 1)

In addition, all college freshmen in the upper half of their class would be deferred. All second year college students in the upper two-thirds of their class could take a third year course. All third year college men in the upper three-fourths of their class could go ahead with a fourth year.

Also graduate students and professional students of medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, osteopathy and optometry would be deferred without taking any tests, provided their schools certified they are meeting scholastic requirements leading to degree.

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A FRIEND



The Penalty —

By Hughie Brennan

She walked up the steps of the State Penitentiary Administration Building. The hall inside was filled with guards either going on duty or off. Everyone knew her — and that helped. She didn't have to speak. One guard told her to follow him. She was led to the warden's office. The warden jumped to his feet when she entered.

"What time?" she asked.

"Eleven tonight."

"Can I see him now?"

"Yes, but may I advise you to—well to be as little emotional as possible. It'll help him. Mrs. Johnson, if there's anything I can do."

She didn't answer but walked to the door and waited for him to follow. Without a word the two walked through what seemed to be an endless number of corridors, waiting now and then to be admitted through locked gates. Finally the warden stopped. A guard unlocked the door to a small visiting room. She'd been here before. The warden left but the guard came in with her and sat down behind a small desk. Then the door on the opposite side of the room opened and he walked in.

They just looked at one another for awhile; then he walked towards her. They spoke of ordinary things as strangers would do, each not knowing how to put words to thoughts. Then he held her close. Finally he broke the emotional silence.

"I can't understand it. I've tried to find reasons for all of this, but, darling, I can't. I'm innocent, so there's no reason possible why I must die."

"I know you're innocent. I believe it and I love . . ."

"It's funny that you believe me so easily when the whole world thinks I'm a murderer. Only one person says I'm innocent—my wife."

Then he screamed his innocence to the guard — to the world. She had to leave. The warden met her in the hall. He asked if she were returning home tonight. She told him she had a room in town and that she would leave tomorrow. He reminded her that if he could do anything to help her, he would. They reached the door leading outside. He told her he had a car waiting and a man to drive her into town.

She entered the hotel lobby. The clock said 10:00. She bought a magazine and got the elevator. She walked down the hall to her room, opened the door, turned on the light, took off her coat.

The magazine could have been filled with blank pages for she paged through it as though she were looking for a particular article. Her eyes never became fixed on anything in the book until she turned over the back cover and then she stared at the back page ad for minutes — not seeing a thing.

She wanted a cigarette. Her bag was on the dresser. It seemed so far away. She got on her feet and walked to the dresser. Her watch lay beside the bag. Without looking at it she turned it face down. She took a cigarette from the bag and tapped it hard on the dresser top, but the tapping took on the rhythm of the ticking watch so she stopped.

When she struck the match the tiny flame attracted her attention to the mirror. She leaned closer. Even this dim light enhanced her features. She twisted her face several times into various poses until she found one that emphasized her eyes. They were clear now. Her features seemed so much sharper on the side away from the light.

The image stared back at her and smiled a little. It moved its eyes to the right — the left and then wrinkled its forehead. It wondered why everything was so silent. Then it spoke.

"Oh, that trip tomorrow. Then it's all over. You have a new world to go home to. Try to make it a happy one. You're young, beautiful — black hair — blue eyes — yes, you are beautiful and you're young and it's all over. You're beautiful, young, and you don't look like a murderess at all. It isn't as though you got off scot free. After all, you did pay some penalty. Justice did take your husband from you."

WOMEN'S ORG. DANCE

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March 30
9 - 12



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