Autobiography of a Lead Pencil.

For more than fifty years I had had a peaceful life, simply growing, each year holding my head a bit higher and a bit more proudly. My home was among other cedar trees in the great state of Michigan, and from my earliest growth I could recall the music of the waves of the great Lake Michigan as it came in its different moods so close to me—now sweet and low in gentle murmurs, bringing up the grains of white sand; then again in its angrier moments it would fairly roar as it flung the sand out my base and covered my roots. It was my friend, though, at all times, and I was glad to have so near.

One day a small boy named Harold, from the state of Ohio, climbed to the sand-hill on which I was growing, and stood looking at me in admiration. He noted the grains of sand caught in my bark, and his mother explained to him how the wind had driven the particles into the bark, and when the sun shone on me, I had a dress spangled with diamonds of which any grand lady would have been proud. The boy climbed into my branches, and as I posed there, his mother took a kodak picture of us together, and I felt then that in some way my history would be connected with that boy's. He asked his mother what I was good for, and she told him many things I might become, but she did not know, nor did I, that some day he would meet me again.

Well, after Harold's visit, one day just at sunset, when my spangled dress was reflecting the most gorgeous colors and the soft winds were whispering their bed-time stories in my branches, a party of three men came through the woods and standing just beneath my branches, gazed upon the lake and the golden path to the setting sun; then one man said: "My! what a place to build a summer home, right on this hill crest, with the house facing the great eye of day as it closes!" "Yes," said another, "an ideal spot. But where would you place the house? these trees would be in the way." I shook from my topmost branches to the sand at my base at the thought of my being "in the way." But the man replied: "Oh, I'd have to cut some of them down; but it's all good marketable timber, and will bring a good price." So I was to be cut down and sold for lumber! Shades of the night-winds, what a fate! I was to make room for the man to build a house and bring his family to look upon MY lake, MY sunsets! Ah, but the waves had a mournful sound that day, and the night-winds did certainly sigh through my branches!

My peace of mind was broken, and after a few weeks I was startled one morning early by a ringing sound close by, very unfamiliar. I looked and listened and learned that my next-door neighbor was "going down," and then came my turn. I took a long last look at the green waves, the blue sky and the white sand; then I felt the first cruel blow, after that I forgot everything; the life-thread was severed, and my feelings were hurt beyond repair.

Then I became a wanderer on the face of the earth; my travels were long and tiresome, till one day I learned with fear that I was again to "undergo the knife," as it were. When I "came to," I found that I was cut into small slabs of wood, and I felt my last bit of pride was dead, as I mentally exclaimed: "What next?"

One day, having been sawed into rectangular small blocks of different thicknesses, I lay all piled up in a big factory. I asked of my next-door neighbor, a perfect stranger to me, in a very small voice, what he thought would be my end. He said in a somber tone: "Lead-pencils!" Then I asked what they were, and in a little louder tone—I think that was because he felt he knew a little more than I—"Pencilius is the Latin for 'small tail;' and if you wait long enough, you will see yourself in the form of a 'small tail.'"

So I waited, but fell into conversation with another block of wood which seemed a bit more willing to impart information, and this is what he told me: "Down in the earth there is mined a soft ore called graphite. This is brought in car loads to the factory; then crushed in big mortars into a fine powder; then sifted to rid it of iron ore, with which it is mixed; then washed over and over again in large washers, in order that the finer particles may be separated and the heavier ones sink to the bottom of the vat. The particles gathered from the bottom of the last vat are ones used in the making of the best grade of lead-pencils. Then they take clay, which has also been washed well, and mix it with the graphite, and then put it together in large receptacles where it is thoroughly mixed and ground together This adds smoothness and softness to the graphite sticks. When it is mixed it is the consistency of stiff dough. It is then put in large cylinders, at the bottom of which is a piece of metal pierced with small holes of different sizes, the size of the different sticks needed for the different-sized lead-pencils. The mixture is pressed through these holes, coming out in the form of sticks. These are carefully laid on drying boards which are grooved, then another grooved board is laid on top of that, and they are left to dry for several days. They are then cut into regular lengths, packed incharcoal, and subjected to an intense furnace heat. The mixture varies—some has more clay, some more graphite. That containing more graphite and subjected to a lower heat makes a softer pencil, and vice versa."

I told him I thought it was all very interesting, and I wouldn't mind at all if I became lead-pencils, as they were very useful; but that I supposed lead-pencils were made out of just plain sticks of lead.

I asked him when the first lead-pencil was made. He was a wise one, and very promptly told me that the first mention of lead-pencils was made in 1565, but in 1830 a Mr. Lehman made some in New York; but in 1849 Eberhard Faber came from the company of A. W. Faber, in Stein, Germany, and started the first real pencil factory in America.

