

AN ELEGY
WRITTEN NEAR
A CITY FREIGHT YARD



BY
STEPHEN
LEACOCK

Drawings by Joban Bull

NOTE

The descendants of the people chronicled in Gray's Elegy came out, many of them, to America. They left the country for the town. They became a part of the working class of the factory district of any great American city.

They never saw the country churchyard with the yew trees' shade and the turf beneath which their rude forefathers slept and are sleeping still.

For them, even death itself took on new forms. And this that follows is their Elegy.

Nor are these verses a parody, but just a transcription of the altered facts of life.

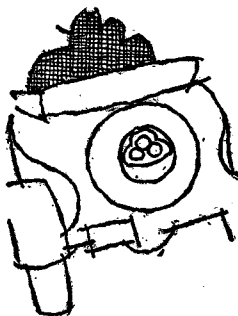


The Factory Whistles blow across the way,
Some Cattle in a Freight Car still I see,
The Employees have finished for the Day,
And there is no one on the street but me.

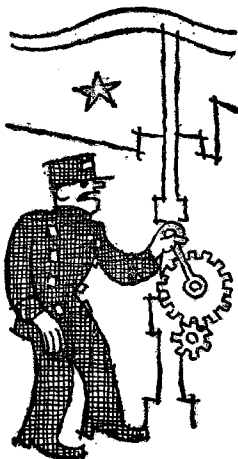
Now they have lighted the electric Light,
And all the People in the shops have gone,
Except the Cop upon his Beat at night,
And here and there perhaps a Motor
Horn.



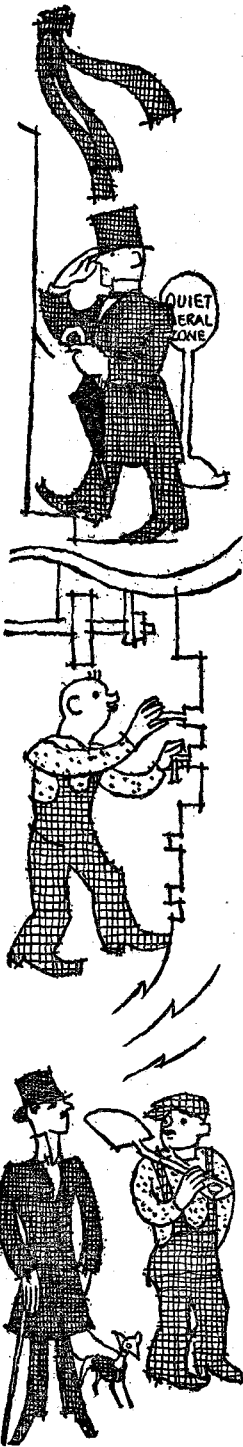
Save that from yonder little Railway Tower,
The Switchman now and then is heard
complain,
When People in a Motor at this Hour
Compel him to lift up his Gates again.



Here on the corner of this Policeman's Beat,
A Funeral Parlor Open Day and Night,
Shows where the decent People of the street,
Have one by one passed out of human
sight.



No morning Whistle blowing six o'clock,
No morning trolley clattering down the
track,
No morning Milkman whistling round the
Block
Shall call them from their Funeral Parlor
back;



For them no more the Radiator Coil,
Shall warm the Parlor for their coming
home,
No busy wife put Coffee on to boil,
No children run to start the Gramophone.

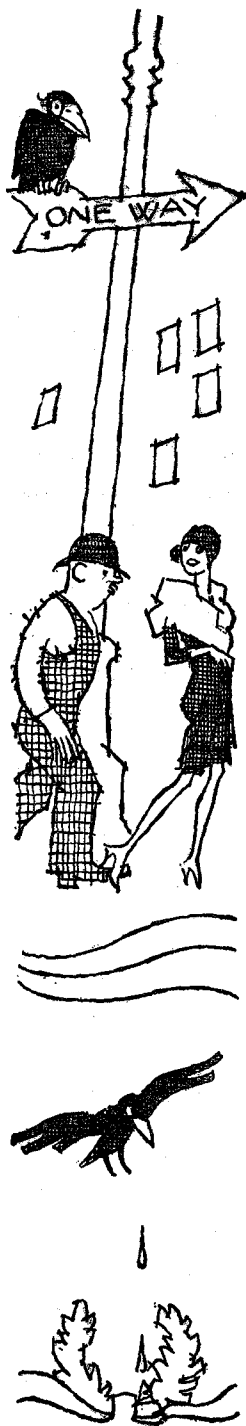
Yet these were Boys who once could hustle
hard,
Full time and overtime for six days
straight,
They worked in factory and railway yard
Or poured out pig iron into boiler plate.

