

William Benjamin Bloys' School Essays written at Salem Academy and Blackburn University.

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Background: William Benjamin Bloys wrote these essays for various classes while attending Salem Academy (1862-1873), and then Blackburn University (Carlisle IL). He left Blackburn to attend Lane Theological Seminary (Cincinnati OH), and after graduating was ordained a Presbyterian minister. Then with Isabelle Yeck, whom he married in 1879 he left for Texas to serve as a circuit rider missionary, and she taught school.

Love.

Love is an affection of the heart excited by that which delights of commands admiration; it is preeminent kindness or devotion to another. It includes moral good will, benevolence, kindness. It is the sublimest passion of being.

Love as a passion forms a large part of that wonderful organization called the soul. It is found to some extent in all living creatures. It manifested along the smaller animals of creation in the fact that they separate into pairs; and pay each other all those attentions which are the immediate outgrowth of genuine affection. The dog sometimes manifests a degree of affection that is wonderful. The same may be said of the horse; and it is even found to some extent among the ferocious animals of creation as the lion, tiger, & c. In all in the protection of their young.

But it is the mind of man that we look for the most beautiful development of this passion. It is exemplified here in the sublime degree, interest manifested sometimes by an individual for whole race. In the devotion of man to the interests of his country, in the unvaried never ceasing care of the mother for the child and in the undying, soul absorbing affection of husband and wife. The Bible says, God is love. As all true greatness is centered in God and he is love; then, the more fully this passion is developed in us the nearer the approach to true greatness and the more we are like God. Love as a passion is capable of a development or an expansion as broad as eternity is long; because God is infinite in everything, then love must be infinite too. We have a familiar illustration of this—take an individual of either sex in childhood; he will love his parent, his toys, his playmates, as he grows up his mind expands and he acquires a love for the beautiful and good, he exhibits a devotion to his country stronger than life, at the same time he lavishes a wealth of affection upon his companion in life and his children which is equaled only by the infinite God himself. In all this he does not take his affections from one thing to another; for he is just as devoted to the first objects of his love as he ever was. If this true in one, it is true in all therefore this passion in our souls is capable of an infinite degree of expansion. Take it under any circumstances in the loved or in the .. in the lower order of animals or in the infinite mind of Jehovah, it is still the same incomprehensible great and sublime principle.

In practical matters it is most beautifully exhibited in our social life. In the family circle there are no smiles, no kind words, without it; but if love abounds there is no need of a book on etiquette to teach them politeness and kind regard for the feelings of everyone.

In all the wide world I know of nothing more beautiful than a family of parents, and brothers and sisters, united together by the sweet bonds of love. A circle in which smiles and polite attentions require no effort.

The bravest of all.

I do often write stories: that you will soon see perhaps. But I do take pleasure in hearing a good story sometimes; and if I give you one that was told by another you may like it, and I in that way will be the means of interesting you at least for a short time.

We were a happy little family seated around the fire on a merry evening just before Christmas. There were my parents, my uncle Charles, two sisters, and a younger brother, and myself. My Uncle was visiting us, I was at home on a visit from college. You may know how pleasant it was when I tell you that in our little family circle there were never any jars nor dissensions, no angry words, nor thoughts, unkind actions. We loved each too much for anything of that kind.

I was the eldest child and fully conscious of the fact that my parents loved me very much and expected me to fill a good position among my fellow men when I should

attain to the age of mature manhood. I believe they expected too much of me. Fond parents are apt to make that mistake.

I had been in college two years and was then in my Junior year and was proud of being first in my class. My Uncle resided in a distant city and had not paid us a visit in many years. So that the younger members of our family had never seen him. He was a benevolent, whole souled, Christian man, as fond of a little childish fun at sixty as he was at ten years of age. This and the fact of his being mother's only brother was a sufficient inducement for us to take him into our whole heart's affections. I was happy in being the namesake of so genial, hearty an uncle.

While we were eating our nuts and apples, I had been entertaining our little [group] with anecdotes and incidents of my life in college. I was full of life and like every school boy must have some fun. I had a full score of anecdotes that I related sometimes of incidents that had occurred and of jokes that had been perpetuated upon the other students. In some of these I had participated, and in the original acting of the one which seemed to interest my Uncle most I had taken a very prominent part.

There were two young men in college who because of their native bitterness of soul were universally unpopular. About a year before the time of which I speak these two had been guilty of an act that was almost a crime; but from its very nature could not be brought before the Faculty. Consequently six of use after a consultation decided to take the matter into our own hands and administer a punishment that should be both just and proper according to our notions of things. So against their own wishes and the laws of the institution we gave each of them the benefit of a long ride on a sharp rail winding up with a splendid bath in a mud hole and a fine shower of eggs that had passed the age when eggs are said to be good to eat. They immediately left for their respective homes and the Officers of the Institution were never any the wiser.

My brother highly appreciated this last and gave vent to his feelings in a good, hearty laugh. But my father took the matter seriously and talked to me kindly about the impropriety of my taking a part in such things. At this juncture my brother in his childish earnestness asked my Uncle if he had ever been to college when he was a young man?