So I thought a good deal, and kept on waiting till one day my turn came, and I was carried to another room, but not before I had time to thank my friend for the information, for it was a comfort to have some idea of what your end was to be. Then in the little round ed grooves already drilled in my face, they placed one of these little sticks of graphite, then they glued a thinner piece of wood on top of me, and then whirled me through a machine at such a dizzy rate that I couldn't think what the tune of the waltz was at all; I spun round and round; then all smooth and finished nicely, I spun onto a table, was gathered into a large box with hundreds of others, carried away and given a brand new dress of yellow paint. I smelt real nice, till I got that paint dress on; then the next day they stamped on my side in gold letters the name of the man who owned the factory, then gave me a number, packed me in with eleven others, put a paper band around us, and I was carried in a big wagon to a store, where I had time to get my breath again, and rest on the shelves for awhile.

One day I spoke to some other pencils on the same shelf, and asked why the stick in their centers was colored, and they said they had been mixed with colors and gum, so that they would make colored marks, instead of black. My! what a lot there was to learn, and how much had happened to me since I left Michigan and came down to Ohio!

Then a small boy came into the store, and asked for apencil. The man took down our "bunch," and the boy picked me out, paid a nickel, and put me in his pocket. What! after all that worldly experience, was I worth only a nickel? But then I reflected that perhaps a thousand or more pencils had been made from me, and many other things besides, so perhaps the man was right when he said that I was good "marketable lumber." When the boy reacher home, he took me out of the dark pocket, took his knife, and trimmed one of my ends to a nice, small point. Then I saw why the block of wood said I would some day look like a "little tail." Then the boy began to make black marks with me on the white paper he had, and when his mother came in the room and asked whether "Harold had written his composition,' I looked into his face, and—would you believe it?— it was the same Ohio boy that had stood in my branches! So here were we again, close together in another form, and I tell you I just traveled quickly for him across the paper, so quickly that he at last said to his mother: "Here's my composition, and written by a lead-pencil!"—Mrs. Susie Aiken Winold, in Pittsburg Christian Advocate.

Lacks Imagination.

The first serious limitation of this so called new religion is that it lacks imagination. Dr. Eliot has given us the floor plan of a house, very useful from the architect's standpoint, but by no means beautiful nor telling us the most important truth about the house. This new religion has not got out of the blue print stage. It is thoroughly reasonable, but is deficient in emotional elements. It is prose, not poetry. The masses will not care for it for the same reason that ten people read Robert Burns where one reads Matthew Arnold.—Rev. Dr. Clifton D. Gray, Baptist, Boston.

A Material Age.

We live in such a materialistic age that it is not surprising that material values and bulk and weight and size and display should smother the finer things of the spirit and of the mind and of heaven, but one learns in the long run that enduring values have to do with character more than with cash. The other choice is between self and God. It is the problem as to whether I shall measure my life by

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Lack of faith in God speedily results in lack of faith in self, and the consequence is—despair.—Rev. William T. Ellis, Presbyterian, Omaha.

Power of Prayer.

Here is where the church is weak. We have not yet realized the vitality of prayer its ability to link the soul with the highest sources of power.—Rev. Dr. Robert McDonald, Baptist, Brooklyn.

Right Contentment.

The only proper contentment is that which combines with godliness and which sees from the standpoint of God's word the divine power able to correct the difficulties which assail us and all mankind.—Rev. Charles E. Russell, Presbyterian, Brooklyn.

Not Liberal Enough.

The only trouble about John D. Rockefeller's proposition to give $100,000 tainted money to missions is that "'tain't enough." It ought to be a million. When God converted a man he took over his money, no matter how he had made it.—Rev. H. M. Wharton, Baptist, Atlanta, Ga.

To Exalt a Nation.

Man is hopelessly religious, and it is religion that governs the world, and if you want to exalt a nation give it a clearer vision of God and of his will and purpose for man and of man's relation to him and to his fellow man. You must cleanse the fountain if you would make pure the streams, and a nation's religious ideas constitute the very fountain of its life.—Rev. Dr. Frank G. Smith, Congregationalist, Chicago.

Social Ostracism Deplored.

Whenever we put the ban of social ostracism on any sect or community that sect or community gravitates to the very evil for which it is despised. Take the case of actors and actresses. All Christian people put them under the ban. All Christian people regard them as unclean, and I tell you that the Christian people have no right to be surprised if they act as though they were unclean. All this is unworthy of us. You will have to rise to these Christ heights some time, somehow, somewhere. You may just as well start now, because this poor, lowly life is not worthy of us.—Rev. Dr. Charles F. Aked, Baptist, New York.

Secrets.

"Don't complain of people tellin' yoh secrets," said Uncle Eben. "Dey couldn't do it if you hadn't stahted it."—Washington Star.

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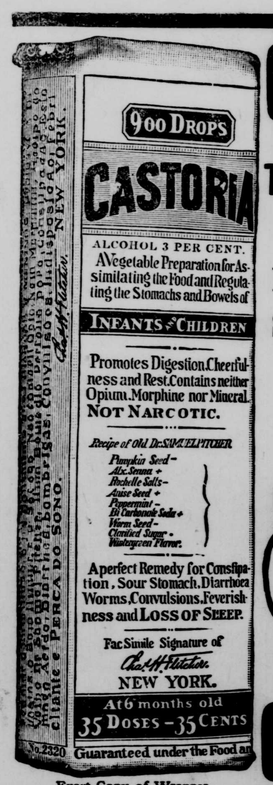

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