





ESSAY

Henry Darger's Great Crusade, Crisis of Faith, and Last Judgment

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Henry Darger did not like children. Real children, that is. He loved fantasy children, particularly the ones he created in his epic novel, *In the Realms of the Unreal*. In this work, he often based his imaginary youngsters upon real-life playmates he had known growing up. Those real-life children sometimes caused him problems, but his make-believe versions of those same kids provided Darger with a second chance to interact with them. And this time around, for better or worse, *he* would call the shots.

His earliest recollections of interacting with neighborhood kids ranged from pushing them down, getting into fights with other boys, throwing ashes in the eyes of one little girl, and slashing another girl with his pocket knife. He wrote in his autobiography, *The History of My Life*, that when he grew older he came to love baby children and would do anything to protect them, but he did not give any examples of this. He freely admitted: "I hated to see the day come when I will be grown up. I never wanted to. I wished to be young always."¹

And so he remained, at least psychologically, for the rest of his life. Emotionally arrested in prepubescence, Darger pined for the days of his youth, even though his early years growing up had been marked by trauma and tragedy.

Born the son of a tailor in Chicago in 1892, Darger ex-

perienced his first trauma at the age of four, when his mother died giving birth to his sister, who was subsequently given up for adoption. Darger's father reported that his son was exceptionally intelligent, but also exceptionally "peculiar."² Four years later, a second crisis came about when he was separated from his father and placed in a Catholic boys' home. Four more years passed and Darger—who had by now earned the nickname "Crazy" because of his odd behavior—endured another catastrophic hardship when he was committed to the Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children in downstate Lincoln, Illinois.³ While residing at what he referred to as "that children's nut house,"⁴ he suffered various forms of physical, emotional, and, very possibly, sexual abuse.

The last major tragedy in Darger's formative years, the death of his father, took place when he was fifteen and still living at the asylum. These four blows to his increasingly fragile self-esteem molded him into a man who mistrusted the world surrounding him, who kept to himself and built a wall around his psyche. Later, behind that wall, he constructed a new universe—one that he entered as soon as the door to his room closed behind him.

Several hypothetical diagnoses have been trotted out to explain Darger's particular mental condition. Dr. John MacGregor makes a good case for Darger's suffering from

Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism.⁵ This condition may have been further complicated by post-traumatic stress disorder and, given his later penchant for depicting little girls with penises in his art, possible gender confusion as a result of childhood sexual abuse.

Following the death of his father, Darger made three attempts to run away from the Lincoln asylum. He succeeded on the last, in 1909. At the age of seventeen, he returned to Chicago and was hired as a janitor at St. Joseph's Hospital, where he also lived until 1922.

Darger's Children's Crusade

Probably in 1912, he began writing the epic novel that was to occupy his thoughts for the next twenty or thirty years and fill some fifteen thousand densely typewritten pages: *In the Realms of the Unreal*, otherwise titled *The Story of the Vivian Girls in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child-Slave Rebellion*.⁶ It's a long-winded, rip-roaring yarn that takes place on an imaginary planet with our earth serving as its moon, and magically traversable by sea cruise. This world is torn by a war between a powerful, demonic nation trading in child slavery and a coalition of Catholic nations attempting to end the evil practice. The seven young Vivian sisters are princesses, daughters of the ruler of the leading Catholic nation. They are blond-haired warrior saints who have characteristics bordering on the angelic. The Vivian girls lend their support to the child-slave rebellion, an army of children initially led by a martyred Joan of Arc figure by the name of Annie Aronburg.

Much of the *Realms* is a pastiche of appropriated literary excerpts and paraphrases from L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and its sequels, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and many other books. Although it is by no means a well-crafted novel, what gives the saga a kind of artificial life is Darger himself: both literally, as he writes himself

into the story, and behind the scenes, as he becomes the animating force underlying the creation of a strangely familiar and even more strangely aberrant mythology.

In separate works on paper, Darger illustrated his saga, beginning with freehand drawings and borrowed images that he altered, followed by ever more elaborate experiments in appropriation—including collage and pictures traced from source materials, using carbon paper, that he incorporated into complex, monumental compositions enlivened with watercolor. Darger cut out images of young children and soldiers in uniform from newspapers, magazines, comic and coloring books, catalogs, and other sources. These became the basis for illustrations of characters in his *Realms*. He apparently had begun making such images by the 1920s.

A Crisis of Faith

In 1911 or 1912, he lost a particularly prized photograph, clipped from a newspaper, of a little girl named Elsie Paroubek, who was reported to have been abducted and murdered. Darger had planned to use this image as the model for the child martyr Annie Aronburg in his story. This loss was calamitous for him; he invested the missing image of the child with intense emotional meaning, as if he had lost a real child—perhaps his own sister—or as if he had known the real Elsie. This event affected the entire course of the novel for decades, and is referred to again and again in his manuscripts.

As a youngster, he had attacked other children and gotten in trouble. In turn, he was preyed upon by bullies and claimed to have fought back violently in every case. Now the biggest bully of them all—God—was abusing him by refusing to restore the lost picture of Elsie Paroubek.

Darger recorded that at one point he had wanted to adopt a little girl, but his desire came to naught. He took this as another personal affront from God. Over the years, he continued to dwell on these perceived rejections

by God and on the past injuries inflicted on him by others. What might be just frustrations or disappointments to most people were exaggerated far out of proportion in his mind. Once one has experienced a major trauma—like losing a parent at a young age—every subsequent injury is an emotional re-experience of that first trauma.

Darger was a devout Catholic, attending church often. In his anger he gave God ultimatums, threatened to make the Christians in his story lose battles, and increased the scenes of human annihilation in it. Having written himself into the story as a dashing and heroic leader come to help the child slaves, he renounced God and the Catholic church and through various alter egos went over to the Glandelinian dark side. The violence reached horrific proportions, but the missing photograph never reappeared. In the end he relented and, no doubt plagued by guilt, returned to the church with redoubled fervor.⁷

In the Outer Realms

Darger had a couple boyhood comrades at the Lincoln asylum,⁸ but as an adult he had only one true friend: a Luxembourg immigrant by the name of Whilliam Schloeder. They probably met sometime during Darger's first few years back in Chicago. Darger and Schloeder would go to Riverview amusement park together and Darger was a frequent guest in Schloeder's home, where he lived with his mother and several sisters. Their friendship was so close that Darger even wrote his buddy—as he had himself—into his *Realms* saga. When Schloeder, who had moved to Texas, died in 1959, Darger took it very hard.

In 1917, Darger was drafted into the army. He was first stationed at Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois, and then transferred to Camp Logan near Houston, Texas. It was not a situation he was comfortable with and he was discharged a short time later due to eye trouble, without having served overseas. The only military actions he was interested in pursuing were the ones in his imagina-

tion. He had been fascinated with the American Civil War since his early youth and now used it as a model of sorts for his *Realms* saga, as well as bringing in many aspects of World War I, which was being waged during the first years he was writing his novel. Although he did not engage in combat, the newspapers were full of reports of it, offering him much source material.

Darger quit his job and left his residence at St. Joseph's Hospital in 1922 because of his intense dislike of an autocratic nun, Sister De Paul. Shortly thereafter, he was hired as a dishwasher at Grant Hospital and moved to his first apartment, at 1035 Webster Avenue in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. In 1931, fearing that a new landlord might install a still to make illegal liquor in his building, Darger moved to a boardinghouse two blocks away. In *The History of My Life*, he recounts an episode that he apparently witnessed, in which a still exploded in his neighborhood. He seems to have been terrified by the notion that a still, if installed at his former residence, might also explode while he was living nearby.

The boardinghouse at 851 Webster was owned by a police officer, Captain Walter Gehr. Darger lived on the second floor in a large single room with a smaller attached room. He shared a bathroom with three other residents. Gehr's daughter, Mary Catherine (now O'Donnell) who was born in 1936, and her little brother, grew up in the boardinghouse and often saw Darger.⁹ They would sneak into his room sometimes and look at the toys and paints on his table, as well as the pictures of children that covered his walls—especially the works of original art containing figures of little girls. According to Mary Catherine, Captain Gehr was not alarmed by the sometimes gruesome images and simply thought Darger was shell-shocked from the war. After all, that would explain why he always wore the same old army coat year after year; why he was a reclusive loner; and why he didn't like Mary Catherine or her brother snooping around in his room

and touching his things. Darger never had visitors, but guests of the Gehr family and the three other tenants of the boardinghouse would remark that they thought they heard people conversing behind Darger's closed door. Those people were all just Darger—a superb mimic—reenacting and possibly amending exchanges that had taken place that day or earlier in his life. Mary Catherine and her brother would sit on the stairway leading up to the second-floor landing and listen to him speaking in strange voices and dialects.

Darger had other unusual habits. He attended Catholic Mass three or four times a day. He avoided talking to people, but if addressed, he would sometimes speak in nonsense syllables or mutter something about the weather and then dash away. His room was piled knee-deep in old, bundled newspapers, which he read voraciously, as well as balls of twine that he foraged in trash-hunts through the alleys, collections of busted rubber bands that he "repaired," numerous pairs of broken eye glasses, discarded honey containers and Pepto-Bismol bottles. He kept a large stash of bricks under his mattress, presumably in case he was attacked. He would ritually intone "Ah-bah-suh-duh" in a deep voice before entering the bathroom.¹⁰ He claimed to be from Brazil and because of that, he once explained, he rarely took a bath.¹¹

Crisis Averted

It is hard to determine when each volume of *In the Realms of the Unreal* was bound or when Darger finished writing his entire saga. He had begun typing the pages in 1916, transcribing his story from handwritten drafts, which he had begun writing four to six years earlier. Sometime in or after 1932, he hand-bound the first seven volumes.¹² He left another seven or eight bundled volumes of unbound pages as well.

Confusingly, he also wrote that it took him "over eleven years in writing out the long and graphic details,"¹³ yet that

would mean that if he started in 1912, he would have finished by 1923. Did it take him another decade or more to sort it all out? The pages throughout the volumes have varied numbering systems, page sizes, and typewriter fonts, all indicating that he was constantly revising and adding to the novel throughout the years. Did he simply give up trying to reconfigure it after binding the first seven volumes or did he continue to write the unbound material after 1932? These questions remain unanswered.¹⁴

What is fairly certain is that by the time he bound the first volume, he had finished writing the whole tale, for he mentions the outcome of the war in the first paragraph of his introduction to that first volume, apparently written and added at the time of binding. The official ending of the *Realms*, on pages 3544 and 3545 of volume XIV,¹⁵ recounts a Christian victory. But a single unnumbered page follows these, describing an entirely different outcome. It is not really an alternative ending, but rather an optional transition page, featuring a Christian setback that promises to be continued "in next volume." This inconclusive page was perhaps a provisional version to be retained as long as the Aronburg/Paroubek photograph was not recovered, and then ultimately rejected when he decided it was high time to draw things to a close.

Last Judgment

Darger was asked to resign from his job at Grant Hospital by a new supervisor in 1936. He wrote in his autobiography that he did not remember the reason given to him, but he surmised that it was because he had been friendly with the previous supervisor, who was the new one's rival. He was then rehired at St. Joseph's Hospital as a dishwasher.

He discovered a method for photographically enlarging images to be traced into his drawings in 1944 or thereabouts. That is the earliest date noted on the envelopes he saved containing internegatives and original pictures

cut from newspapers and magazines. By this time, he had probably finished writing his *Realms* saga and had moved on to an 8,500-page handwritten sequel of sorts, *Further Adventures in Chicago: Crazy House*, which placed the Vivian girls in a more conventional setting. Although he was no longer writing the *Realms*, he continued to make his carbon tracing/pencil/watercolor artworks until the end of his life, though for the most part they no longer referred to specific episodes in either novel, but rather depicted other events or general scenes from his world. Moreover, all references to the war and its atrocities gradually disappeared from the art images, which Darger was now producing as very large, panoramic works. Even the Vivian girls no longer appeared: just happy children—sometimes the same child repeated over and over in patterned rows—cavorting blissfully in a flowery paradise.

In 1947, he was let go from St. Joseph's because the work had become too difficult for him. He was then hired at Alexian Brothers Hospital as a dishwasher, but transferred to the bandage room in 1951.

Once the tales of the Vivian sisters were either completed or abandoned, Darger turned to other kinds of writing. He began keeping the first of six weather journals on December 31, 1957. Always fascinated by the weather, he reported his firsthand observations almost daily until December 31, 1967.

Leg pains forced him to leave his job at Alexian Broth-

ers and retire in 1963. It was at some point after this that he began writing *The History of My Life*. It is a selective autobiography at best. He omitted many things, such as his interest in adopting a child and, most conspicuously, the writing of his magnum opus, *In the Realms of the Unreal*. He referred only in passing to the fact that he was also a visual artist. After documenting his memories for some two hundred pages, he launched into a fictitious story about a tornado named Sweetie Pie that occupied nearly five thousand more pages.

Darger was struck by an automobile in 1969 and suffered an injury to his left leg and hip. This, in addition to previous problems with his legs, made it very difficult for him to climb the stairs at his boardinghouse. His landlord, Nathan Lerner, who had acquired the 851 Webster property in 1956, recalls that wallpaper on the stairway to the second floor landing had been worn away where Darger leaned against it for support as he climbed. In 1972, the artist asked Lerner to arrange for him to move to a nursing home, since he could no longer negotiate the stairs. He was admitted late that year to St. Augustine's Home for the Aged—the same nursing home in which his father had passed away.

He kept a diary of day-to-day activities, which consisted of reports regarding his daily church attendance and complaints about his declining health, from March 28, 1968, through January 1, 1972. The last page is dated a

little more than a year before he died. Now too crippled and exhausted to rant about his health problems in his diary, and removed from the private world associated with his boardinghouse room, he ceased all written, artistic, or verbal communication, and withdrew into himself completely at the nursing home. He died the day after his birthday in 1973 and was buried in a pauper's grave.

Shortly after Darger moved out, Lerner asked one of his other tenants, David Berglund, to clear out Darger's belongings from the room he had occupied. After hauling away several truckloads of trash and perhaps a wealth of unrecognized artistic source materials as well, Berglund came upon Darger's watercolor works and writings. He immediately told Lerner about them and as they began to examine the material, their awe and amazement grew. When Berglund visited Darger at the nursing home shortly before his death and mentioned the discovery, Darger was jolted out of his reverie long enough to say, "Too late now."¹⁶

Too late for what? Too late to keep his secret life hidden any longer? Too late to keep the world from running its eyes over the majestic and monstrous landscape of his bloodied-but-unbowed psyche? Absolutely. But perhaps *not* too late for him to realize that he might finally get the audience and admiration he surely wanted. And that his last judgment would take place not only in heaven, but on earth as well.

Notes

1. Henry Darger, *The History of My Life*, manuscript, ca. 1968–72, 14 (Darger's numbering, see page 283).
2. John MacGregor, *Henry Darger: In the Realms of the Unreal* (New York: Delano Greenidge, 2002), 659: "Henry's father states on the application form [for admission to the Lincoln Asylum] that his son began to speak at 'One year.' In response to the question, 'Was the child peculiar from birth?' he replied, 'Yes.'"
3. *Ibid.*, 660. MacGregor cites the application form for Darger's admission to the Lincoln Asylum, where a Dr. Otto Schmidt makes "the rather vague clinical observation that Henry was insane." The application also states that, according to his father, young Darger had indulged in excessive and uncontrolled masturbation from age six to twelve.
4. Darger, *History of My Life*, 43 (see page 287).
5. MacGregor, *Henry Darger: In the Realms of the Unreal*, 656–65.
6. Another manuscript provides the only record of when Darger began to write *In the Realms*: Henry Darger, *Time Book Monthly*, 3, unpublished manuscript with notes for *In the Realms of the Unreal*: "The writing of the Glandco Angelinian war started in June, 1912 . . ."
7. Darger, *History of My Life*, 139–40 (see page 303).
8. Darger, *History of My Life*, 50. Darger writes: "I had only a few special friends, Jacob Marcus, Paul Marcus (no brother of the first-mentioned), Daniel Jones, and Donald Aurand" (see page 288).
9. Mary Catherine O'Donnell, interview with the author, June 1, 2001.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Nathan Lerner, talk at the dedication of a new grave stone for Darger at All Saints Cemetery, Des Plaines, Ill., November 2, 1996.
12. Where the decorative wallpaper that Darger used to cover the outside of bound volume VII has lifted up to reveal the newspaper

lining beneath it, a photograph caption is visible that reads, "Copyright, 1932, International News Photos, Inc." The volume thus could not have been bound before that date.

