

Saturday Night Musings

Ross Winn

1898

What changes are wrought in the briefest span of time's ceaseless flight. How different are the environments that chance has flung about us this Saturday night when in thought we contrast them with those of two weeks ago? Again have we been reminded that the whole course of human life and destiny hinges often upon a single circumstance, and that in the loom of fate the breaking of a single strand is adequate to mar forever life's golden cloth. Tonight we are sad and the hand of (*illegible text*) has fallen (*illegible text*) upon our heart. We are (*illegible text*) in the accustomed place, but all is not as it was. There is a vacant place in the little family circle around us, a beloved form is missing, and in our heart there is a void that cannot be filled. In the chorus of loved and familiar voices there is one missing, a lost note in the symphony of domestic conversation. Three days have passed since the dark messenger of death silently passed the family threshold and pitilessly stole away the dear father whose loving voice will never again greet in welcome the loved and loving son, returning home at eventide, as in the old days, now gone forever. The loving heart is still, and the feeble hands that so often used to clasp our own in parting sadness or greeting joy, are folded upon the breast that was once the altered refuge where, in childhood's happy days, we often rested our weary head when tired of play, we sought the haven of sweet sleep's repose.

Next to the priceless jewel of a mother's love, is the watchful care of a father's strong affection. And it seems to me that many boys and young men and older men, too, who have noble and loving fathers, so no always appreciate the love and care bestowed upon them by the parental hand. They are inclined to regard him as "the old man," and consider him a sort of back number, whose authority and loving guidance are merely to be tolerated, not sought for and approved. But, boys, I want you yo remember this; Be always kind and gentle and considerate to the old man, and let him know that you respect his judgement and opinions, and that you appreciate the motive of his advice and guiding care. The old man may be growing old and his mind may not be so robust and vigorous as it once was, but he has had more experience than you, and be sure that he knows much more of the lessons of life than you do, and what he knows will always be used for your wellbeing and happiness. Many boys and young men, too, think they know a great deal more than the old man—but they don't. The father who held them upon his knee, who built for them their first sled, who taught them to ride their first horse and guided the plow for their first furrow, who bought them candy and red top boots and played Santa Claus just to fill their little childish hearts with joy, who listened with patient sympathy to their childish troubles, played

ride-horse with them upon his back and built their block castles and toy wagons, that dear old father is their first and truest friend, monitor and guide, and the boy who fails to hold in respect that father is a bad boy, who, if he has sense enough, will live to weep tears of regret that he did not sooner realize how fortunate it is to possess such a friend.

The father whose loss we mourn to-night, was appreciated while he was yet alive, and we are filled with joy that this appreciation did not come too late, and linked with the bitter poison of regret. He is gone from us forever, but we have with us the comfort of happy memories. In childhood's golden days he was our faithful friend, and in manhood's maturer time we learned to appreciate the noble soul that yearned to have us always near him. He lived a pure and blameless life, and sowed the seed of happiness and joy in loving hearts that clustered about him in the home circle. And when his day was done, he fell asleep like a tired child, and calmly passed into the great beyond, when death, not terrible, but sorrowfully serene, drew gently the sable curtains of night upon his last repose and pinned them with the bright and shining star of Hope.

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On Saturday, November 12, 1898, Ross Winn's father passed away. Winn published the following thoughts in *The Coming Era* (Vol. I No. 8, November 21, 1898), where he was then serving as editor-in-chief.

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