Let not the People in the Upper Town,
The sort of supercilious social Pup,
The People on the Boulevards look down
On what they did because they were hard
up.

The social Column, social Graft and Pull,
And all the high-class Beauty Parlors
do —
What does it come to when the Time is full?
The Crematorium awaits them too.

A bang-up Funeral, a Motor Hearse,
A Write-up in the Paper, lots of Space —
What good is that? These Boys are none the
worse
Because they only had this little place.

Some Men more full of Brains than you
might think,
Have passed perhaps this Undertaker's
Wicket,



Who might have been elected, but for
Drink,
To Congress on the Democratic Ticket.

Here, say, was one who had the mental
Range,
But for the Schooling he could not afford,
To make a Fortune on the Stock Ex-
change —
As big a Man perhaps as Henry Ford.

There's lots of Waste upon a Garbage Pile
That's full of Money, lost or thrown
away,
There's Gasoline away beneath the soil
That's never utilized — or so they say.

The trouble was they never went to School,
Or never got enough to make it tell.
Straight Poverty made each one seem a Fool,
And sort of paralyzed his Brains as well.

Of course, you take it on the other hand,
The very Ignorance that made them fail,
The very things they didn't understand
Combined, perhaps, to keep them out of
jail.

I'd like to add my Epitaph to theirs,
Just as Gray did with his, to glory 'em,
And promise, when I settle my affairs,
To join them in their Crematorium.

INTUITION

JAMES HENRY LEUBA

ARCHIMEDES was taking a bath. All at once he had a bright idea — a sudden flash of intuition. Without stopping to pick up his clothes, he leaped up and ran through the streets of Syracuse shouting, "Eureka! I have found it!" Archimedes had discovered the law of floating bodies which bears his name to this day. But how explain his intuition? Was it a revelation from some god? Or did it well up from his own subconscious mind? Professor Leuba offers a convincing, commonsense solution.

subconscious activity. It is, of course, pleasant to believe in the possession of a wonderful source of knowledge, and intuitive power is therefore the boast of many — particularly of those who have little inclination or ability to get the truth by painstaking observation and judicious conclusions. Their claim is a lazy way, and perhaps a not very honest way, of gratifying a natural desire for self-esteem. Thus, intuition has come to be set up as a compensation for stupidity. When, mistakenly no doubt, women are accused of lacking in reasoning ability, they counter by claiming a superior power of intuition.

Of the several classes of experience called intuition, two at least really do express a knowledge not acquired by the person possessing it: instincts and axiomatic propositions. Animals and — in a smaller number of instances — man know instinctively how to do certain life-preserving things without having had to take any trouble learning them. They have inherited the ability to act in these ways. Axiomatic propositions are intuitions of an altogether different sort. The dictionary defines them as propositions known to be true as soon as thought of. Such propositions are found at the root of logical thinking. The statement, "Two things each equal to a third are equal to each other," is immediately acknowledged as true, says the mathematician. It needs no demonstration; it is self-evident.

We shall be concerned neither with the problem of instinct nor with that of self-evident propositions. These sorts of intuitions

WHenever we find ourselves in possession of some striking knowledge without knowing how we have come by it, we are tempted to call it an intuition or an inspiration or even a revelation. To say that an item of knowledge is an intuition is for most of us nowadays equivalent to saying either that it comes from above — i. e., from some superhuman Being — or that it wells up from below — i. e., from a