13. Darger, *In the Realms of the Unreal*, vol. I, 1.

14. *In the Realms of the Unreal* was begun in 1912, according to a note by Darger (see n. 6, above); Darger stopped writing it sometime in the 1930s. (The latest date on a piece of its text is from 1929, but Darger seems to have rewritten and reordered passages for some time thereafter.) The novel comprises fifteen volumes of typescript, seven of which he bound, while eight others are unbound bundles. Although Darger numbered some of the volumes, his system was confusing: The bound volumes are numbered I through VII and the unbound volumes are numbered VIII, X/Part One, X/Part Two, and XI. There is no volume numbered IX or XIII, while three of the bundles have no label. Adding to the confusion, Darger labeled another unbound volume VII, though he also had a bound volume with that number, and it seems to belong to a later point in the tale. Because of the episodic and somewhat fragmentary nature of the narrative, it is not altogether clear how the volumes follow upon one another, nor is the date when Darger wrote each section easy to confirm. References within the volumes to dated fictitious events are guideposts to establishing a likely sequence. John MacGregor and I have each proposed a plausible sequence and dates for the volumes, and agree in most respects:

volumes I–VII, 1910–13, bound
volume VIII, undated, unbound
unbound, unnumbered volume IX(?), 1913
volume X/Part One, 1913, unbound
volume X/Part Two, 1913, unbound
volume XI, undated, unbound

unbound, unnumbered volume XII(?), 1914–17 (MacGregor has not assigned a location to this volume, calling it "volume A")
unbound volume VII is volume XIII(?), 1915 (MacGregor places this as volume XII)

unbound, unnumbered volume XIV(?), 1915–17 (MacGregor places this as volume XIII)

MacGregor notes that "the final sequence of volumes and chapters was left unsettled by Darger, with several volumes lacking either a title page or a volume number. Darger often moved huge sections of his manuscripts about within a work, and large fragments were left out, perhaps to be fitted in later. The various numbering systems encountered on many pages provide evidence of evolutionary developments in the writing history of *The Realms*. . . . The identification of [volumes IX, XII, and XIII] is still uncertain, and later studies may yet relocate them in the sequence. Two additional large fragments . . . have not been fitted into the sequence." MacGregor, *Henry Darger: In the Realms of the Unreal*, 666, 709.

15. Or volume XIII according to MacGregor. Darger's numbering system does not correspond to the actual page count.

16. David Berglund, interview with the author, December 20, 1999.



The Metaphysics of Wreckage

Introduction to the Autobiography of Henry Darger

CARL WATSON

The History of My Life is Henry Darger's autobiographical narrative. It was the last of his major texts, begun around 1968 and continued probably until his death in 1973.¹ *My Life*, like all of Darger's books, has a unique physical presence: it is composed of eight bound volumes—school composition and record books of different sizes—tied together with twine. Darger's handwritten pagination is roughly continuous across the volumes; he numbered 5,084 pages. The entire manuscript is actually much longer, due to the circling back and consequent doubling and tripling of groups of page numbers—the bound texts may comprise close to 5,500 pages, and there may be as many as 2,000 additional loose pages.² Taken as a whole, the manuscript may be usefully divided into five sections, a prologue and four books, based on distinct breaks in the narrative material: *The Autobiography*, *The Maelstrom*, *The Inferno*, and *The Sweetie Pie*.³

The Prologue has separate pagination and is not obviously consistent with the rest of the work, being thirty-six pages of descriptions of biblical books.⁴ The *Autobiography* is Darger's narrative of his own life and is factual (or largely so), if not comprehensive. The remaining three sections comprise what could be called the catastrophic books, as they recount, via numerous imaginary witnesses,

an apocalyptic tornado that ravages central Illinois. Notably, the fictional events of this tale are set in the real world (as opposed to the fantastic world of *In the Realms of the Unreal*). The storm goes by various names until it eventually takes the shape of a "strangle-headed child cloud" called Sweetie Pie. The narrative is made up of endless descriptions of the massive death and destruction this wild turbulence wreaks upon city and countryside alike, savaging zoos, orphanages, supermarkets, and convents. Windmills warp through the sky like flying skeletons, great municipal buildings explode, and bridges buckle like cardboard. The storm ignites thousands of acres of wildfires,⁵ which in turn create sinister smolders sending forth poison clouds that spread for hundreds of miles. Witnesses recount the massive movements of men and supplies across ravaged landscapes, applaud the bravery and suffering of entire populations, attend the musings of professors, engineers, and meteorologists, and stand in judgment at the trials of traitors and arsonists, culminating in the trial of Sweetie Pie herself.

Such a synopsis may sound epic, even exciting, but there are, as well, great challenges for the reader. Time is relentlessly cyclical throughout the narrative, events fold in on one another, geography is impossibly fluid, and it is



difficult to know who is narrating at any given time. The writing develops no climax, no conclusion, nor any real insight or dramatic tension, but seems to exist only to perpetuate itself in an ongoing metaphysic of wreckage and sublime turbulence.

There is much to fascinate in Darger's catastrophe narratives, but for the reader interested in Darger's life via his own unique perspective, the *Autobiography* is the place to start. Here, the artist, who seems to claim both a German and a Brazilian identity, provides us with an oddly plotted, unfocused tale of a strange and sometimes brutal childhood followed by an adult life of mundane work interspersed with personal reflections. The reader gains basic chronological and logistic information—most of which seems to be reliably factual—along with indications of Darger's general interests: storms, fires, petty disputes, and personal pains. One may also detect a certain emotional distance, or matter-of-factness, partially attributable to Darger's advanced age—he was in his late sixties at the time of writing—but which is also reflective of a larger missing dimension, that of autobiographical import. In fact, *History of My Life* does not seem to fulfill the typical function of autobiographies as we usually think of them: that is, the portrait of the well-lived life, the reflective life, the life atoned for. Incidents that one might expect to be developed are quickly dropped. Events that normally would seem traumatic or life-changing are passed over with little comment. The deaths of loved ones are only briefly mentioned. Darger does not speak of his landlords, Nathan and Kiyoko Lerner, who were probably the people closest to him during the time of the writing, nor does he mention, except in passing,

his art or his writing, which were his lifelong passions. The reader begins to suspect that much of what is most important or influential is only hinted at or actually absent, lending the narrative a tone of triviality or at least evasiveness, as if the author were hiding, rather than revealing, the relevant truth.

The *Autobiography* is not totally devoid of emotion, however, as an undercurrent of anger and sadness surfaces periodically. I would stress the periodicity here because as important as any particular autobiographical detail is the structure and rhythm of narration that emerges—themes and patterns that are reflected in astounding ways in the remaining 5,300 pages. For instance, a repeated admission, or consciousness, of unknowing pervades this text. When it is contrasted to what is accepted as *known*, a dialectic begins to emerge that is reiterated throughout the narrative as a tension between control and lack of control, containment and escape, authority and defiance—tensions that are further amplified in the remaining catastrophic books in the form of conflicts between order and chaos, density and explosion, the inexplicable and the limits of human knowledge. There is, as well, a continual chronological backtracking in the *Autobiography* that often takes the form of something Darger “forgot” to tell us, shoring up not only the chronological integrity of his story, but also his identity. In fact, much of the second half of the *Autobiography* is a “going back” in which various revisited themes can be seen as attempts at either enhanced self-definition or more willful explanation.

The final return to the forgotten past occurs on page 206, in the last sentence of the *Autobiography* section: “There is one really important thing I must write which

I have forgotten.” No further information about this one important thing is given; instead, Darger turns immediately to a description of the fictional tornado. This return—incomplete, unfulfilled—thus functions as a narrative phase shift into the fiction of the remaining books. We might read it as a retreat from the dissolution of old age and fading memory, as described in the factual *Autobiography*, to a more fully realized and more meaningful, albeit invented, existence—heroic, authoritative, prophetic. Even if it is fictional, this new phase may hold as much subjective relevance as the autobiography.

Most scholars consider *History of My Life* as two distinct narratives, the autobiography and the tale of the tornado. Darger's intentions in this respect are open to question. We may believe that he was writing an autobiography and simply, unbeknownst to himself, went off track into the fanciful storm drama that had always fascinated him. Or he may have intended to write a fiction all along. It is also very possible he actually did witness a major tornado at some point, perhaps during his youth in rural Illinois. It is almost certain that he read about such a tornado, and he may have later believed or “remembered” having witnessed it. A famously destructive tornado that struck the Chicago area in 1967 may have inspired him to begin this narrative.⁶ In his concurrent diary he states that the story of Sweetie Pie is fictional, but then again the name Sweetie Pie does not appear until page 4158, so this may have been a late realization. He headed page 1 with a title, “The History of My Life by Henry Joseph Darger (Dargarius in Brazilian)” and inscribed the tops of the manuscript pages, albeit erratically, with some version of the heading *History of My Life* (or *My Life History*, or *Life History*) for nearly

two thousand pages, long after he had ceased to describe his own life story. The heading becomes less and less frequent until its last occurrence on page 1980, better than a third of the way through the total volume of the manuscript and well into Book Three. We can conclude, therefore, that on some level Darger was writing the same book he had begun, even if its purpose had changed.

However we choose to define *History of My Life* as a whole—as autobiography, fiction, creative nonfiction, psychological reportage—it is a unique experience for the reader, an inconclusive, obsessively redundant tale that, in the end, seems to have no real point other than the pleasure of the writer, a delectation gained from intense indulgence in the text's most prominent themes: Catastrophe and Mystery. These may be interpreted as the Catastrophe by which the world is punished and redeemed and the Mystery that underlies every attempt at understanding. From the parades of the destitute, the mad, and the stalwart to the collapse of the highest accomplishments of human engineering, to the strange tangled constructions of violence, to the motives of men and of girl-shaped whirlwinds: "It was all confusion commotion . . . glory majesty mystery and even beauty."⁷ This mystery, for us, is readily equated to the mystery of the artist himself, born in Chicago at the end of the nineteenth century, the quintessential unknown man who unexpectedly arrives in the public consciousness out of the whirlwind of anonymous modern life. Perhaps it is some need of our current media-addled culture that desires this storm he brings. As General Henry Darger himself proclaims: "The heart aches at the sight the inconvenience and strange mystery of it all."

Notes

1. The major texts are *In the Realms of the Unreal*, *Further Adventures of the Vivian Girls: Chicago Crazy House*, and *The History of My Life*.

2. The existence of these loose pages is based on John M. MacGregor's statement. John MacGregor, *Henry Darger: In the Realms of the Unreal* (New York: Delano Greenidge, 2002), 670.

3. Darger does not separate *History of My Life* into sections. His manuscript flows from one theme to the next without identifying breaks. The terms "prologue" and "books" are mine, as are the titles. A brief description follows. Page numbers refer to Darger's handwritten numbering.

Prologue, Biblical Citations (pages 1a–36a): These are brief descriptions of various books of the Bible with the number of chapters in each.

Book One, Autobiography (pages 1–206): Darger's narrative of his own life up until the time he retires. This narration spends a lot of time on some rather trivial events and avoids any major introspection or reflection on the general course of his life.

Book Two, The Maelstrom (pages 206–1809): Darger's narrative of his first encounter with the great tornado. It is told initially through his own voice as a fifteen-year-old boy who quickly becomes an adult named Henry, wielding both authority and expertise. This section uses a great many invented eyewitness accounts of the tornado by farmers, farmers' wives, railroad engineers, etc.

Book Three, The Inferno (pages 1810–2950): The narrative of the Great Wheat Field Fire. First thought to be a result of the tornado, the fire is eventually found to have been set by four arsonists for reasons of jealousy over the marriage choice of a farmer's wife. Much of Book Three is taken up with battle scenes, strategies, and logistics. There are also discussions of dangerous clouds of smoke and of the "smoulder," the underground fire that keeps erupting to the earth's surface in new conflagrations. Throughout this section Henry is an adult, a master firefighter, although numerous other voices narrate events.

Book Four, Sweetie Pie (pages 2951–5084): The narrative returns to the story of the tornado, which eventually takes the name Sweetie

Pie (page 4158) and the anthropomorphic shape of a strangle-headed child cloud, i.e., a girl's head being strangled by cloudlike arms, her protruding tongue forming the funnel of the tornado. This section alternates between eyewitness accounts of the tornado and panel discussions and mock trials, most of which have to do with the storm's strange shape.

4. I include the Prologue as a part of the overall work, because I believe this early section sets up Darger's fascination with numeration, which is magnified in the catastrophic books. It also provides a stepping-off point for reading the rest of *My Life* as an apocalyptic vision, similar to the biblical prophecies.

5. The cause of the wildfire changes over time. See the description of Book Three, *The Inferno*, above.

6. There is much to be said about Darger's catastrophe narratives, of which just a taste may be offered here. On page 206, shortly after the end of the Autobiography section of the manuscript, he discusses a tornado he witnessed "in his late teens" in northern Missouri. (We do not know if Henry was ever in northern Missouri.) Then he says that the second tornado he witnessed was in extreme southern Illinois (he says only that it was a town with a French name). This second instance actually took place earlier than the first, in 1906, when he was fifteen. The rest of the story seems to develop from this sighting. However, the main part of the tale takes place in upper central Illinois, in the area of LaSalle, so there is a lot of dislocation in time and space. Several tornadoes occurred in 1906, but none in the southern Illinois-Missouri area that I can find. But that was the year of the San Francisco earthquake, which was heavily reported in newspapers. Darger seems to have borrowed several accounts of events from earthquake coverage and used them later in his manuscript. It is also interesting to note that one of the greatest tornado outbreaks in history occurred in 1965, which would have been about the time he was beginning to work on *My Life*: forty-seven tornadoes were confirmed across the Midwest on Palm Sunday, April 11.

7. *History of My Life*, manuscript 3121.

8. *Ibid*, 2969.



*The following is a facsimile
interpretation by the publisher
based upon select pages from
Henry Darger's History of My
Life, ca. 1968-73. Handwritten
5,000-page manuscript. Collection
American Folk Art Museum,
New York. Gift of Kiyoko Lerner*

THE HISTORY OF MY LIFE

By Henry Joseph Darger (Dargarius in Brazilian)

851 Webster Ave., Chicago, Ill. Box 14

* * *

[Born] in the month of April, on the 12, in the year of 1892, of what weekday I never knew, as I was never told, nor did I seek the information.

Also I do not remember the day my mother died, or who adopted my baby sister, as I was then too young, nor would my uncle Charles tell me, or did not know either.

My father and I lived in a small two-story house on the south side of a short alley between Adams and Monroe Street.

Across on Monroe on the street's north side were two large high schools, the one a little further west having a high, steep sort of slanting roof, and dark brown walls, and large windows. The one east of it had yellow-white stone instead of brick and a fancy shape; also very large windows. Both were 3-and-a-quarter stories high. The yellow stone one had a water tank on its roof.

Both floors in the house we lived in had only 2 rooms, one a kitchen with a large stove and behind it a bedroom.

The bed was large enough for both my father and I.

The stove was used for heating and cooking. During the hot days of summer we usually ate out in a restaurant.

Our barber was only a block away.

While living with my father, I went to St. Patrick's Catholic on Des Plaines and Adams, first to a Sisters' school and then one operated by the Catholic Christian Brothers.

At our house a staircase on the outside led up to the second floor.

Our living quarters faced north, and the kitchen had only one window. My father was a tailor, and a kind and easy-going man.

I had two uncles and 2 aunts, also easy-going people. My cousin,

Harry Darger, was their only son. Their religion, I'm not sure I know. My uncle had a Masonic funeral and burial. His name was Augustine Darger, called August, though. His wife's first name Emma.

Our meals were not scant, and I loved the pancakes the most.

There was, facing Halsted, with the east-rear facing us, a handsome building, three stories high and a quarter-block long. Nearly every day I went on its top floor porch. I was a meany one day when, for spite, I know not why, I shoved a two-year-old child down, and made it cry. No one seen it fall down and the child did not tell on me. This incident happened on that top floor porch.

