



Another's Sin

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"Let your conscience be your guide" may be good advice and it may not. Mostly it isn't. On a dark night, in a strange barn, for instance (and nights in strange barns are always dark) conscience has little value as a pathfinder. One might as well be guided by prejudice as to follow the dictates of conscience on such occasions, in such barns, in such strange darkness.

If darkness had set-in before your arrival, and you have no matches, you must feel your way without a guide (except your general knowledge of barn construction. . .)

Conscience, where the mind is open or blank or not in contact, cannot serve as a guide post. In fact, conscience must have training, as to intimate details and merits, pro and con, up-to and from and between, beyond and before—have all facts—before it can function either as motivator, guide, retarder or paralyzer-of-action, actual, prospective, improbable or impossible. Yes, indeed.

Take a street scene: The fight is in full progress when you arrive—a glorious fight it is—you don't happen to recognize any of the combatants—the shape they're in—or, they may all be bosom companions of yours. At first you view the labors of the fighters with an impersonal gaze, impartially applauding the efforts of one or another—and you long to take part in the fray. You are expected to take part—if you don't, "you're a coward."

But you didn't see the start of the fight. . . . How's your conscience going to guide you? Will you jump in and help the underdogs and even-up the fight and thus prolong the battle or will you aid the heavy-hitters to bring about an early and honorable peace—or will you jump in on general principles and hit the interested parties

without fear or favor, (as you get to 'em) when they're looking, as well as when they ain't? Will you join them in their manly pastime just for the sake of driving your loneliness away? Your conscience is on dead-center. It is mute. You look appealingly to your conscience for advice. You might just as well look to your liver for counsel—your conscience has had no intercourse with the intelligible facts (if any) preceding the heavy engagement.

No, conscience, as a guide is unreliable. In such a case you could confine your prowess to "betting on the outcome" with more reason than by attempting to influence "fortunes of war" with your uninformed presence.

In ferreting out decaying matter (such as dead herring, rats, dogs, or camels) it is better to follow your nose and "let the odor be your guide."

Where odor, visibility, or conscience cannot function it is well to follow the crowd or let your hearing be your guide. And, in isolated cases, taste has been a great help to those who staggered beneath an overload of misapprehension.

INTUITION. Ah, a guide!
Experience, another chaperon!

May I recount a true story? May I unfold a tale of INJUSTICE:

I was a cook, not one of those that discover north-poles and pass out gum-drops, I was a lumbercamp cook and a good one too (especially on stew). I was sent down to open up "the landing camp" soon to start "out-loading." Upon crowbarring the door open, a most terrific smell struck me in the nostrils. Being a cook, I refused to retreat. I held my ground. Hasily I threw my eagle eye around and it lit upon a sourkraut barrel—with much pulping and gagging, I rolled it outside, heavy as it was, half-full of liberty cabbage.

With heavy heart I dug a shallow grave and emptied the keg into it. Thank God, that is done—I heaved a sigh. Once again the birds sang in my soul and I walked back to the cook-shack whistling, "Who'd Have Thunk It Stunk." Alas! Alas, fellow workers, the stink in the shack was worse than ever. . . . Up she came—my breakfast!

After recovering somewhat I went on a still hunt, gum-shoeing, and found a dish

full of rotten salmon—a squirming, sizzling, mass of maggots.

I had buried the innocent cabbage! Injustice! What!

I now freely admit that I was prejudiced against kraut—always have been. Prejudice and conscience was my guide. And I'm here to say that 99 times out of 98 conscience as a guide is a snare, and prejudice a pitfall. Knowledge is the one and only guide. "If You Don't Know, Don't Move" is a good rule.

To move without knowledge is to let chance be your guide.

Jumping in the dark is no longer practiced in polite society.

O "Liberty," can men resign thee?—I'm still thinking about the Cabbage-in-a-Wrong-Grave?

Where Cabbage Sleeps,
Salmon should—
If cabbage didn't,
Salmon would—
And both are lost,
(Their graves are "crossed")
"Another's sin".
Bereaves their kin.
Oo la la la Laa!

Of course the farmer that hires you has a "housefull" of soiled children—Were the children "bigger" you wouldn't be there. Do not under circumstances mention "dirt" tho the children bother you. Just casually remark, "Mr. Haybailer, does your well ever go dry—do you have water" the year around?"—That's what's called hypo-ism-sister question. He can't say Yes or No to that.

Then if he don't tumble, ask him "Is 'summer following' beneficial for the children's complexion or is it better to plow it up every year?" You've got him. He can't say Yes or No.

One who is on the farm for the first time should study this well and comfort himself accordingly. Don't be Blunt.

That reminds me: The girl in the grocery store as she filled my order for eight eggs, remarked: Are you going to eat all "them," yourself?

"Young lady," says I looking hard at her, "I wish you would bear in mind that I'm a virtuous old man; that I'm merely trying to ketch-up with my egg-eating and that I'm a working man and not a social-lion."