

The Midnight Ride of Ebenezer Frear

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—there was nary a glimpse of the many nice, generous things he had done, too! Such is conscience in a crisis. Ebenezer was entirely human.

All of a sudden his foot encountered a piston connecting with the generator. He pushed it in a last frantic endeavor to get action. The plane had been running amuck among the clouds all this while, but now she responded so quickly that Ebenezer sat hurriedly down. The craft shot off and upward—like the skylark, higher yet and higher—and it began to look as though the next stop would be St. Peter when the machine suddenly gave a tremendous flop and heaved her nose downward. What had he done? . . . His hand had pushed against some durned button accidentally. Or was the juice giving out? Great Caesar's ghost! She was sinking in great swooping dives. He caught sight of a tongue of flame near his feet, and he quite lost his head. Better beat her to terra firma than be burnt en route! Ebenezer stood up on the edge of the fuselage, threw his arms up and leaped off into atmosphere! He gave no thought to the hereafter as he took this drastic step, though he knew his last words had been as ardently blasphemous as those with which he was wont to address his mule, Pearl Maud. But Fate was kind and stalled off the fire—and—brimstone. For:

Ebenezer fell down, down, down, through leagues of space. He struck old Mother Earth finally, with a thud—a rather emphatic thud. His senses reeled for a few minutes. Blindly he lifted his arms, his legs, felt of his ribs. Yep! He was still all to the good, all in one piece! Then through the void, amid his semi-stupor came the sound of a voice—a dear familiar voice. It was saying:

"Ebenezer Frear! This is what comes of eatin' cheese a-goin' to bed! Aint I allus said as how yew can't stand a rich supper last thing at night? An' if yew intend to sleep thar on the floor yew might hand me back some o' them bed-clothes!"

THE BOY LIVING DOWN IN THE STREAM

By R. G. Chase, Milestone, Sask.

Living down in a stream was a boy whom I knew,
In the days of the far, long ago,
And how oft have I wandered when skies they were blue,
And the soft sun of summer would glow,
To the side of the stream where I knew he would be,
Living there mid the bright waters gleam,
And by just peeping over the edge I could see
The boy living down in the stream.

Came a day then at last when I looked for the lad,
But to find he was gone and instead
Was a man with a face that was sunken and sad,
And a place that was bald on his head;
Just a look in his eye and the story was told,
Then a blur on the bright waters gleam,
And I knew that I never again would behold
The boy living down in the stream.

O, how sweet if time in its waverless flight
Would revert through the cycle of years,
Bringing back all the days and the hours so bright,
Leaving out all the sorrow and tears.
O, how sweet just to stray with a heart light and free,
Once again where the bright waters gleam;
Once again to look over the border and see
The boy living down in the stream.

THE LAW OF ENVIRONMENT: VARIATION

That environment is an immense and controlling natural law for the sustenance of life has come to be a fact as conceded and confessed as that Biogenesis, or life only proceeding from life, is the inexorable natural law for the beginning of life. Environment, as the natural law for the sustenance of life, is energetic, with two main influences upon life. The first influence is that of variation. The life itself varies as the environment gets changed. Hunter put a sea-gull into such environment that it could only get grain to eat. The result was that the stomach of a bird normally

adapted to a fish diet, came in time to resemble in structure the gizzard of a grain feeder like the pigeon. Holmgren fed pigeons for a lengthened period on meat diet, and their gizzards became carnivorous stomachs. How constant and controlling this varying power upon life is, is seen in the adjustment of animals to their habitat—the flounder, burying himself in the mud and sand at the bottom of its sea or river, takes on its hue; the fur of the polar bear is white as are the Arctic snows amid which it lives; the alternating narrow stripes of shadow and sunshine interbraided amid the tangled Indian jungles are photographed and stereotyped upon the Bengal tiger which seeks its prey among them.

But is not this varying force of environment upon life, a natural law for life as thoroughly energetic in the spiritual world as in what we call the natural? What man's spiritual life does not get shape and take on color from his environment? The books he reads, the social atmosphere in which he is immersed, the daily business to which he sets his hand, the companionships he chooses—how do their varieties, their purities or impurities, their nobleness or lowness, react into variations within himself. The law of environment which, in the natural world, bleaches the brown coat of the hare into the white coat of it in the Arctic regions, is only the same law plying its changes upon man in the spiritual world.

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