Once on that porch I observed a big fire east from there on Monroe Street. I did not go to it though, as that day was very cold.

My father, besides being a tailor, was a very good cook.

Once in a while he or I would drink a little beer, especially in the summertime on hot days, but not in the winter. Oh how good the coffee he could produce by boiling. As he was lame, I bought the food, coffee, milk and other supplies, and ran errands.

Though a young boy, I did not hate school, but I did tell my teacher, a Catholic nun, that I "hate" school, when in truth I meant her, because she was so strict, severe, and prim.

I was of the kind that only my father could tell me what to do, and would take no scoldings or authority from anyone else.

I played hooky once for a whole week because of my intense dislike of her.

My father cured her and me both.

When, however, I and my teacher got to understand each other better, there was no more trouble and we got along fine, yet for mistakes in school I would have to write a sentence of words 200 times or more.

For Christmas, I mostly always got colored picture- or storybooks, which I liked, and chicken for dinner. I disliked turkey and still do, but I'll eat it if I can't get anything else.

Once in a while, to paint pictures or anything else, I had paint boxes, but I myself bought them, and other interesting articles.

During my youngest days, before I went to school, and not knowing any better, I hated baby kids—those, though, who were old enough to stand or walk. It was caused, I believe, because I had no brother, and lost my sister by adoption. I never knew or seen her, or knew her name.

I would, as I wrote before, shove them down, and once foolishly threw with my fingers ashes in the eyes of a little girl by the name of Francis Gillow.

And her mother and two grown brothers had been very good to me, and the boys often came to see me. And not thinking I would do such a mean deed as that.

My father had to pay the doctor's bill. Her mother scolded me from her open window, but did not punish me.

But she told me that my father would sure have to pay plenty on the bill.

The night of the same day, my father, coming up the steps, said to me, reproachfully, "What if she had died?"

I had so forgotten the incident that I did not comprehend what he was saying. But what I had done I did not know any better anyhow.

My Christmas presents, as I probably remember, that year were deducted because of my being made to repay his payment on the doctor bill.

And yet I was too young to feel sorry for what I had done. Later she and her three children moved away. To my own knowledge she was a widow. I never heard when her husband had died.

You remember I wrote that I hated baby kids. So indeed I did.

Yet what a change came in me, though, when I grew somewhat older.

Then, babies were more to me than anything, more than the world.

I would fondle them and love them. At that time, just any bigger boy or even grownup who dared molest or harm then in any way was my enemy.

I will have to say, all my childhood days with my father, who was very busy every day, except Sundays and holidays, were sort of uneventful, except I was very interested in summer thunderstorms (still am, old as I am) and during winter (cold) I could and would

stand by the window all day, watching it snow, especially if there was a great big blizzard raging.

I would watch it rain with great interest, also short or long showers.

Once, not knowing any better, I put lots of newspaper beside the stove near the wall and set it on fire. I got my ears boxed good and proper. I got it good, once again, from my father when he thought from my action that I was going to do it again.

But I had no intention of doing so.

Every 4 of July, I shot off all types of firecrackers and never was hurt or burned once, I was so overcareful.

I was also crazy about making bonfires, but was so careful I was never scorched, singed or burned.

I also loved to splash water in pools left by rain, especially with my hand, to pretend it was raining, but somehow never got wet.

Big or small as they were, I would never run to or go to fires. At home I'd watch the great cloud of smoke, or the glow in the sky by night-time.

I was scared of burning buildings on fire, for fear of falling walls or other debris.

Once on a late summer afternoon, my father took me to a big one close to home, on the corner of Washington Street, close to Halsted.

We stood watching it across Washington Street on the south side. He told me it was a tar factory.

It was not a wide building, only 6 windows across, but it stood 10 stories high and was like an inferno from the street to the top floor.

We did not stay watching it very long.

The fire was in the late afternoon but also raged all night, keeping the sky well lighted up.

It must have been an awfully stubborn fire to resist the efforts of so many firemen like that.

The fire departments, however, did not have the long snorkels that we now have, and they had no way to reach the top floors of so tall a building with their hose streams.

It was still burning the next morning and an awful smoker. All the fire companies I heard were still there. On that morning, the breezes being from the northwest, smoke enveloped our whole district, so thick that we could not stay in our house unless we wanted to be smothered.

Southerly winds came to our aid in the afternoon and drove the smoke to the north.

I did not go near the fire that day anymore, as I was afraid.

I did not remember the year, day or month of the fire.

One thing I must write is that us children in those days were looked on as beneath the dignity of grownups and did not amount to much, whereas, to my opinion or feeling, all grownups and especially all types of strangers and those I did not like were less than the dust or mud beneath my feet.

I also believed that I had read in the Holy Bible that children, especially all good and innocent ones, were more important to God than the grownups, and that He, when on the earth as a man, Jesus Christ, had said that it was better for a man or any person, of any kind, if harming a child, to have a millstone (not feather) to be tied around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea. Or the child's guardian angel will witness against the person who harmed a child before God who is in Heaven.

Also, in my boyhood days (I was like a little devil, if called "kid"), I had a very queer way of playing in the snow, by motion of my left hand, which later on got me into some serious trouble, of which I will explain somewhat later.

Do you believe it? Unlike most children, I hated to see the day come when I will be grown up. I never wanted to. I wished to be young always. I am grown up now and an old lame man, darn it.

I do not remember the number of years I lived with my father, but they told me I was 7 years old at the time of the One Hundred Days' War with Spain.

Except when enjoying myself, otherwise my life was uneventful, and during my somewhat later years (believe it or not) I was very

good, and I and my father and even the neighbors got along fine, except one.

Other kids had been stealing his wooden fruit and vegetable crates, and he accused me of taking them, which was very unreasonable, as I could furnish proof of my innocence.

In order to get even with him when he was not home (he being a peddler) I took a few of the crates, piled them in the center of his yard, and set them on fire. Then I quickly left and sat on the steps in front of the house, facing the alley. My father soon came out, it being near night, and sat with me.

Just about dark we both noticed a light of brightness which I felt sure could not come from the few crates I had set afire.

I ran over there to see what was the cause. Against the west side of the house the peddler had stacked by three wide an actual wall of the crates.

I could not believe my little bonfire, so far from there, could have caused it, but the shebang, including the side of the house, was one high, towering mass of singeing flame. Some of the blazing crates crashed down, bouncing, and covered the spot where I had made the little one, erasing evidence against me.

There was a number of boys in the neighborhood, but I and they could do nothing, though we worked like mad, my father helping. We could not reach the reach the flames with the pails of water higher up, so it was I who ran to the fire station only half a block away.

They got it out in twenty minutes. What do you say? What did the landlord say? He was the owner of the building and a few others nearby. According to what the firemen told him about what I and the boys did, he was good and friendly to me from then on. The fire only burned the outside. It did not get inside the house.

The cause of the fire was never known, but secretly I found sure proofs that my little revengeful bonfire did not do it.

Before I went to school, however, I could already read the newspapers, which my father had learned me by study.

Because of that, from first grade I was promptly put up to third grade.

My teacher had been very astonished at this. This happened when I went to St. Patrick's School.

I also excelled in spelling, but was still rather poor in figures and geography. History I almost knew by heart.

I once told my teacher, but the one, Mrs. Dewey at Skinner school, that I believed no one truthfully knew the losses in the battles of wars (including our Civil War), because each history told different losses, and I had the histories and other stories to prove it, and let her see and go over them. I had three histories that told different losses at the big Civil War battles, including Pittsburg Landing, Antietam, Bull Run No. 2, Gettysburg and so on. And it is true. Some claim Shiloh or Pittsburg Landing was the war's bloodiest, with 24000 dead in the 2 day battle.

I don't care what you might say, but I firmly don't believe it.

As the time passed on, my father grew worse in his crippled condition and I believed my uncles payed my father's way into the St. Augustine's Poor House Home on Sheffield and Fullerton Aves.

The place is still nicknamed The Little Sisters of the Poor, yet many are tall Sisters.

My Godmother, which until now I forgot to mention, who presided at my baptism at 8 years of age, took me to a place on Jackson Boulevard, some distance west, that I nicknamed "The Newsboys' Home."

The right name was the Mission of Our Lady of Mercy. The entrance was on North Jackson Boulevard.

The Home had a home in the rear, or north, called the Playhouse. It was very large and had all the conveniences necessary.

The Mission of Our Lady of Mercy building was four stories high, had a steep slanting roof, which leaked a while during storms. The top floor, under that roof, was our large sleeping room. I never knew how many boys there were, but there were not many. Our large sleeping room at times surely had the "beautiful little creatures of a red colour" known as bed bugs. Got the creeps?

Our building was 50 feet wide, and the windows seven feet high.

The dining room was on the ground floor and the meals were good, except on Fridays the cook put some horrid-tasting sauce or fish gravy on the fish and I could not make myself eat it.

When I first came, there was a woman matron in charge of us by the name of Mrs. Brown. During the time I was there, my Godmother gave me two dimes, which I did not yet spend for anything, or yet had time.

A boy whose name I did not yet know, seeing the dimes, accused me of stealing them.

I got the whacking on the hands with that rubber I mentioned, but still he did not get those dimes. They were really mine, and I would not surrender them no matter what the cost.

I notified my Godmother. She came and proved she gave those to me, and did he get it from Father Meaney, not O'Hara.

He never dared say that to me again, but I never forgave his frame-up either. He made me his bitter enemy.

In the matron's presence, in the dining room, I let out a big whopper of a poop, and as I said nothing, she, or most of them there, did not know who it was. The oldest one there said, "It might have been 'Crazy,' " meaning me.

She said "if he is crazy, he does not know any better." John Manley, who sat across from me, said to me truthfully, "It was you." One time, during a hot day in June, she wanted to adopt me, but I could not let her do it without my father's consent. He wouldn't give it. I was walking down the street past her house and she called me in, to make the request. Though living in the Home, we were allowed to roam at will.

She was a good woman, though. When she left her job to retire, for she could afford to do so, there came a new woman by the only name I knew her by, as Mrs. Gannon.

She had a son with her there by the name of James Gannon.

At that time, being in the Home, I was sent during the days to a city public school called the Skinner School.

Even now it is still there, with a large north addition of yellow brick. It is the same height. We were sent there for it was way too far from any Catholic school.

The Skinner School was on Jackson Boulevard and Aberdeen Street. The school front was on Aberdeen— that is, the main entrance. The school, both old and new, was a three-story building and was two blocks east of the Home. I don't remember that name of the street the east side of the Home fronted on, but the entrance of the Home was on Jackson.

There were two priests in main charge, Fathers Meaney and O'Hara. Father Meaney was the main head or otherwise top administrator.

They were prime and very severe and because of it I had been tempted to run away from there more than once, but after all I did not.

What boys were not allowed to do there was climb onto the top of their clothes lockers, as they were called.

I was forced to tell on them once when they did so, and after that they—and even prime Mrs. Gannon—were sore at me, and some of the bigger boys told me plenty. They did not hit me, though. I never did that again.

There was one boy who was somewhat friendly and sometimes not. When he got angry at you, you knew it. He was not a bully though, nor tried to be.

But at times he was a snitcher. His name was John Manley.

His parents were Irish. The boys there all had parents, but they could not take care of them.

He wanted my company and friendship but was hot-tempered and aggressive, and I did my best to try and avoid him. He wanted my company, but was bossy. He wanted my company always, for sure, I'll say again, but when I don't like anyone I wanted him to stay away. He would not do so. I knew two others who were brothers, by the names of John and Jim Scanlon.

Most kids there were of Irish descent.

I was of German descent, and I do not know why my father did not

learn me the language. My father and two uncles were, as they told me, born in the city of Meldorf, Germany.

My Uncle August told me that in his late teenage he witnessed at a safe distance the battle of Meldorf, at which the French army was beaten badly.

It was during the early part of the year-long Franco-Prussian War, when then the French were invading Germany.

They were soon driven out, but the war then raged fiercely on in France until the main French army was overthrown at Sedan.

What he looked like, I would have been dreadfully scared of my Grandfather, especially because of the awful mustache, horseshoe in shape.

That probably made him look more fierce and stern than he was. He and my grandmother, however, stayed in Germany.

Another thing that happened when I was young was when, without the least expectation, I was taken from my father and hustled off by train to a certain small boys' home at Morton Grove. I was there, however, for a short time when my father came and took me right home—and for good, for that never happened again. And for a good reason. Nobody could fool with my father, not even law officials.

At the beginning of my first term at the Skinner School (my teacher's name was Mrs. Dewey, a distant relative of Admiral Dewey, hero of Manila), I was good and studious, but not meaning any harm or wrong, I was a little too funny and made strange noises with my mouth, nose and throat in my classroom to the great annoyance of all the other boys and girls.

And I thought they would think it funny, and laugh or giggle.

But they gave me saucy and hateful looks.

Some said if I did not stop it, they'd gang up at me after school, and gave me the dirtiest looks. I defied them.

After several months of it, it caused my expulsion from the school.

The children were glad, for because of my silly noises, they were very much annoyed and tantalized. They surely did not like my

crazy noise one bit. They, some of them, did try to beat me up, but I knew how to defend myself with the long stick I always carried, and with telling effect.

My teacher had said that they had been otherwise, and still had been the best-behaved children in any classroom she ever did any teaching in, and my annoying them caused me being excumicated from the school.

I do not know, or even remember, how long I was away from school after being excumicated, but when one of the priests brought me back, asking to give me another chance, the administrator or principal allowed me to come back to school.

But she told me very sharply and angrily that if I ever did that again I would be expelled for good.

As I truly forgot and did not remember what I had done wrong, I did not really know what she was scolding me for so sharply. I would have told her off, but Father Meaney warned me with a sharp look to be careful.

But nevertheless, I was returned to school, and I was so unusually changed. I remembered still not what I had done out of the way the first time at school, but believe me and heaven knows, I was now one of the best-behaving boys in school.

Mrs. Dewey still was the teacher of the classroom and all those children, girls and boys that I was with now were well-behavers too. To go back for a while, when I still lived with my father, I knew a woman by the name of (I do not know her first name) Mrs. Anderson. She lived in an old wooden three-story house. (A house next to hers burned down one night.) She had a son and older daughter. His name was John and her name was Helen Anderson. I knew not their religion, and never asked, but I and he, without my father knowing it, went on Sundays to a Salvation Army Sunday School.

I believe they were Scotch-Irish.

Helen sure was a little girl for cleanness, and often washed my hands when she came to see me.

A bad thing happened to poor Helen when I was with them on a

visit one hot summer day. An ugly thunderstorm, with savage wind, came on from the almost straight north.

We were having a meal in the evening, and the north window was wide open because of the heat. Johnnie was shaking pepper from the pepper shaker, whose lid, not screwed on tight, came off. He was sitting with his back to the window and so was I.

A squall of wind came in through the open window and sent the pepper into Helen's eyes, as she was facing the window. Her mother, sitting alongside, got a little of it.

As he was only across the street, despite the blinding sheets of rain I ran over and quickly brought the doctor.

I do not know whether her eyes got better or not, because it was a few days after that my Godmother took me to the Home called the Mission of Our Lady of Mercy.

Also, before that happened, I used to go and see a night watchman in a six-story factory building a short distance from where we lived. That factory is not there anymore, or other building. Even the fancy school across from us on Monroe is gone.

To me it is a sad remembrance, now, to go back to the home. I had been there, I believe, for about seven years.

There was a sort of overseer, besides Mrs. Gannon (my Godmother didn't like her) and the two priests. His name was Otto Zink.

Between him and my "pain in the neck" John Manley, and the two Scanlons, I was accused before Mrs. Gannon and Father O'Hara of something, Heaven knows, I never did, but I had no means to prove I was innocent. It seemed, also, I did not have the brains or courage to fiercely deny it.

I got whacked by the priest, as often as I was told on, on the hands with the kind of rubber you put over your shoe.

If I knew where to go, to be elsewhere taken care of, I would have surely run away.

I hated my accusers and would have liked to kill them, but did not dare. I never was their friend, and am their enemy yet, even whether they are dead now, or not.

Yet for other strange things I really did, I was thought of and called "crazy."

Especially for the strange way I threw with my left hand, like pretending it was snowing.

Had I known that, I only would have done it where I was not seen.

It caused Mrs. Gannon, her son, and Otto Zink, and others there who saw me do it, to think I was either feeble-minded, or actually Crazy.