On his replying in the affirmative, he was earnestly pressed to tell us a story of his college experience. Well, said my Uncle, I have in my recollection an incident that has affected the action of my whole life. Both because of its melancholy ending and the lesson I learned from it.

At sixteen I entered the college at ____ in the State of _____. Everything went on smoothly until I reached my Junior year. I believe that I was liked by both my fellow students and the professors. I was lavish with my money, of a strong social temperament, and always ready for fun of any description. In reviewing my past life I think that my worst fault at that time was a disposition to carry a joke too far. This sometimes led me to wound the feelings of my best friends, though not intentionally.

I was cautioned in regard to it, and sometimes harshly reproved for it; but it seemed to grow as I grew, and the remonstrances of my friends and my own good resolutions were alike feeble in checking my mischievous propensity.

Among all those whom I like to cherish in my memory as friends there was no one whom I preferred to James K. He was of a very sanguine temperament and as fond of fun and a good joke as I was, yet he tempered it with a nice sense of propriety which I suppose he inherited; for he carried it with him into everything. [unfinished/missing?]

I'll tell thee a tale as t'was told to me

Picture to yourself a cool, shady avenue leading from the dusty road to a large handsome mansion almost hidden in dense foliage of the surrounding tress. A front yard tastefully and scientifically laid out in beautiful walks winding here and there between the flower beds through the shrubbery and under the trees, their edges lined with soft, green turf while all around beautiful trees of foliage cast their luxuriant shade around the mouse. To the left and in the rear a number of plain but comfortable abins in each of which there is a din of preparation as of expected vent then stretching as far back as the eye can reach fields of cotton, the bursting boles beginning already to grow white like a vast field of snow. And you have before you the Southern home of J.H. Wharton as it appeared on this Sept. evening in 1855.

Half reclining on a curiously wrought seat placed out in the shadow of the trees was a girl of twelve summers. A glance reveals the fact that she is a person of remarkable beauty. Her figure clad in purest white, her raven hair, contrasting beautifully with her dress thrown carelessly back. Evidently she is taking in a lesson of the good and

beautiful from her rich surroundings. But a closer look shows that our little lady is engaged in no such delectable employment. Her face is flushed to any angry hue, her proud lip is curled half contemptuously and her black eyes lose their dreamy softness and flash fires as she explains I wonder why it is that papa brought her here. I am sure I could have taken music under Aunt Rosa, I could finish my arithmetic and geography and other things in good Mr. G's school and then—Then what? A voice broke in from behind her as a gentleman approached her and taking both her hands into his he asks further what is my pet troubled about now? Has the Mr. G. been cross? Has Miss Rudolph failed in her duty? What means this troubled face and these tears? The speaker was a man of perhaps fifty years of age. But his black eyes had lost none of their fire, his hair although ringed with gray was abundant and turned back in smooth waves that constantly threatened to break into curls, and his erect form had all the vigor of a fully developed manhood. He was a descendant from an old Huguenot who had fled from the storms and persecutions of France and had found a home and liberty in the peaceful retirement of the then dependent province of S.C. For four generations their estate had been handed down from father to son until by right of heritage this one came to be sole proprietor of the home of his fathers. Of a restless disposition and longing for something to call the energies of his mind he had early in life followed the westward march of civilization and found a quiet retreat among the uncultured pioneers who had slain the forest and bridges the rivers and prepared the way for a more cultivated class to follow after. During all these years he had been busy in laying out and reducing to a proper state of cultivation his vast estate. While he was increasing his wealth he was developing his mind by a regular course of reading and study so when his country called him to take part in her councils there was no one more gifted in knowledge nor more clear in his deliberations for the public good. In his association with the under people around him he had lost none of his noble bearing and now in his full manhood he exhibits the unflinching integrity and sublime fortitude that had characterized his ancestors.

...surely not if will give you pleasure; and along with it I present a note from my friend Dr. Lambert. The note was as follows:

Popular Grove Hall Sept 10/55

J.H. Wharton, Esq.

Dear Sir, I take pleasure in recommending to your kind care and consideration Louis Rudolph. He has been one of my family for two years. He is careful, industrious and intelligent, and can be trusted to any extent. He is a descendant of a good family; and although of northern birth he is southern in his choice and tastes. I am satisfied that if you give him a home and kind treatment he will be of invaluable assistance to you in managing your affairs. I could not be induced to part with him; but the continued ill health of my wife makes it necessary to seek a change of climate. Most respectfully yours, S.M. Lambert.

It is needless to say that this produced an entire change in the manner of Mr. Wharton. After some questions in regards to Dr. L's family with a half muttered apology, he extended a cordial invitation to Louis to spend the night in his house promising to consider what he could do for him on the morrow. It is a matter of wonder to me why it is that we who consider ourselves far superior to the lower orders of being paid to attach its proper idea in regard to the treatment of our fellow men whom consider beneath our station. If a poor unfortunate presents his claim for a copper and a cold crust we are careful in bestowing these to remind him that he is a beggar. If a man in the pure honesty of his nature asks to exchange with us the exercise of his bone and muscle for a fair equivalent in money we make the exchange; but seek to impress upon his mind the tremendous responsibility to us under which he is placing himself. In this case before a favor has been asked, and without any just reason a homeless boy must be treated scornfully and tantalized with its agreeable suggestion that his personal appearance is that of a tramp. No notice is taken of his manly bearing, the clear honest expression of his countenance, nor of his bright eyes speaking out the depth of soul within—the sure mark which the All Wise Creator set for us to distinguish the high and noble from the mean and ignominious. In this empty desire to show our superiority over our fellows, we poorly imitate the example of a pitying God who bestows alike and without question his rich blessing upon the high and the low. [unfinish/missing rest...]

