

At The Roycroft Shops

When I first visited the Roycroft Shops a joyous camaraderie bordering almost on the burlesque pervaded the place. Elbert Hubbard's fame was in the making and fate still waited around the corner with her big prizes and her cruel blows.

Again I was there when Col. Rowan the man who carried the famous "Message to Garcia" was there. He had hid in Garnet's stall and got himself disgracefully messed up with hay and oats because he refused to be lionized by a highbrow bunch of hero-worshippers, and the way I got chummy with the Colonel was when on a tramp with the Fra as leader I refused to be left behind when they jumped a creek, also a barbed wire fence.

I waded the creek and rolled under the fence destroying my best Sunday shoes and ruining a favorite dress.

But I did the "Hike" and the Colonel bought me the best bound "Message to Garcia" in which many noted visitors and Roycrofters inscribed their names and good wishes along with a delightful inscription from himself. Elbert Hubbard was like a big boy gleefully playing hookey and it was this atmosphere and this spirit that made the guests chortle and chuckle with glee and go away full to overflowing with resolutions to come again and bring their friends with them.

Success followed success quickly with Elbert Hubbard but while larger crowds came year after year to Roycroft, somehow as the grandeur of the place increased the joyous spirit decreased—the sign "Take anything that is not nailed down" gave place to de lux goods at de lux prices. I was at the "Shops" a year after the sinking of the Lusitania. Roycroft is now grand and beautiful, a life's work finished, but Elbert and Alice sleep side by side at the bottom of the Ocean.

Many of the "old bunch" were there—The Red One—always a host in himself and Ali Baba and that genuine Bohemian and sure enough artist Alex Fournier and Elbert II., so like and so unlike his father.

We talked of the days when things at Roycroft were in the making—when the blacksmith shop was a real red hot iron door