In fact, I made far better advance in my school lessons than any of them did.

Her son was a very unusually proud boy, and because he was her son could do things which us other lads could not dare think of doing. I actually had an awful intense dislike for him, and his mother too.

So that, for a time, caused all the boys who disliked him too to leave me alone, or avoid me completely.

My father came to see me during my stay there often, in the winter and the summer.

And especially on the Fourth of July and Christmas. My Godmother also came often to see me. Once, my father brought some woman relative to have me adopted by her, but Father Meaney was not there at the time, and Father O'Hara could not do anything about it. My father would have to see him.

He never did.

My father never came with her again. I had heard that Father Meaney, without a court order, could not grant him the request.

My uncle said I was better off not being adopted by her as she was a heavy drinker and might cause me to become one.

I do not remember the length of time or years I remained there in the Mission of Our Lady Home, but one part of the last year I was still there, I was taken several times to be examined by a doctor, who, on the second time I came, said my heart was not in the right place.

Where was it supposed to be? In my belly? Yet, I did not receive any kind of medicine or any kind of treatment whatever. Yet his office sure had an awful medicine smell.

I did not know it at the time, but now I know I was taken to the doctor to find out if I was really feeble-minded or crazy.

He said nothing about that especially in my presence.

Had I known what was going to be done with me, I surely would have ran away.

Again, I will say he said nothing about what my examination was for, but during a cold, windy, threatening late November day (I know not the day or date of the month), I was hustled into the Chicago and Alton Limited train, and brought to some kind of home for feeble-minded children, outside of, and south of the small city of Lincoln, Ill.

If I had known at the time of the cause of me being sent to that children's nut house, I surely would have never forgiven those at the Mercy of Our Lady Home, and would have revenged it the very first chance I had. I, a feeble-minded kid. I knew more than the whole shebang in that place.

I believe Mrs. Gannon was really responsible. Otto Zink, before I was taken away, was not there anymore.

It surely was a severe blow to me, but after the long run I got over it. I was now one hundred and sixty-two miles away from Chicago and my father. I wrote letters to him, and received once in a while Catholic prayer books and a musical harp.

But I did not know how to play it, or had anyone to learn it to me.

I knew a lot of songs and other pieces.

My stay there was for some good number of years and was uneventful but busy, except my schooling and interest in big summer and winter storms.

During my earliest time there, there were two boys there by the names of George Hamilton and John Johnson, whose character was such that no punishment of any kind would change them. It only made them far worse.

One morning, when us boys were in what is called the "playroom," Johnnie Johnson, known as the most bad of the boys, teased or tormented me.

At that time I was suffering from a very severe toothache. The pain and his torment of me roused me to an awful fury.

I went at him so savagely that afterwards he never even dared to come near me again.

Then, also, I remember one morning when I was in the classroom, conducted by a good teacher by the name of Miss Duff (Irish, I presume), there came into the schoolroom door and swiftly down the side aisle, two persons, one a janitor and the other I do not know who or what he was. They sure were handing each other a perfect storm or "cyclone" of fist blows.

The taller one almost right away had the janitor backed against the wall, beside the right side of the teacher's desk.

He held his mouth open wide in a strange, funny way, accompanied with an awful sort of frown during the 20-minutes conflict.

The poor teacher was scared, though, crying, "boys, boys," and us kids were sort of panicky! A fine example for those two grown rowdies to be fighting before us children in the schoolroom.

In my day I've seen many fights, but never like these two fought each other so savagely. The janitor was, however, a much better one with the fist, and though shorter than the other more than doubly stronger. The taller man was getting the most blows.

Still he wouldn't give up, and tried to fight more and more savagely. One of the boys of our class went to bring the school administrator, but she was scared too. She went to her office to call the police.

I never knew or even learned what caused the twenty-minutes fight, but I watched the janitor as he surely swung blow for blow. He had a dangerous look on his face. But when the fight was on its 20 minutes' duration, the janitor, with an extra-hard blow with his right, felled the taller man, who crashed headlong to the floor.

He lay there for a half minute, then got up, his face bleeding badly, but instead of renewing the fight, walked off, his mouth still open that way.

The janitor's name was George Harnford. I knew not the name of

the other. Two weeks or so later, he quit his job and we never seen him again.

Again to Johnnie Johnson. This is after the fight between the two men. There came into the asylum a new boy, whose name I never learned. He was good-looking, had blond hair and was a little taller. Stronger too. When Johnnie teased him he would holler very loudly: "Johnnie Johnson, very bad boy! When my papper or papa give me a gun I shoot him." As he appeared to mean what he said, and I for one believed he meant every word of it, Johnnie hereafter left him alone. The boy did look dangerous, yet I could see he was not crazy, for in all his lessons he was ahead of all of us.

That building had two sections, one for girls and one for boys.

I had heard there were at times 1500 children there. The head man there was a professional doctor and surgeon whose name was Doctor Caldwell.

Among all the boys in my section, I had only a few special friends, Jacob Marcus, Paul Marcus (no brother of the first-mentioned), Daniel Jones, and Donald Aurand.

The latter had very bad eyesight. There was a sort of parklike grounds south and extending west, north, and south of the asylum, where we boys had our recreation during the summertime.

It had a tall, rounded sort of fire escape on the east side, which we boys often, for a fire drill, slid down on the inside.

One boy was terribly scared to go and slide down in it. We made him, or else.

What if the asylum had a fire? What would he do then?

Yet scared or not, two of the bigger boys grabbed a hold of him, brought him to the round fire escape, and pushed him down it.

For my part, it was fun sliding fast down on it.

We all retired to bed at eight o'clock in the evening, got up at six AM in the morning and went to the school across from the asylum. It was 200 feet north of us.

Once in a while, in the school hall on the ground floor, we were entertained with shows, training exercises, and church meetings, or

Sunday school on Sunday morning.

Those who could sang hymns and recited prayer meeting.

The minister never gave any sermons, though the other type of services lasted from 8 in the morning until noon.

The one who was over us was a severe, stern man by the name of Henry Aurand. For forgetting to make my bed once, he sure boxed my ears. That made me his enemy for life, but yet otherwise I behaved so well he had no real occasion to punish me further.

Yet because my real descent of my nationality is much against such type of punishment, had we been in Brazil, he would have been killed for boxing my ears.

You cannot there with safety hit anywhere on face or head with the hand. The assistant superior was an Italian by the name of Mr. Bandico. He was very severe too, and somewhat harsh too, but never bothered me.

He thought otherwise: that my behavior was marvelous, and liked me well, I being among all those boys in that section, and yet got along with them all fine. As I mentioned before, my special boyfriend was Daniel Jones. We were great pals.

We had, later on, a tall colored boy come there by the name of Earl Little. He turned out to be a bully, always picking on the smallest boys, who could not fight him. For a good reason he molested me once, for what I did. I'm surprised and glad I did not kill him. Afterwards, he kept away from me.

He also soon met some others too, who put him in his "place," and being humbled and put down that way caused him to run away. He was never seen again. There a little girl there by the name of Jennie Turner. I thought I could be attracted to her, but when I learned from others of her disposition I kept away from her. I had my doubts for a while, thinking they wanted her for themselves and lied to me.

The truth was, Heaven help any man that when she grows up marry her. She was a wildcat and let you know it.

After several years more of my stay there, which sometimes was pleasant and sometimes not so, Doctor Caldwell, the head man, left and a new administrator came in charge.

He was a little, handsome, short man, and had a wife and little daughter.

She was a pretty child, but somewhat bossy, but no one paid any attention to her.

She otherwise appeared to be a very good little girl.

There was also a head boy in charge of us by the name of Whilliam Oneil. He was all right, but sometimes imperious. Whilliam Thomas Oneil was the best-looking boy I have ever seen. He was no bully or exactly bossy, but being set over us by the administrator, we had to obey him and do his bidding. If you did, you and he got along fine.

If you did not, he'd take you before the administrator and you then were in serious trouble.

Finally I had got to like the place, and the meals were good and plenty. But when I was somewhat older, probably in my earliest teens, I was put with a company of boys of apparently the same age to go and work on what was called the State Farm.

It was three and a half miles from the asylum.

The work was not hard. We quit at four in the afternoon, started at eight in the morning, after milking the cows, and off again at 4. We were off on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. We had our baths on Saturdays, before our dinner.

The meals there were splendid, but I believe at breakfast I was a glutton (if not hog) for the oatmeal. I spent one whole summer there, then back to the asylum we went.

I believe that fall a bad plague of measles broke out in Lincoln, Ill., and it spread to most of the kids in the asylum.

Strange, though: I never caught it.

Next summer I was back on the farm again. I liked the work very much, but still I don't know why, but I did object to leaving the home. But as they said so, you had to.

As will be written later, that was the cause of me running away two summers later.

There was on the farm, in one large field or more, a very

peculiar type of crop, yet well-known to all farm growers, if not all of us people.

It is a strange but very beautiful tomato plant called the "Beautiful Lady," or, in Spanish, Belladonna.

The juices of that plant is used by chemists for medicine and other needs. I've once used it for a sore knee.

It really was a most beautiful plant, with most beautiful little flowers, before the tomatoes came.

There is where it got the name "Beautiful Lady." But God help those who ever ate one of those tomatoes. We had very large, easily seen and easy-to-read signs (also electrically lighted at night), warning tramps or hobos and visiting strangers about eating them, or anything of the plant.

Their original name, well-known by most, is the deadly nightshade.

No hobo or anyone else went near them.

When removing the tomatoes, you had to wear protective gloves, for if one of them was squashed or overripe the juice would cause serious infection, if gotten into a mere scratch or wound.

The juice smelled horrid and sickening.

Anywhere else was also grown, in long straight rows, all crops and vegetation you could think of.

I loved to work in the fields. We worked on the farm only in the summertime. During our working days, we at night slept in a large place called the Dormitory. The farm had a regular boiler and engine room, and motor dynamos or other machinery that produced the electric lights.

The farm was supervised by a man whose known name was Allenberger. He had a wife and little girl. They were very good people.

We boys working on the farm were divided into "gangs," three gangs, I believe, and under a supervisor for each. Their names were John Fox, William Oneil, and Mr. West. He was the cowboy.

At the approach of late fall, we were returned to the asylum,

which Mr. Allenberger termed the bughouse. I loved it much better than the farm. But yet I loved the work there. Yet the asylum was home to me.

While back at the home I received a severe shock.

I got the bad news that my father had died at the St. Augustine home.

I did not cry or weep however.

I had that kind of deep sorrow that, bad as you feel, I could not. I'd have been better off if I could have. I was in that state for weeks, and because of it I was in a state of ugliness of such nature that everyone avoided me, they were so scared.

Even when back on the farm the next summer, they noticed a change in me.

They heard the sad news, however, and did not bother me. During the first of my grief, I hardly even ate anything, and was no friend to anyone.

I was even very dangerous if not left alone.

I believe I was at the asylum 7 years, and during the summer between that time on the farm.

During the early summer of the fourth year, it was June, and I made my first attempt to run away, but that farm's cowboy caught me in a cornfield, tied my hands together on a long rope, and made me run back all the way at the rear of his horse.

The second attempt was successful. I, with another boy, hitchhiked a freight. He got off at Joliet, where he lived. I rode on to Chicago.

After a storm, I foolishly gave myself up to the police, who had me sent back. I stayed then again for more than a year.

What made me run away? It was my protestation at being sent away from the asylum, where I wanted to stay, as for some reason it was home to me.

During the early summer of the following year, the sixth—I believe it was June—two boys working on the farm induced me to run away with them. We then got an actual work for a short spell with a German farmer.

It was a job driving to the nearest town with a wagonload of something the farmer sold there. At meal times, breakfast, dinner or supper, he said the Our Father and sang some sort of a German hymn before we ate. He asked why we did not join him.

We answered, We do not know any German.

His son and wife answered some parts.

Being short of working conditions, he finally had to let us go, me and a stouter boy. We were paid. He kept the other boy. Excuse me. I do not remember their names.

With me giving a part of my money to my stout companion, we rode on the Illinois Central railroad to Decatur, Ill. While there, I wanted to see Chicago again.

You would not believe it, but I then walked from Decatur, Ill. to Chicago, arriving early in August. Because of unusual warm weather, and hardly able to sleep, I walked also many a night.

I had forgot to mention: the time when I gave myself up to the police, I was taken by train to the poorhouse at Dunning town.

From there, after a month's stay, I was sent to the asylum at Lincoln, Ill.

But this hike to Chicago from Decatur was successful.

I knew her address, so I went and took refuge at my Godmother's and after some weeks there she took me to St. Joseph's Hospital, which was on Burling and then the street called Garfield Ave.

It now is known as Dickens Ave. I prefer it would have retained its original name, as Dickens was an English man, Garfield an American and one of our presidents.

I got a job there as hospital or floor janitor.

I worked there under Sister Mary Rose and later under another Sister, Dorothy. Sister Rose was prime but good. Sister Dorothy was good too, but you could joke with her.

I worked under each of them until I was there for a little over fourteen years. The name of the head Sisters were Sisters Cephas and Camilla.

Both were good, but Sister Cephas took sick and died less than

a year after I arrived. At the earliest of my time, because of an old injury to my right shoulder, I had to be left-handed with the sweeping broom and other things.

All Sister's scoldings could not change to sweeping with my right. As my shoulder injury was caused by a fight, I did not explain to her. She gave up nevertheless and let me sweep as I pleased. I sure knew how to scrub floors as clean as they would get, and all on my hands and knees.

And that was not done that way to humble myself. Under no condition would I humble myself, and Heaven help the one who would dare humble me.

One did, and was in a hospital for a year. And somehow I got away with it, too.

But it was on that score 50-50, as I never exalted myself then either.

I do now, and how.

As I said before, and again will write, that a lot because of my injured shoulder I did really find myself unable to use other certain household articles and the sweeping broom brush.

In my younger days, which I forgot to mention, when angry over something I burned holy pictures and hit the face of Christ in pictures with my fist. I wonder, would I have the heart to do so now? I can't say yes or no.

I've got an awful nasty temper.

Sometime or other, for a time Sister Rose, finding out that I came from the home of feeble-minded children, thought I was still crazy.

I believed she got the information from Sister Nina, who was called Sister Leno by others. My Godmother, not thinking of the consequences, told her.

The whole hospital full of persons soon knew. I was then called crazy. I had, I believe, more brains than all combined. None of them, I found out, even knew geography or history. I did. My spelling, figures and reading and writing was more excellent than theirs. My

finding it out: there are many cities in this country and the old world they could not spell or pronounce. I could.

Berlin and Dresden are still the most beautiful cities in the world.

Berlin is largest, next to London and New York City.

As I said before, I received admonition from Sister Rose because of my enforced left-handedness, until I could prove it was impossible with my right hand.

Once, in searching for something that got lost from me in a very dark enclosure of the out exit on the ground floor, behind the dining room, by which you go outside by the rear, I scared some young woman (she was cowardly and timid anyway) out of her wits accidentally.

When Sister Rose heard of it by someone telling her, she scolded me good, and said she surely believed that I am really crazy.

But I could see that, while scolding me, she also had a hard fight with herself to keep from laughing over it. Yet afterwards, by many that woman was looked on as a Scardy-cat, and "chicken."

She quit after that. Several times, when scolding me for something, whether I did it or not, she threatened to send me back to the Lincoln Asylum.

I wished then she had. I felt I was a fool for after all running away. I was better off there, and never was scolded. But I knew they would not take me back now, and told her so.

On the Christmas midnight Mass, a cold snowy one in December 1909, I received in their chapel my first Holy Communion. I was to convince them before then that I was baptized Catholic, but in the asylum, I even then knew all things of the Religion but also, in the asylum and on the state farm, they never, even for us all, showed any kind of religion.

They seemed even Godless, even in the school there. The only sign of something like religion was in the asylum's main children's dining room for us, when before and after meals the Our Father was recited by the dining-room matron, only ending the prayer in the Protestant way.

Or on Sunday, some sort of Sunday School, where only some hymn was sung by the best singers.

Otherwise, no sign of religion at all. She said, then I did right to run away. My Godmother had me baptized on the snowy afternoon, in St. Patrick's Church on Des Plaines and Adams Street, Chicago.