The Theatre.

Salem. William Benjamin [Bloys]

Pottock one of the purest and most eminent of poets [said:] The Theatre was, from the very first the favorite haunt of sin, though honest men, Some very honest, wise and

worthy men, maintained it might be turned to good account; And so perhaps it might, but never was. From the first to last, it as an evil place; And now such things are acted there, as made the devils blush; and from the neighborhood, angels and holy men trembling, retired .

...acknowledged house of prostitution, and a place for the expression of vulgar language; sentiments couched in vulgar, and the doing still more vulgar deeds. Several centuries passes away, and the passion for theatrical amusement increase; and the stage was extended into other countries. As time moved on the still spread its influence until a few centuries ago we find it in every country on the globe. Now the, trace its history from the first, study well the character of each individual connected with it; and tell me if you please, the amount of good it did; to how many children did it give a proper education? What great principles did it disseminate? You look, and look again; and find nothing. On the other hand, I find that it was characterized by the number of its vices, as a sink of iniquity into which young and old might fall and be mired forever. To such an extent was this profligacy carried, that the Catholic Church, still gory and reeking with the inquisition, forbade on pain of excommunication, any of its members participating in the exercises of the stage. The Protestant world raises its hands in holy horror at the doings of the Catholics; I wonder how high it ought to be left them at the doings of an institution which the despised Catholic cannot conscientiously tolerate. Let us turn to the theatre of this day. Has it improved any one? Are the actors better men and women? Is it doing anything to elevate the moral tone of society? In short, is it an institution to which parents can send their children without fear of them being led astray? ...if so the theatre must be a good place; but is it so? Are these its results? If so how is it that a young man intelligent, pure and generous possessed of every noble impulse of humanity after a few months connection with it comes out a debauchee unfit for the society of decent men and women?; and how is it that a young woman as artless and gentle as a dove, as chaste as an angle of God, comes out of this institution destitute of every principle of true womanhood to sink down and down beneath the very lowest of all God's creatures?

I know there are exceptions to this. All actors are not so depraved, but it is true in general and you cannot show me one who has been connected with it but what is more improved than when he entered it.

I know the theatre to be an evil, because wicked men carry it on; and good men refuse it their support; and when one of the noblest and purest of men, acquiescing in the wishes of his friends, attended the theatre he was killed by an assassins hand.

It is an evil because it associates itself with every other form of vice: drinking, gambling and prostitution are all its allies; A man is known by the company he keeps—if the theatre was good, its company would be pure good and its effects moral.

I have already spoken of the tendency of school exhibitions to beget a taste for theatrical performances; this is often the case. We are all fond of applause. An individual prepares himself well for the anticipated exhibition....He performs his part in the so called exhibition by selecting some character and imitating it to perfection—either a drunkard, a thief, a murder. He says all kinds of funny things; dresses himself like a fool, throws himself into all kinds of positions; and in the end is greeted with the prolonged applause of his friends. Now, it is natural for him to conclude that he would get still more applause by appearing on the stage; or in the circus. So he starts out:— first, the stage, plenty of fun, excitement, and applause; then gambling, drunkenness, then, then, eternal ruin.

You say this is exaggerated, it is not; it is the fate of many a young man and woman, who commenced with a life of bright hopes, and pleasant anticipation; and ended it in shame.

It has not been a year since I saw a young man strutting along the street smoking a cigar, his hair and infant mustache curled a la mode. He was the son of good parents; and was well bred; but he came to town to learn; fell in with an exhibition, discovered in himself some talent as an actor, took part in several performances; got into bad company, became intoxicated frequently, learned to gamble and swear; and now stares ruin in the face as he walks along.

There are several other points to which I would like to call your attention but I have already detained you long enough.

In conclusion, I challenge the world to show an evil, which can produce such astounding immoral results, as the theatre. War may kill more men but it does not demoralize the people. The Pestilence may sweep off half the inhabitants of a continent in a few hours; but its victims may be moral and sure of salvation; while the theatre not only carries

off thousands of people into endless ruin, but it leaves an influence for evil on the minds of the living, which is never, never erased. The Pestilence is like a mighty torrent rushing down, and destroying everything as it goes. The Theatre is river of stagnant water flowing slowly along poisoning the atmosphere and throwing out its malaria in every direction. In order to deceive the thoughtless its banks are lined with flowers and shaded with evergreen, but its waters are infested with huge monsters whose jaws are ever open to crush the heedless and unwary. Woe! Woe! To him who once drinks of the waters of this river.

[note probably by teacher:] If you will meet me at four o'clock we'll settle this—pistols and coffee? Constables.

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