The way it was there, as I told her, you'd think there was no God at all. And at first I wanted to stay there. I suppose they had the idea that feeble-minded people could not at all understand Religious instruction.

Then why were they to go to school? The school building, as I wrote before, I believe, was over two hundred feet north of the asylum, and there was an underground tunnel leading to it from the asylum, to be used only in bad weather. All this I told her. I can't say whether I was actually sorry I ran away from the state farm or not, but now I believe I was a sort of fool to have done so.

My life was like in a sort of Heaven there. Do you think I might be fool enough to run away from heaven if I get there? Besides, for doing it the third time, the officials of the state farm would not take me back.

I have to go back for a few words again about my stay at the asylum, because many things slip my mind. I'm telling the truth: there was a night freeze rain, lasting till mid-morning of the next day, followed by the most terrific blizzard storm I have ever seen before and during my lifetime, even now.

I remember the big snowstorms of 1912, March 26 and 27th of 1930, and also, before that, one of 1918. I've seen here also two other big ones, including last January 26. But believe me or not, that one when I was at Lincoln, Ill. had them all put together beat.

It raged all day, all night, and till late afternoon the next day, so thick you could not see a hundred feet away.

But strange, unlike most awfully big blizzards, it had no very strong wind, and was off the straight north.

As I read in papers, Chicago and all other Middle West cities and towns had the worst traffic tie-up I ever imagined. At Lincoln,

too, was a perfect stand-still of traffic, and it looked bad for us inmates for food and fuel for a time. But we got by.

I would not want to see a blizzard like that again, and all farmers were marooned and snowbound.

Even the state farm suffered severely. It was, as I read, near two months before traffic could resume in our town, and all the snowbound cities. And it was bad on all the stores, as nothing could be brought to them. The storm was on January 24, 1906. It got terrible cold after the storm to add to all the misery caused by it.

I had read that the worst blizzards of all come if they happen to follow a freeze rain, which fortunately seldom happens. The freeze rain was on the night of the 22 and morning of the 23.

The blizzard was on the 24 and 25th.

Another thing I got to go back on is that while still living with my father I was out alone, playing on Adams Street.

An old man that had the appearance of what we call now a skidrow bum appeared as if he wanted to kidnap me. I'm alert and very dangerous to those kind.

At first I fled him, till I reached the crossing of Adams and Halsted Streets. He still came after me.

I observed a half brick lying near. I picked it up with the intention of hitting him on the head with it. If molested, I was a brick thrower, and there are some big bullies who, molesting me, can now (if still living at this time) confirm my statement. I never missed.

But this time I did, and for a very unusual reason. As I threw it, a streetcar came by and I accidentally threw it through a front side window of the front of the car.

I escaped him and the consequences of the brick throwing, as no one had seen who threw it, as I beat it so quickly. At that time, a streetcar strike was impending and it was supposed that a striker threw it. There were passengers sitting by that side window, and I really hoped none of them was hit by the brick, or out by the broken glass.

My father heard of it, but as it was in the papers and believed to have been thrown by a striker, he said nothing about it.

And believe me, I never told him or anyone else I did it. I was afraid of the results. But I did not mean to do it and also it was lucky the streetcar came between the man and me.

I never seen him again. I'm sorry, but if there is anything else again forgotten I will have to write it. It can't be at all left out.

I also remember I said I was at St. Joseph's as floor janitor for 14 years, first under Sister Rose, only a short time under Sister Damien, and the rest of my years there under Sister Dorothy.

I had also, all the time I was there, an extra job of carting away to the engine-house trash firebox lots of junk that came down into the large receiver through a large five-story rubbish pipe. I took care of that every afternoon, even Sunday, if it was extremely necessary.

Twice the trash was mysteriously on fire inside the roomlike receiver.

Something nurses neglected caught fire, and not thinking of the results they had thrown the burning stuff down that pipe, which I called the chute.

It was a heck of a job on the rainy days, or in the cold of winter. On rainy days or also with summer thunderstorms the trash got wet, and then I had to dump it into the lot till heat and sun dried it.

Then I burned it there.

I worked at my janitor job, or out there getting rid of the trash, even in the winter, when I had my worst colds.

You see, I don't know why, but they would not let me off, when really I should have been in bed and under treatment! I dared not take off.

And you call that charity. Afraid I would be behind in my work and that would cost them (money).

Also, a Sister by the name of Sister De Paul was in charge of the Sisters' Dormitory, or sleeping rooms. Many a time I scrubbed the

floors of the sleeping rooms, and the hundred-foot-long hall of their
Dormitory, on my hands and knees.

You would say that was a good way of doing penance or humbling
myself? Ha. Ha. I'll still do it on my hands and knees, rather than
cleaning floors with a darn sloppy mop.

That does the cleaning so well as the humble, old-fashioned way.
I'll get down on my knees still, with soap, rag, and scrubbing brush.

Yet to me, and I hate to say it, but have to, Sister De Paul was
a pain in the neck.

She had nothing to say over me, only Sister Dorothy. Yet she
acted as if I was under her too. I will not and never did stand for
having two persons over me at the same time.

I hated her and showed it that she had no authority over me
at all, only Sister Dorothy. Yet as she did not intervene for
me, I think, unless I'm mistaken, that Sister Dorothy was afraid
of her.

To Sister Camilla I complained, and the only answer I got was,
Don't pay any attention to her. I stood for her froward ways for a
year. The trouble was with all my work I had to do. I could not come
and clean the Sister's latrine just when she wanted me to come and do
it. Sister Dorothy would not let me do it until my work was done, yet
she did not defend me against Sister De Paul, because I believe she
was afraid of her.

Yet I held my own, but not being able to stand it any longer, I
sure argued fiercely with her one day.

One day I told Sister Dorothy and others of the big grain
elevator fire I seen at the Illinois Central Railroad siding, and one
asked, "Did you set it?"

I said nothing more. My days of agony continued with Sister
De Paul and so to Sister Camilla. I pretended I was going to quit
because she seemed to refuse to give me a vacation, but truly I was
leaving because of what I called "the persecution" of Sister De Paul.
Despite all the time I had worked there, she did not seem to protest
my going.

Sister De Paul had a bulldog-like face, and seemed to have the
disposition of one. I don't really believe any Catholic Sister should
have such a disposition. That is not charity or Christlike.

Though she was a Sister, I had a very intense dislike for her and
did my best to avoid her. As I wrote before, the trouble was caused
because I could not come to the Sisters' bathroom to clean its floor
when she wanted me to.

Sister Dorothy was my superior, not her, and I had to obey her in
all things first. But as I will say again, she had not the courage to
back me up. I heard that most of the others were shy of her. I spoke
and complained to Sister Dorothy about it, and yet with me, Sister De
Paul would not even reason.

As I wrote before, if not now, I finally could not at all
stand it any longer and therefore quit, and even a day later got a
new job at Grant Hospital. Some weeks later, Sister Dorothy sent
the orderly to my house at Mrs. Anchutz* to ask me if I would like
to come back.

My fear of Sister De Paul made me refuse.

For a time at Grant Hospital, which I came to in June 1923, I
seemed to have leaped from the frying pan into the fire, for the
woman Superior, by the name of Mrs. Stevens, in her nature and prime
ways had Sister De Paul way beat.

You could argue and fight it out with Sister De Paul, but if
anyone even only tried that with Mrs. Stevens, you got fired right
then and there.

Somehow, though, I got along with her far better than with
Sister De Paul. Mrs. Stevens was severe, of course, but reasonable.
Do the right thing and not argue or talk back and everything was all
right. Sister De Paul did not at all appear reasonable.

I do not remember the number of years I remained there, but
after Mrs. Stevens left to return to nursing, which before had been
her vocation, she was superseded or replaced by a woman (housekeeper)
whose name was Mrs. Ilene Joice. She was somewhat severe also, but
you could talk back to her and argue too, without being fired.

But out of respect I never talked back to her either, only to Sister De Paul, and I still would contest with her.

During my stay for the number of years I was at Grant Hospital (the dishwashing machine at way at the north side of the main kitchen) there were, I believe, four very, very severely cold winters, with way below zero temperatures.

What I would like to write about was the distance I had to walk to it. The meanest winters I had to walk there were those of 1924 and 1927. The distance was six blocks east to Larrabee Street, then one long block to Grant Place, and three quarters of a block east on Grant Place to the main entrance.

You were not allowed to go out the rear entrance, but you could go in that way. But that was a much longer distance around.

How I put up with the severe cold that distance I do not know, but I did. I did not mind the walk in hot summer weather.

There was a young girl there who took charge of the help in the main dining room on the ground floor. Her name was Johanne Kuback. It seemed strange that every time she had her afternoons off it would, winter or summer, come a heavy long rain. On her half day. Though in winter it seldom snowed. Severe cold weather, however, never spoiled her half days.

I felt sort of sorry for her and proposed that if she and the housekeeper were willing she could for once change half days with her.

She chose the Sunday, June 2, Feast of the Corpus Christi.

My Sundays usually had been sunny. I was to be off the following Monday, which was her usual half day.

I'll have to write this down. Did it rain that afternoon? At two-thirty it came: clouds of black or the color of brown-black and a very terrific cloudburst that lasted more than an hour. Thunder was unusually frequent but not loud. The rain afterwards kept up until late evening as a very heavy drizzle.

As I did not have an umbrella or raincoat, I could not have gotten back to Grant Hospital to work.

I got two hours off in the afternoon every day.

When I got there, the kitchen, where the dishwashing machine is, was so flooded that nothing could be done. The food for the patients had to be brought in from outside. Us help, who could not do anything because of the flood, had to eat outside.

I wondered, because of the rain, where all that water came from. I believe it was caused by the backing up of the sewers in the kitchen. At late night there came up another thunderstorm that had loud thunder with one extra awful loud crack, but shorter in duration.

The rain, too, was heavy and the wind blew almost like a hurricane. That flooded all the basement and kitchen again.

In the kitchen on that Sunday afternoon, and the whole basement too, the water was almost up to your knees. No one could work in the kitchen.

The next day, in the morning, I told her truthfully: I was sorry the debauchery of the weather. And she said she knew it might happen because, having been brought up in the country, she knew the tricks of the weather and could tell by cloud formation what would come.

So can I. In the dining room during mealtime there was a man who knew of my exchange with her and made fun of her because it stormed on Sunday afternoon.

I got aroused and told him to shut his "blanky blank" mouth.

He, being chided, got up and went out. He minded his own business after that.

I do not remember how long Mrs. Joice stayed, but one morning she received a sort of scolding from the Supertendant, Miss Watson, for being too severe with the baker, and several months later she left, to the sorrow of us all.

She was replaced by another woman, whose name was Mrs. Larson.

I don't remember the cause, but I do believe because of Mrs. Larson, I was asked to resign, so I left and in a huff. I had been a friend of Mrs. Joice, who was Mrs. Larson's rival over something, and probably that was the reason.

At first, for more than eight days after that I had trouble getting any job, which I desperately needed.

There was one place I applied, somewhere on Webster and Burling Streets, and was insultingly told to go to the poor farm at Oak Forest—and at my young age. But finally, after a day's work in a café across from the Alexian Brothers Hospital I was soon again at St. Joseph's Hospital, working in the dishwashing department. That was the third Monday of August, 1946.

I was under another prime and severe one, Sister Rufina. She had both Mrs. Stevens and Sister De Paul put together beat a mile.

If you talked back to her it would also result in losing your job.

Yet, like with Mrs. Stevens, I got along all right, never talked back, from respect, and knew how to hold my ground. I was not afraid of her, and she could see it. That made her like me. She did not like anyone who was afraid of her. And do your duty and there was no trouble. And she was not like Sister De Paul. Excepting my compelled contesting with Sister De Paul, I was not ever the talking-back kind. I received that sort of training in the "Bughouse" asylum, as they called it.

Whoever talked back to a superior there got the real punishment, and how.

Even there I never talked back. I did not dare.

But I had another pain in the neck while employed at St. Joseph's.

It was a dietician by the name of Mrs. Catherine Nash. Before she got married, her last name was Conway.

Sister De Paul, even if she tried her best, could not equal her. But if you even talked back to Mrs. Nash you'd get fired by Sister Rufina. As there was then an awfully severe Depression on, and it was utterly impossible to get a job with any place, I had to stay there and go through a number of years of misery because of her constant nagging. Once she went too far and I drove her out of the dishwashing room.

She told Sister Rufina, and the Sister told me, Mrs. Nash has as much say as she has. Then what could I do? Nothing. I decided to get even with Mrs. Nash, but when the time came I never did.

I was not the only sufferer. She was a pain in the neck also to all the tray-setting girls and others.

It seemed like Heaven when the time came that, to retire, Mrs. Nash quit to take better care of her property and child.

The new head woman hired by Sister Rufina was Mrs. Wise. She was good, kind and reasonable. She never scolded anybody.

She, however, was a very fat woman. Whether she was a Catholic or not I do not know nor heard. Mrs. Nash was a Catholic, but the way she was at us I do not know how much.

I don't think you could blame her for her nature and disposition, though. She had a strange nervous illness, which made her that way and some years later caused her death.

But when I received the news, I had no feeling or emotion. All her primness killed all that in me.

When I received the news I do not remember if I then worked still at St. Joseph's or the Alexian Brothers.

During my employment at Grant Hospital and St. Joseph's a second time, under Sister Rufina, I roomed at a place at the southwest corner of Kenmore and Webster (1035 Webster Ave.).

It was a three-story wooden house owned by East German people by the names of Mrs. and Mr. Anchutz.

They seemed sort of Godless in their way of living, but were nice people to room with. She went to church with him only once a year and that was Christmas Eve.

The church is on Dickens and Kenmore and is Lutheran.

During my stay there, there were quite a number of roomers who, however, were not steady roomers but come-and-go. After one particular one left, the police came looking for him on some swindling charge, but he had left on short notice, at night, and told no one, not even the landlord, and left no address.

As far as I can ascertain, they never found him or heard of him again.

I was the one, that late morning, to discover he was gone. I took the police up to his room. But he was gone and all his belongings.

Usually, swindlers are very shrewd and clever.

Two of the other roomers, good ones, died, one of an ingrowing goiter that strangled him. The other killed himself, but not where he roomed.

He had his body cremated and some of his ashes he willed to the landlord.

At New Years we celebrated by seeing the old year out, and the new year in. We had ginger ale or other soft drinks.

I do not remember how long I worked under Sister Rufina at St. Joseph's Hospital, but the time came when she died of cancer of the breast.

Her successors were two women matrons, one of the main kitchen and diet kitchen. I don't remember the name of the first one but she was under the dietician, by the name of Mary Ann Knuckles.

The other one of the main kitchen was Miss Casey. Both did not stay long.

I stayed beyond this time there, and was soon under a Sister whose name I could not spell. I could pronounce it, though.

I was then fired, after my three weeks' vacation, on the idea that the work was too much for me because of my age, or something like that.

I really had worked from seven AM to 8:30 PM and never got any time off.

In being dismissed I believe I was better off.

While under Miss Casey I had some superiority, however, and dismissed one of the girls for misbehavior.

The rest all quit in their sympathy for her.

The day I was dismissed a Sister by the name of Alberta was the Superior. I was not there long enough to know her nature, but it was she who let me go.

But she was nice about it. She told me that I was not fired for any wrongdoing. She said the nurses told her that I was there too long, the work was too much, the hours too long and could cause me to break down in my health.

All too true. With so many patients in the hospital, I got so much

work I could hardly find time to eat my noonday dinner.

Though fired, I could eat my meals there yet, until I got a new job. She suggested an easier job and with much shorter hours.

I got a new job, then, at the Alexian Brothers Hospital, during the middle of August 1947, after being out of work for a week. I was put in the place of a man who did not show up. I was under a brother, Fabian by name. He was not severe at all.

But still he was somewhat strict. On my job in the dishwashing room I had to work only six hours. At this job I stayed there for more than 14 years. I was transferred up to the bandage room, under Joseph Harry.

I had a helper, by the first name of Jacob. I could not pronounce his last name.

The job was rolling long, six-inch-wide bandages called hot packs. They were fourteen feet long.

After I worked here for three and a half years, it happened that because of violent pains of a bum leg I was forced to quit and retire, and am retired yet. Even before then, during Christmas and New Years of the years before, my leg gave me severe pain, especially at night. Though it don't bother me so much now, I always need the walking stick to go out with. I am on Social Security and yet get only enough to barely live on.

I have forgot to mention that from the time I was a young boy until even now I always had a very rough nature or temper, always was and still am self-willed and also determined that at all costs, even at the expense of Sin, that all things shall come my way, no matter who might try to interfere or stand in my way.

In that situation, now, because of my sore and lame legs, I am still worse and seem to have no way to control myself. I can blow up like a stick of dynamite.

I had forgotten one thing to describe, about when I was employed for my third year at Grant, I believe October 1923.

While at Sunday Mass, I was off that Sunday morning. The priest from the pulpit announced that on Halloween night the students were

to celebrate with a big Halloween bonfire, with mostly wood that will make much more flame than smoke.

He said all neighboring fire departments were notified that even if they did notice a rousing glare in the sky, they need not run out, because they'll know what it is.

I was at my friend's house, Whilliam Schloeder by name, on Halloween evening. I was astounded by the fact that enough fire departments were running out as if to a very big fire.

I saw a glow in the sky and it was exactly in the direction where the big celebration bonfire was to be made.

I said to my friend and his sisters that they forgot the announcement made to them and thought it a bad fire. The glow was surely very bright and getting brighter.

Finally, his sister Lizzie said to me, "They said the wood was not to make smoke, yet look at that big black rolling cloud. And how high it rises."

I said nothing in answer, because I was too excited at what I observed. And how extensive the glow was, mostly too far northwest to be the celebration bonfire.

I said, "It is a fire, and a big one at that." Lizzie and his sister Catherine and also his mother thought it was the University burning, but I said, "The glow is too far north."

I and Whillie went on our way to see where the fire was. It was a twenty-minute walk, but we got there.

It was the big two-thousand-foot-long and three-hundred-foot-wide broom factory, the west end of which is on Fullerton across from the St. Augustine old people's home, whose main entrance is on the west Sheffield Ave. side.

The burning building was 4-and-a-half stories high. Only a quarter of the building was then on fire, but despite the fierce fight put up by all the firemen, within an hour the whole immense long structure, from street floor to the top, was a raging inferno. The flames seemed to leap three hundred feet from the roof, amid great clouds of rolling smoke as long as the building.

The smoke went so high Whillie could not estimate it. The west end of the old people's home faces Kenmore Ave. So did the west end of the building, a fire. And it ended with the east end facing Sheffield Ave. on the east, three or four blocks long.

I have seen quite a number of big fires in my day, but this one had them all beat put together. And the worst of it was that it threw such a heat, so awful, with the wind direction from the west, that the firemen on the south side of Fullerton could not face it, and even their clothing smoked.

O, by means of the firescapes of the old people's home, some got to the roof and aimed their streams at the top of the building from there. And the streams then hardly reached, as some parts of the home is more than thirty feet from the south-side street sidewalk.

And hoses had also to be trained on the walls of the home's north side to keep them cool.

I mentioned the name of the streets, but one of them crossed Fullerton, along where the burning broom factory was. It extended all the way down from Kenmore to Sheffield Ave. The building also extended from Sheffield to Bissell, a little west, though, of the Elevated train road crossing Fullerton. The building had a narrow four-story tower on its east end, and that survived the fire.

When the big blaze started, the place was full of night workers. It was, I believe, a miracle that at the first alarm, all the employees, foremen, and the owner got out safely.

The owner himself and the managers nearly got trapped in their offices.

The head of the fire department said the fire must have started by spontaneous combustion underneath the high bales of broomstraws.

It was true that the bales of broomstraws were large and many, piled up high on top of one another. Thousands of them were in large rooms, piled almost to the ceiling with small or narrow passageways between.

It was, they say, fifty pounds per bale. Standing too long that way could start dangerous heat underneath—and how fast they could

burn! Once started, the broom stack piles could not be put out, and spread the fire so fast through the whole length of the huge building.

I was never across the street from the building, but a little west of it, in or near the Kenmore side of the St. Augustine Home. There, I did not feel the heat too much, and avoided most of the smoke. I got a good view of the building, though.

As I was to start my vacation the next day, November 1, All Saints Day, I stayed near the fire til close to eleven PM at night. The fire, being very stubborn because of the size of the factory, was still the same, though reinforcements for the fire departments came.

I did not want to stay up all night, in spite of the blaze, so I returned home, found I had forgot the keys, and no one was home.

I suspected they too, including the house owners, were at the fire. They were.

Mr. and Mrs. Anchutz came ten minutes after I did, and asked if I had seen the fire. I told them I saw it a little after it began.

They let me in and I went to bed. Yet I was still so excited about the fire that I slept but little and did not stay long in bed either, in the morning. I went to Mass and Holy Communion at St. Vincent's Church, and had my breakfast, then went again hastily to the scene of the fire, where from the Church looking northwest the cloud looked as that from an erupting volcano.

When I arrived there, some of the upper part of the building had caved in; a portion of the south wall a hundred feet in length had fallen across a part of the street, and the building was now like a smoking, blazing volcano. The caved-in portions of the top floors protected the raging inferno beneath from the hose streams, causing the huge rolling clouds of yellow, brown, and black smoke. It looked awful.

All the fire departments were still there. This was Saturday, All Saints Day. It was, I believe, a week from the following Monday before it was all out.

Now to go back to my ill nature and character. I did not and will not bear things going wrong. I won't stand for the slightest

pain anywhere, though most of my pains were very severe, and I want everything under any conditions to come my way.

If things went wrong during any kind of work I do, I'll say I lose my temper terribly, and say things the saints and all the angels would be ashamed of me for.

For what I had said in the past, for my severe face pains when I was employed at St. Joseph's Hospital, I'm surprised, yet relieved, that one of them did not strike me for it.

I really believe it is really naturally in me, as I was that way when I was a small boy and no kind of scolding or punishment could change me. Once, in school, for some kind of cutting up a teacher boxed my ears, and my father had to pay the doctor's bill for what I did to her. I slashed her on face and arm with my long knife. I must say also, when I was aroused I was dangerous.

At least, when going to school after that, my father would not let me take my knife or any other weapon with me.

Outside of that, it was all right.

But I was expelled from that school for doing that. Yet if I could, when a boy I would severely revenge punishments, whether I deserved them or not. Some boy once accused me of stealing his wagon, which I did not.

If I would have, I really had no place to hide it. He hit me on the nose with the palm of his hand. For what I did to him in return, he was in a hospital for a long time. His parents could do nothing against me, or make my father pay my bill because witnesses said, and was able to prove, that he and his gang of followers ganged up on me, twelve against me.

What probably caused the trouble was that I often played on the third-floor porch of the building across from where I lived.

He lived there. Somebody did steal his wagon, but not I. What good would it be to have stolen his darn wagon, when, as I wrote before, I had no place to hide it?

If I had even brought it into the house, my father would have found out who it belonged to and made me give it back, and punished

me besides for stealing it. As I had no place to hide it I could have fully proved that I never took it, but still they would not believe me. So I was slammed on the nose, and I believe I nearly killed him.

I was a very dangerous kid if not left alone. A much bigger boy than I, a sort of bully, tormented me in front of where I lived.

I nearly broke his knee the way I hit it when I threw that brick, a half brick. That was my temper then.

At the Alexian Brothers Hospital I was an employee in the main dishwashing room.

While under Brother Fabian I would bring a food wagon down to the main kitchen from one of the floors.

Every morning (except on my day off) I would bring the long, four-wheeled cart or dish wagon full of dishes from the Brothers' dining room to the dishwashing room, and have them washed.

Then I would bring them back to the dining-room man.

But after that, after he was gone, the new dining-room man would not allow me into the living room after them, and tried once to put me out by force.

Then this dining-room man afterwards had to bring the dishes to the dishwashing department and back again.

I would not do anything for him, and told him if I had the chance I'd slash him with a knife. I told him he can't get rough with me and get away with it.

I believe that was one of the reasons I had seen him no more, though I did hear he got into a row with Negro employees in the main kitchen and they chased him out.

His successor had to bring the dishes and wash them too.

During the time or years I worked both at St. Joseph's and Alexian Brothers Hospital and also at Grant Hospital, every evening and Sunday afternoons off (I got no Sundays off at St. Joseph's Hospital), I went visiting a special friend of mine, by the name of Whilliam Schloeder.

I don't know his middle name, but he was a Catholic and so were his folks and sisters. We often went to Riverview Park. I did all the spending. If I had saved all that, what would I have had? He had a

very good, pious mother, but I know nothing about his father because he died not long after I went seeing Whillie.

He had the three grown sisters and a younger but grown brother, Henry. His sisters could boss Whillie, but not Henry.

The names of his sisters were Catherine, Lizzie and Susan Schloeder. In their nationality they were Luxembourger. Susan was very prime and always contesting and fighting with my friend Whillie, and he never talked back. I know I would chase her out of the house if I was him, with my strong independent nature.

His other sisters were not like that. Susan got married, causing her husband to be Whillie's brother-in-law. Their two children, a boy and girl, were his niece and nephew. I forgot the boy's first name but his last name was McFarran. His sister's name was as her mother.

In character, of what kind of family were they?

In spite of being well-to-do, which I would not account with any other. They were very charitable, kind and good. When I had bad, mysterious pains in my face, he did all he could to help me.

What he told me to buy stopped the pain.

I had wished I had children like theirs. They were good.

It was too bad, though, that little Susan so often had such awful toothaches, despite all the dentist tried to do.

And he thought it very unsafe to pull them. To stop the pain he removed the teeth nerves. A dentist did the same for me when I had the same trouble.

After their mother's death, they went to live in the city of Wilmette. I do not know what was the cause, but their sister Lizzie died so mysteriously.

Whillie sold the house soon afterwards, and he and his sister Catherine went to San Antonio, Texas, to live.

I wrote to Whillie often but as he could not write in English, his sister wrote his answers for him.

When in San Antonio three years my friend Whillie died on the 5 of May (I forgot the year) of the Asian Flu, and since that happened, I am all alone.

Never palled with anyone since. Where I worked, I could not get off to go to his funeral. Afterwards, I never could find out where his sister went, for she went somewhere, not leaving any known address. I believe she went to Mexico, where she intended to go anyway.

I do not know where the McFarrans were at the time of Whillie's death.

I just now remember the time, while still working at St. Joseph's Hospital, on the first floor, but then under Sister Dorothy, that I asked some man whose name I need not tell or even do not remember to do me a special, easy favor, which I needed badly.

He refused sternly, saying he had not time to do anyone favors. I'm the sort of person that, if anyone refuses to do any favors for me, do not expect one from me, either. Then, one day he was arrested for speeding, by a speed cop. I do not actually remember what his fine was, but for the full of it he was short of five dollars and fifty cents.

A cop, or two of them, came to me at the Hospital where I worked. They told me why they came to see me.

I remembered the favor he refused me and not out of revenge, but of my way of no favors done for me, do not expect one from me, I refused his request for the five dollar and fifty cents loan.

Therefore, he had to stay those five and a half days in the police station. Because he had been arrested and jailed he could not get his job back. I thought because of my refusal of the loan to him, the Sisters would rebuke me as being mean, but they said nothing. They did not even know of it.

From then on I have never seen him since.

I am still that way, yours truly, and always will be. If I am refused a favor, do not expect one from me.

And if I have been refused a favor, I do feel that the one who refused has got a lot of nerve to ask me for one. The guts of him! Pooh.

But at Grant Hospital, where I worked in the dishwashing department, in the main kitchen, the work was sometimes slack and sometimes too much.

At Grant Hospital I received two half days off a week and two weeks' vacation.

Grant Hospital was, I believe, fifteen blocks from where I lived to the west, at the Anchutzes at 1035 Webster, and it was an ordeal to walk it in bad weather, especially in the winter and during severe below-zero cold waves, and during real hot weather in the summer, and getting caught in sudden thunderstorms coming up, without umbrella or raincoat.

You would ask why I walked such a long distance? It was because there was no way or means to ride there and I could not afford a taxi that distance.

There was a single-car streetcar running on Dickens Ave., but it came only every three quarters of an hour and I could get quicker to my job by walking.

From the Anchutzes' place it was eight blocks to St. Joseph's Hospital, but also an ordeal to walk even there during bad stormy and cold weather, especially the awfully cold winter of 1935, and also of 1936.

I do not remember how long, or the number of years I worked at Grant Hospital, but all that time there were no big, long, blinding snowstorms. There was one blinding snowfall but it lasted only long enough to lay 4 inches.

A March-end blizzard, lasting from March 31 through April 1, I forget the year, only laid ten inches. That snow fell for two days without stopping.

I can't forget the big blizzard of March 26 and 27th, Sat. and Sunday 1930, so late in the year, too. Traffic was tied up for more than three weeks.

It melted too fast under the sun, in the open country, as I read in the papers, and caused the worst flood in the country's history.

Though she was good as a sister, Sister Rufina was a very scolding kind, and I do not remember or recall how many would not remain long working under her.

Yet, too, she was prompt in firing anyone who would talk back to her.

I stayed through the years under her. She died, though, in a hospital in Evanston of breast cancer. So I was told.

Then came the kitchen overseer and when she quit, the Sister whose name I cannot spell. She was very quiet and easy-going.

Work for me those years was way more than I would or could take, long hours, no hours off, but yet a day off, though.

Then, after my last vacation there, after I came back I found I was fired. The head sister, Alberta, said the work was too much for me.

Then, after a week out of a job, I received employment at the Alexian Brothers Hospital. I stayed on the job there until my enforced retirement.

Because there were so many patients at the Hospital, I would at times find work too much; also, I worked in the dishwashing department there, too, but not as dishwasher.

I never ran or operated the dishwashing machine.

I stripped or scraped the refuse off of the dishes and other utensils to go into the dishwashing machine.

When I first came, I had to wash all types of the dishes by hand that had on them what the machine would not take off.

Sometimes here too, the work was slack and other times too much. One day there came a change in the dishwashing business.

The old machine was dismantled and moved out. The dishwashing room was changed into a sort of medical department, and a new machine put into another room, to be operated by only girls or women.

No more men. That dishwashing room had an electric-driven garbage disposal by the refuse stand.

No need any more to wear out heavy garbage cans. However, a girl had to take out stuff that burns in a container by truck.

I myself got a pot-washing job. Sometimes that job was so slack that you could stand around, waiting for them to come, and at other times there were so many pots, pans and other utensils that you could not hardly manage them without additional help.

However, as the pot-washing room was much too hot in the summer, especially for me, it caused me to have a sort of heat sickness and I had to be on sick leave for more than eight days.

When I came back, Miss Sullivan, the head of the kitchen and the vegetable department, transferred me to the vegetable room for my health's sake.

It was more cooler there. At times there, too, the work was too much and everything had to be on time.

By machine, I peeled potatoes and cleaned and worked on all kinds of vegetables. All these had to be on time and I had to be at work by five thirty, until the brother who came in charge changed it to six thirty and to quit at three thirty.

I did not like that sort of change, because when I came at five thirty I could quit at two.

I was going to quit, but at that time jobs were hard to obtain. So I had to put up with the unpleasant change. I however was soon transferred to the bandage room, up on the fifth floor. There, no one could show any authority over you.

There, you were on your own. Joseph Harry was very good to me and my helper Jacob.

They called him Jake. He had a sort of stomach ailment that made him vomit for any unusual exertion. He would even throw up if he had to walk through deep snow.

The bandage room was an awfully hot place in the summer, with a very low roof which the sun heated dreadfully. It was a very sweat shop, and we shortened our time of work because of it.

In the winter, especially during cold weather, it was like an ice box, even if we had a radiator on.

We soon succeeded in having a second one put in, and it helped a lot.

The heat itself was not so humid as down in the kitchen and that darn hot room.

The heat was caused, as I mentioned, by that sun-heated low roof. I remember that I did mention that I was first, before that,

transferred to the vegetable room, because in the pots room the last summer I was in there, I got what is called heat sickness, or mild heat prostration.

I could not understand it, for all the rest of my life before that, I stood worse heat than that well.

I had suffered no results from the fierce heat of the bandage room. I stood it perfectly well.

Maybe because that heat was drier. When I got that heat sickness, it was a terribly hot summer, where for many days eighty-five degrees was the most lowest temperature. Five days it was over a hundred.

While working at St. Joseph's Hospital and then at the Alexian Hospital, I got on me a very mean streak, because of prayers not being answered, and a question over the snow.

Before this happened, I was a daily attendant at Mass and Holy Communion.

Then foolishly and very sinfully I stopped going to Mass and Holy Communion and when work was unusually heavy at both places I badly sang awfully blasphemous words at God for hours without stopping.

I am surprised that for the words I sang God did not strike me. But no, he did not.

I believe he knew there was a time coming when I would wisely change my ways. It did happen. It was while I was working in the bandage room.

Up there, there were days when the work was so scarce that I almost had nothing to do.

In some sort of a magazine I read of a young fellow, who, when losing his fortune, turned bandit and robbed and killed at will.

He was betrayed by false women friends, arrested, and being found guilty at his trial, was condemned to be hanged.

When he died he went to hell and was tormented horribly by fiends.

There was not only descriptions of the story, but as many pictures. The pictures of his torments in the fires of hell, and by

the demons, scared me into repentance, and I stayed good and after Confession have been going to daily Mass and Confession frequently, and also daily Communion ever since.

During my long stay at the Alexian Brothers, I was raised in my pay three times. Then I got partial retirement, and worked part time in the bandage room with half the pay reduction.

I then received \$100 a month with employment taxes to pay.

Yet it was either at St. Joseph's Hospital or the Alexian Brothers that I was in bed under the care of the main head doctor for a severe pain on the right side of my belly. Yet what was the cause of it, I or the Doctor did not know.

Repeated Axrays revealed nothing. The pain however slowly stopped after I vomited toward the afternoon of the day, which it had started in the morning early, while at work. But I had to remain in bed for for six days. It is a long time since that happened, but I have been walking with a cane ever since.

I'm over 65 years now, but sometimes, off and on, that same kind of pain returns and goes.

But it so far has not been so severe, except on January 26, a year ago from this January, it caused me chills while in bed that I thought would not stop. Then all of a sudden when I did master those chills, I felt a sudden need to vomit, and go up to do it, but nothing would come up.

Then, as suddenly, it was all over and I was all right.

I plowed through that deep snow to the grill on Sheffield and Webster to breakfast. It was Friday the 27th and the storm was still going strong.

Was it that the blizzard storm affected me that way Thursday night?

I had slightly suspected my gall bladder. Some of the hospital employees thought I might have strained the right of my belly muscles. That too could have been a real possibility, because the pain does not feel like being inside of me, but on the abdomen. This happened when I worked in the bandage room, rolling what was

fourteen-foot lengths of what was called hot packs, I as I mentioned before, with my helper by the name of Jacob Feserl.

He, though somewhat fussy, was a good man. His fussiness made him somewhat troublesome. If I could not, he did the rolling, after my turn to get the long-gauge hot pack straight for him.

He would command, "Open."

They are called hot packs because they were wrapped about, where they were to go around the patient, as hot as he could stand it. Joe said the hot packs cost fifty dollars per one.

I and Jake and Joe too took turns in rolling them.

It was a sort of pleasure to roll them myself, but when Jake rolled, I have to say with his complaints and hollering "Open," he was a pain in the neck.

Otherwise he was absolutely peaceful, friendly and good-natured. I did the very best I could to please him, and did not understand what he really meant by "Open."

I missed him nevertheless, when he left to retire. He owned houses (he did not say how many) and two big watchdogs: a police and a shepherd dog. He also roomed in a house on Montana Street.

After he left, it would be double work for me and Joe, especially if there were more than twelve, 12 large bags of hot packs.

And believe me, they were very large back size bags, and held plenty.

Jake told me the bags were sometimes more than thirty in number and then he had to work on all of them alone, when Joe was sick in bed. He too had been sick abed several times when I was there.

The hot packs never were as many as 30 of them while I worked in the bandage room, but once there came as many as twenty-three and I was alone with them, too. That happened when Jake was away on his vacation. There were still that many when he came back. Then it was my turn.

When I returned the hot packs had diminished to nothing. That was the way with that job. Sometimes too many, and sometimes almost nothing.

I got Thursday and Sunday and holidays off.

In the kitchen dishwashing and vegetable jobs, I only was off one Sunday a month, and two weekdays. I sometimes had to work mostly on Christmas and other holidays and was only off then when my layoff came on one of them. I know of a country where the employer would have to pay a thousand-to-10,000-dollar fine to work himself or work his employees on Sundays, holidays and holy days.

As I wrote before, the bags were large, heavy when full, and held plenty.

The least number was two of them. I would go get the large laundry cart they were on. When loaded, the cart was heavy and hard to push.

The work on the hot packs usually had to be done on time, when the nurses (men) came up for them.

Yet this sort of work caused me a lot of standing on an uneven floor with my bad leg and the work was worse yet when Joe was sick and I had to go it alone. Especially if there were a lot of them.

Strange to say, there were always a lot of them when I was alone, and they were slack when we worked together.

And if he was with me and the hot packs were not many, I was always able to quit before dinner and go home for the rest of the afternoon.

I always came at seven thirty.

If I only had him with me and the hot packs were very numerous, I had to work sometimes to past three o'clock in the afternoon.

Though I could, having a meal ticket, I seldom stayed for supper but ate out. I was in the Hospital bandage room for a little more than four years, I do believe, and I and Joe got along fine, no trouble or nothing.

Then one morning, I believe it was in early November 1958, my right side (same old belly trouble) and right leg both tortured me so bad I could not hardly stand, at the same time. I went to a hospital doctor, who gave me the prescription for some pills for my leg trouble and told me I got to retire if I don't want to be bedridden.

I was told my side trouble was a permanent strain, and that I should be careful in anything I do and do no heavy lifting. I came

first to tell Joe I got to retire, and then the personnel manager, and got the checks coming to me.

Yet to go back a ways, being at the Alexian Brothers Hospital, I was under Brother Fabian. The rest of the time I worked there, excepting one occasion, there was no brother in charge when Brother Fabian left. I was under no one at all.

I did not like that. Then came Brother Hillary. He was all right, but he did not stay long.

Then in charge of the kitchen came a Miss Sullivan. She had nothing to do with the dishwashing room. She was somewhat prime but nevertheless good, social and fair. Do what she said and she even was your friend. But as I wrote, she had no charge of us.

I forgot the name of the woman who had, but she had so much work elsewhere that she seldom came around to see how we were getting along.

It just now comes to my mind that she was called Miss Dolgiest.

She was not prime or severe. She too quit, some years later, to retire.

Then Miss Sullivan was put in her place.

I worked under her in the vegetable room for a certain number of years and we got along fine and dandy.

I worked under her in the vegetable room until I was transferred to the bandage room. In the pot room, before that, I was only under the chef or the main cook. When Miss Sullivan went, I was upstairs then; I missed her.

During my stay up in the bandage room there were two awfully cold winters, the one before being below zero for three days, before we got a morning that was 14 below.

The winter following, I believe it was 1959, there were two weeks of moderate subzero days, until came a twenty-one-below day. The day following, was 14 below and then a week more of severe subzero temperatures, but not that severe. The rest of the winter also was severely, severely cold, but not subzero any more.

Spring, too, was cold. The following summer was not a very warm one, and rainy.

Strange for me, the Sunday before I went upstairs to the bandage room, the Personnel Officer, Mr. Shields, said to take the Sunday off.

Yet according to Miss Sullivan I was supposed to work that Sunday, and she asked me why I did not come.

I did not think at that time, that Monday noon, of what the Personnel Officer told me, and I told her I had been sick or something like that.

And believe me, I certainly did not feel at all well, at that, vomiting badly in the early morning. It was not what I had eaten. It was that darn side pain, off and on. As I had said, I had suffered from it since the the first time, and had a bad spell again on the 26th of January, the night of the big blizzard, and I nearly did also vomit that night.

Are you ashamed of me? You ask why? It's because of the pain. I shook my fist towards heaven, meaning it for God.

I also had a bad spell all day last week, when, near the west side of the St. Vincent Church, I vomited some green stuff in the early afternoon.

The pain gradually stopped. To go back to writing about Miss Sullivan, when I told her I was sick, she excused me. I should have told her also about the Personnel Officer's permission.

She even for that would have to excuse me, because being only a dietician she had no say on that, or even over me. I was on my own.

Then, sometime, after I had been working for five years in the bandage room, the knee pain came again, especially worst after midnight.

The left leg then took its turn, and then back to the right. It was very severe. I would get up and apply a hot rag for a time, but that did not help much.

When I went back to bed, I thought I had received relief, but half an hour later it was even worse. I had to get up and stay up. That alone slightly slackened it. It spoiled a Christmas and a New Year for me.

Since then, though, the pain is now not so much anymore. I had to start walking with a cane.

It's terribly difficult to walk, otherwise. I also discovered how awfully hard it was to walk through that deep snow Friday, January 27, that storm of Thursday and Friday. I dread those blizzards ever since. When I was out to go to Roma Grill on Webster and Sheffield Aves., I walked in the path already made by those gone before me. While at Mass in St. Vincent's Church, I can stand, I suppose, at standing times, or kneel, but do not, and it is at times mighty tiresome sitting all that time.

I go to three morning Masses and Communion, at the seven thirty Mass every day, and one extra Mass on Sunday afternoon at five o'clock, besides the seven fifteen and the eight thirty.

And on Monday, I go to the Miraculous Medal Novena Devotions. It too is followed by a Mass.

What did you say? I am being a saint? Ha Ha. I am one, and a very sorry saint I am. Ha Ha. How can I be a saint, when I won't stand for trials, bad luck, pains in my knees, or otherwise?

I am afraid I was a sort of devil, if I may call myself one, during the bad pain of my knee at night.

I had forgot to mention that in the early part of September 1917 I was drafted into the army, when the United States entered the latest part of World War One.

I found army life far from pleasant, but I was soon transferred from Camp Grant, Ill. to Camp Logan, near Houston, Texas.

Through real bad eye trouble—which, though, I greatly exaggerated—I received my dismissal from the army, and got my old job at St. Joseph's Hospital.

I was working then afterwards there too, under Sister Rufina, in the dishwashing room, and when the Second World War was on. I had to register then again for the army conscription but because of my age I was not called, fortunately. This time, I don't say why, I could not have passed the physical examination.

I sure felt good about it, as I hated army life. But you know, if

I had been a draft evader, I would have served a three or four years' term in prison.

And I do not under any conditions like the idea of being a jail bird, as at least that is what all persons will call you.

To go back to my cross of suffering: I would not bear it. I firmly believe there is no one, not even you, my reader, who would, I'm sure. Who would put up with such pains, my past severe toothaches, face pains, and side pains, and other things I don't find time to mention here? The knee pain at night, I must confess, and am not ashamed to tell of it: I actually shook my fist towards heaven.

I did not mean it for God, though, though I felt like it.

What sin it was (if it was one) I do not know for sure, but when I told it in confession the priest was disturbed and admonished me, and gave me a severe or long prayer penance to recite, yet the severe knee pain drove me to it. Yet while working on the first floor at St. Joseph's Hospital, in the main so ward, or rooms, I never found any patients who put up with any severe pains either.

Then why should I? And people who do suffer are usually crabby or hard to get along with.

Yet despite that pain even bothering me severely in the morning, I went to and stayed through three Holy Masses a week on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. And also to work on the working days. Yet I stood it.

Would you have done it?

But I will write again of that one morning. I was up in the bandage room with Joe, when my right leg began again while I was rolling hot packs, and it became so terribly severe that I could not stand on it, and to add to my misery, my side acted up severely at the same time.

I had to quit and the doctor who examined my leg advised me to retire.

I did so, depending on my Social Security, I retired November 19, 1963. Have been retired since, and I'll say it is a lazy life and I don't like it.

I suppose a real lazy person would enjoy it.

I do wish I could be back working there again. To make matters worse, now I'm an artist, been one for years, and cannot hardly stand on my feet, because of my knee, to paint on the top of the long pictures.

Yet, off and on, I try, and sit down when an ache or pain starts. I remember when I and a tall man were walking down Webster Ave. homeward bound at dark in later fall, we saw an auto, driven without headlights on, strike a dog, nearly killing the animal right there, and then nearly being hit by a car coming from the west.

I wished we had been motorcycle cops then; we would have arrested him.

There is one strange thing I have got to write: Even when a young little boy, I felt insulted being called "kid." I have had peculiar, willful ways, and a very independent nature.

At that time I never even heard the word "brat," but had I, and if I would have known what it meant, if any one would have called me that, that party-boy, girl, or grownup—would have got a rock or brick on the head. I don't care what would be the result, I would have done it.

But fortunately I never heard anyone call a little boy or girl that. I was told that anyone calling a child that commits a very grave sin. Yet too, I'll say again, I won't, under any conditions or costs, stand for anything going wrong, or bear any kind of trials or disappointments whatever.

I would not even stand for a snowless winter. I cried once, when snow stopped falling. And my poor father looked at me so queer. It must have been unusual to him.

Though they were small ones, I have committed sins because of these trials, disappointments, and things going wrong or not running smoothly, and especially all sorts of childhood pains and miseries. I was very dangerous if teased.

For my part, to go back to my working time at St. Joseph's Hospital, with your granted permission: I had had toothaches, very bad ones, and once severe pains, where teeth had been pulled, that would not stop day or night. But much worse at night.

The pain was on both sides, in the upper jaws. You, I suppose, would have been ashamed of me because of the terrible language and blasphemous words I said constantly during this pain.

A friend of mine for a while loaned me the use of his hot water bottle, but that did not help. It only seemed to make it worse.

Finally, a dentist I went to, to see if he he could find out the cause, said it was caused by the teeth being pulled at the time of the pain, and gave me some kind of mouthwash, and after a week of using it in hot water in my mouth, the pain was gone.

During the pain, the openings where the teeth had been taken out would not heal or close. Now they did. The dentist knew what my trouble was. As I was the one who pulled my teeth, I forgot to dig the hard abscess pus out.

The mouthwash dissolved and cleaned out the pus. Then the pain was gone.

I also forgot to mention: while working at St. Joseph's Hospital, there came as a patient an old man who was there for some kind of sickness, a sort of shaking sickness, but it was not palsy. Afterwards, he was put in charge of us working men and the hours that we sleep in, and turned out to be handy for everything, even causing a man to be arrested on the charge of hitting a man with a hammer during a fight at night.

He had thrown the hammer out of a window. The fellow was not hurt much. In fact more scared than hurt.

His name was known as Mr. Phelan, who took charge of things, and he willingly did his work without pay to make up the hospital pay, as he had no money to pay his hospital bill.

He had studied for the priesthood, but failed to be one because of his oncoming illness. When I was in the army during Nineteen Seventeen, I would write him letters.

Would you believe it? When I received his answers, I discovered his handwriting was exactly like my father's.

It certainly was.

I also wrote to Sister Camilla, who was Superior at St. Joseph's

Hospital, and in the answer to my letters, she still sent me monthly wages, though I was still in the army.

In late December I was discharged from the army and came back to St. Joseph's Hospital.

I had sent her a telegram, but—I do not know how or why—I got there ahead of it.

That to me was strange. How long does it take to get to Chicago? I know Houston, Texas, is over 3000 miles from Chicago, Ill. Did the train, the Katy Flyer, run faster than the telegram?

I do not know how I even passed the physical examination for the draft, because all my life I had troublesome eyes, and too much sunglass or sunlight made me seem partially blind.

I could not stand the bright glare of electric lights in the hospital chapel, either. I believe my passing the examination was a fraud on the part of the doctor.

I must exclaim something again about army life. At first I was at Camp Grant, Illinois. I would have, in a way, liked the army life, only I was forced to leave behind things I loved too much. That was almost unbearable.

I do believe it is in the Bible that says it's transgressing very severely God's law to force any man into the army against his will.

I don't blame the Amish, the Jehovah's Witness, the Quakers, and so on, to oppose it. None of them will allow themselves to be drafted, even at the cost of the firing squad, let alone imprisonment.

The Bible says woe to the nation that drafts its men into the army against his will. That nation maybe, in due time, will not exist.

I will repay, says the Lord.

At first I was sent to Camp Grant at Rockford, Ill., through which, it is said, the Rock River runs.

I would, however, have slightly liked the army life after all, if not for what I so strongly yearned for, what I had to leave behind, and still worse: getting shots for this and for that.

I dreaded them, because my arm, or where the darn shots go, was so sore for days. Some of the shots even made me ill. The only good

part was the canteen, where I could buy all sorts of refreshments and other goodies. I came to Camp Grant on September the 12th.

I do not remember the day or date of the month of November, but then I was transferred to Camp Logan, Texas, with a long trainload of "buddies." The camp was near Houston.

There, I was for several days reexamined for my peculiar eye condition, failed the test, and so, sometime after Christmas there, I received my discharge papers and came back to St. Joseph's Hospital a few days before New Year's, where I stayed until 1922.

I remember, after I came back, the great big blizzard of January 6 and Seventh, 1918. It was Sunday, the Feast of the Little Christmas, and the Monday after.

Sunday had the heaviest of the big storm, especially in the late afternoon and way into the night. I enjoyed the blizzard, though it did tie up traffic awfully.

Then, as I wrote before, because of Sister De Paul molesting me and making my life miserable, I left, and received a job at Grant Hospital.

I believe my first winter at Grant Hospital was one of the coldest I have ever known, except later, in 1936.

The one I am speaking of, though, was the winter of 1924: below zero, far down, and severe too, for more than two months.

I believe, too, it might have been that winter also that a roomer at Mrs. Anchutz wrote a complaint to the Health Department that the landlady did not furnish much heat in her place. It was true, too, because many a day did I spend in my cold room there, in the winters. Yet I stayed, stuck it out and never complained.

But it was her doing, not her husband's. He wanted to heat the place, but she would not let him.

But as it happened, most of the roomers were away to work most of the day, and she said it was wasting the coal and other fuel, and only put on the heat about late afternoon, before they came home.

He, the complainer, was a stay-at-home kind.

Yet as I said before, I myself, coming home earlier than the

others, passed many a time inside, and went to bed with my clothes on and never complained. However, the Health Department sent her a warning by mail. I do not know if she could read English (she was from East Germany) or not, but she certainly could not write it.

She asked me to write a reply for her. I did, but she then got no answer. In the warning she was told it was better to buy the coal. She was told it was better to use the money for it than pay the one hundred dollar fine.

When that man reported to the Health Department, he did it after he had moved.

I believe it was a very sneaky thing to do, and I believe I told her so. She said I was right.

I also remember—again, I have to go back to write this—that while I was working in the pot room of Alexian Brothers Hospital I was suspected by a certain person to have twice snitched on him. I was relieved, however, by the main cook and the kitchen employees, who not only said, but were able to prove that I never did. And also, for all the work I did, and also having to empty all that garbage, which was heavy work, I never had time to go “hanging around Miss Sullivan’s apron strings.”

I would have liked to find out who told him I snitched on him. Well? You can guess there were many knives around the kitchen.

People of my nationality use knives on “framers.” I firmly believe he was the real snitcher, and as “you call it,” it “hooked” me to “cover up.”

I lived for a long time at the Anchutzes. Afterwards, I do not remember the fall of the year when she exchanged property with an Italian on Logan Boulevard.

I’ll now tell why I did not remain, when he was to come to take possession of the house.

I found out that he had a sort of moonshine still in his house (it was during the Prohibition or forbidden years), and when he was about to take possession he was going to bring it over to where I was living, at what had been the Anchutzes’ house. That scared me into

quickly making a change. For that reason I would not stay there. I will tell you why and how.

I remembered the big moonshine still explosion on Webster and Southport Aves. that completely leveled that big, long, wide three-story brick building to the ground, and broke all the big windows of every house for many blocks around.

Roofs were shaken from from houses, even more than a block away.

The terrible blast, said to have been heard six miles away, happened January 30th, 1930, at night, just after I got into bed. A lot of people living there were killed or injured. Some of the bodies lay on the sidewalk across the street and some half a block down Southport Ave., according to the papers. I myself saw the debris lying across and on both Southport and Webster Streets, blocking the middle of the streets.

It was a good thing for all the people living in the houses, where all the window glass went out from the shock, that there was no cold-wave weather.

Remembering this, and seeing all that, made me afraid, and I moved away to a new place: 851 Webster Ave.

I am still there, though this is 1968.

The sound of that big explosion was like some big boom thunder overhead, which I have heard during some thunderstorms, far as it was from my place. Though it sounded overhead, it was way much louder and actually shook our house badly.

I heard Mrs. Anchutz cry out, “It’s an explosion.”

As I said before, I was in bed when the explosion came, and at first I thought it was one of those big “boom” thunders overhead, which I have heard in some thunderstorms. But it was louder than all of them put together. I wonder what was the size of the moonshine still, to do all that damage?

I never heard or read in the papers whether they ever found or captured the moonshine maker or not. He was never seen again. And proofs were he was not in the building at the time it was demolished by the the explosion.

I read that those who make the moonshine in Kentucky, Tennessee or other states take awful chances with their stills. It is said an explosion of one of them can kill or maim you sixty yards away from it.

He made his moonshine in the basement, unknown to anybody, even the landlord, and during the time when it was outlawed.

Mrs. Anchutz knew right away that it was an explosion, and when the fire department passed by, she followed it to where it stopped.

There was no fire, however; in fact, the explosion by its great force left nothing to burn.

It was at first really hard to say what was the truth, whether it was the still, as many said at first that it was a black-hand bomb.

The owner, however, was able to prove that he received no threatening black-hand letters.

And many of those living across the streets from the destroyed building testified there was no black smoke or smell of exploded powder.

They said the big cloud was white and steamy and had a caramel and brandy smell.

I did not, at that time of night, get out of bed to go to see what had really happened, but the next day, after I was home from work, I went down there.

The scene was worse than what I heard. I had seen and known the building.

It had been a large three-and-a-half-story building. It had been a quarter-block long, and also as wide. Of pink red brick. A very handsome sort of building.

I could not believe my eyes for what I observed. And no exaggeration either: There was nothing at all left of the building but scattered debris.

A lot of the wreckage blocked both streets in that neighborhood.

The building did not have two feet of any of its walls standing, and wooden planks lay scattered everywhere, even on the rooftops of houses nearby, and through broken windows. It seems exaggerating but not so.

There was a sort of brandy smell in the air.

And as I wrote before, wherever I went, I did not see anything but glass gone from the windows, littering yards and sidewalks like fragments of sheet ice.

I even seen roofs of some buildings nearby shaken loose.

Not believing it was done by a black-hand bomb, I went out of my way to see if there was such a thing anywhere as any fragment of the still. I could not hardly believe it, but here it was: a big piece too heavy to lift, in a lot near Fullerton.

It was half round, with riveted parts and a sort of pipe attached, and was big and too heavy for me to lift even at one end.

Neighbors told me it came sailing through the air and landed there.

Because of needed evidence about the cause of the blast, it was forbidden to be moved then.

That proves it was a still explosion, and one with very great force, to hurl such a heavy object so far.

Why it was left there all night and the next day and a week, I do not know. It was full evidence that the blast was from the moonshine still, even though no officials took it away for evidence examination, or proof.

In four weeks it was gone, and to where I do not know.

There had been a few pipes and one pipe elbow also attached to it. This fragment was shaped like a half-rounded tank, eight foot long and half an inch thick. No wonder it was so awfully heavy.

Excepting for a few days, I do not believe January 30 was a terrible cold month, and had only a 10 inch snowfall before New Year's Day. No snow at all for the rest of the month until the 30th. One was on the 18th with 21 below. Then a short time later came 8 below.

All other days, and even in February, I noticed the days were almost warm above normal. March the first had one below zero. The rest of March until the 26, like late January and through February, was almost snowless.

But March the 26 and 27 had a very big snowstorm, which I cannot

explain why I really enjoyed.

The paper I bought later in the afternoon (it's a wonder I could get it) said nineteen inches had already fallen and even then the storm seemed to be at its worst, it showed no sign of letting up.

Really, through the whole storm I am sure it got way much deeper, because it snowed severely all night Saturday, and also all day Sunday, and again way into the night.

Late in the year as it was, traffic was tied up for weeks.

But nevertheless, I enjoyed the storm.

Later, as I read, in the open country parts, the sun melted the snow so fast, it caused the most extensive and worst flood in all histories of floods.

When I worked under Sister Rufina, at St. Joseph's Hospital, for that time, the summers from 1930 to 1937 were the most hottest I have ever seen or felt here.

All that time, too, there was very little rain or snow, except there was a sizable snowstorm on March 7, 1931.

The summer of 1934, however, broke all records on July 18. Yet too, 1933 also broke all records, for believe it or not, for three weeks it was over a hundred and three in the shade, but never reached the temperature of July 18, 1934.

The winter of 1936 was the coldest I ever seen here. Not only because of the extremely low temperatures (7 below for 4 weeks was the highest) but also because of the long duration of the cold spell.

This time, it could not be called a cold wave, because for such a long time it did not abate, for 33 days: All severe below-zero days.

It lasted all the three and half weeks of January, not forgetting Christmas week, and through February without a let-up. On the Saturday of early February. however. came the worst cold spell of all, following a ten minutes blinding snowsquall. And during that cold spell it blew awfully strong from the west for 2 days. Those were awful cold Sundays and Mondays, more than 27 below, according to the news. I do not know how I stood it, walking to St. Joseph's Hospital from where I lived two and a half blocks away.

Yet it was not exactly the cold. It was that awful wind. St. Joseph's Hospital is a long distance, considering the length of those blocks.

But despite the severe wind and cold I managed to take it. I also remember the day Sister Rufina died in a hospital in Evanston of breast cancer. At least, that is what I was told it was. Even then, I stayed for a good number of years, and those were my worst years because of the unruly teenage girls they hired for the dishwashing department.

They were the worst or most severe cross I ever bore.

I was in charge, though, and one evening, under a kitchen head woman, I could stand it no more and fired the most unruly one.

In sympathy for her, the rest walked out. "Oh how I cried," ha ha ha.

Older workers came afterwards and my agony was over.

I did not remain long under the other Sister, whose name I can pronounce, but cannot spell. I left by request.

Sister Alberta let me go, saying the work there was too much for me. She was very much right. Yet I was afraid to quit after being there so long. I don't say how much work there was, but I worked too many hours, from 7 AM in the morning until 8:30 PM, and no hours off. Hardly even had time for my dinner.

After I was let go, I got or obtained a job at the Alexian Brothers Hospital, a week after I left St. Joseph's. A few winters were severe too, while I worked there, especially one, when I worked in the bandage room.

I first worked in the dishwashing room under Brother Fabian, then under Brother Bebe, and then under women supervisors. Every one of these were easy to get along with.

That dishwashing room was an awful hot place in the summer, especially with all that hot water in the dishwashing machine, but not near as hot as the dishwashing room in St. Joseph's Hospital. The Brother stripped the dishes. I scraped off the refuse, and the machine operator loaded the dish trays and run them through.

I never had the chance to operate the machine, though I worked

at the receiving end once in a while, removing the clean dishes and loading the dish cart wagons.

I also took out the garbage, and cleaned the cans. That was the only unpleasant job: handling and dumping the slop.

I believe I had once before wrote that all my life, ever since a child, I always had a very willful nature and mean temper, and was very determined always that all things will and shall come to my satisfaction, or else.

I would not even put up with or stand for any kind of bad luck, and I would always have an anger, slight or severe, which made people say I have fire in my eyes.

I would not even stand for anything going wrong, no matter what the cost, and am still that way, if not worse, especially because of my injured legs.

It says in the Holy Bible, "For those who do not bear the Cross there is no Salvation." I'm sorry to say I defied that, and still do.

Yet if I am that way, what am I going to do, defy or not? It seems impossible to control myself. Yet I am not that way to persons, only all sorts of gadgets and other things.

If something I'm working on goes wrong, "I am a spitting growling, if not thundering volcano." Blow my top too, as you call it, or hit the ceiling. And do I say bad words and blaspheme. Oh my.

Despite my nature, I have never been mean or hostile to anyone except one person.

Yet that was not from my mean temper. I believe I wrote of this before, but won't think it wrong to do so again. I once asked that man to do me some favor, really an easy one, but he refused me. This, as I wrote before, occurred at St. Joseph's Hospital.

As I said before, he got into trouble, of which cause I do not remember, but it might have been speeding. He was fined 50 dollars, but only had on him 45.

He sent a policeman to me, asking me the loan of five dollars, but knowing of the favor he refused me, I also refused to give him the five.

He then had to stay five days in the police station. I believe you think me mean but, whether you do or not, I am the kind that if a person refuses me a favor, don't dare ask me to do any.

I'll stick to that whether I'm right, wrong, or even if it is sinful. There is another thing, too. There is a saying that it's better to give than to receive.

But with me, I don't give if I don't receive—and receive first, too. If anyone don't like my idea on that, they can—well never mind. You know what I mean.

After five days, I really expected to see him come back to work, but he never showed up. I think being what is called "a jail bird," he got fired. But I am not sure. I am now past 65 years old, and I am still that way. Refuse me a favor, don't expect one from me.

You would say, what would I do if I had granted a favor first, then afterwards in asking for one, I would be refused?

Let that person watch out.

I had expected that after his five days were up he would come to me angrily and raise an eruption for my refusing to pay his small part of the fine for him, but I never have seen him again, since that day.

Some of those, for what I did, especially those in the hospital, sided against me, saying I was mean and revengeful, and that revenge is a mortal sin, and I'll never myself be forgiven. And that to hold a grudge against him, too, is a mortal sin.

I did not commit any mortal sin.

It was not revenge or a grudge on my part at all, or any intention of revenge.

Such a thing was not even in my mind. And I had no revengeful feeling. It was for the favor refused me, so then no favor done by me. And I believe I am in the right.

Ain't I right? Well, I leave it to you to decide.

I remember a night at Mrs. Anchutz, which I really believe she and her husband would never forget either.

The ceiling of my room in the south end had been gradually loosened by a leak.

I suspected something might happen, so I pulled the head of my bed, which was in that location, away from under.

But yet I did not lie in bed with my head there, but the other end, with my feet towards the head of the bed.

I'm telling you that section of the ceiling, coming down, created some sensation.

Mrs. Anchutz cried to her husband, "Amiel, Henry fell out of bed." If I did, I must have been awfully heavy to make that terrible noise that was so loudly to be heard by neighbors, who thought it was an explosion. The fire department came, but there was no explosion.

A piece of the plaster, bouncing off the top of the bed's head, hit the top of my right foot toes, and though I was not injured it was a horrid pain I will never forget.

They came up to my room, and I had a hard time to convince them that I did not fall out of bed.

I cleaned off of my bed enough plaster fragments to fill a bushel basket. I almost nevertheless had a difficult time to convince her I did not fall out of bed.

But her husband saw the large vacancy in the part of the ceiling, the amount of plaster fragments on the floor behind the head of my bed, and knew I told the truth.

During the latest time I worked still at Grant Hospital, a disaster occurred which I, or even the hospital baker, will never forget.

There had been a leak from the eastern ceiling of the hospital kitchen. At the north side (also east) of the kitchen was the dishwashing machine.

Lucky for me, I was at the housekeeper's desk that morning. Something I was asking for which I badly needed.

Before I received her answer to my request, there came from the distant kitchen a loud, thundering noise that startled both of us. We hastened to the kitchen and an awful sight met our eyes.

All the ceiling plaster over that part of the kitchen had crashed down. Near the baking oven stretched a long, wide wooden

table, and it and the floor were covered with inch-thick plaster. So was the top of the dishwashing machine. Lucky nothing was inside. The plaster falling on that long wooden table made that deafening noise.

The baker had been hit on the head by a big piece of plaster and was hospitalized.

He had more than 30 pies, which he had baked, on that long table, and they were all ruined. They too were covered with plaster fragments.

Had I been by the dishwashing machine at that time I might have got a piece on my head too. The kitchen ceiling, I believe, is 25 feet above the floor.

The main cook was sick from shock at witnessing the disaster.

The ceiling over his part of the kitchen did not fall, however.

Unless I am mistaken, I believe the baker sued the hospital for damages, declared the condition of the ceiling was known, and nothing was being done about it. He had a slight skull fracture and a badly cut head. He was in bed there for a month.

I do not know if he ever collected, as I never heard, but he received his hospital care free of charge.

By hospital workers, more than half a ton of plaster was wheeled out on carts.

There is one really important thing I must write which I have forgotten.

* * *