

SCHOPENHAUER'S SON

Life, alas, is an intricate illusion. God is a pack of lies under which man staggers to his grave. And man—ah, here we have Nature's only mountebank; here we have Nature's humorous and ingenuous experiment in tragedy. And thought—ah, the tissue-paper chimera that seeks forever to devour life.

It is the cult of the pessimist, the gentle malice of disillusion. And, like all other cults, it sustains its advocates. Thus, the city has no more debonairly-mannered, smiling-souled citizen to offer than Clarence Darrow. For years and years Mr. Darrow has been gently disproving the intelligence of man, the importance of life, and the necessity of thought. For years and years Mr. Darrow has been whimsically deflating the illusions in which man hides from the purposelessness of the cosmos. God, heaven, politics, philosophies, ambition, love—Mr. Darrow has deflated them time and again—charging from \$1 to \$2 a seat for the spectacle.

This is nothing against Mr. Darrow—that he charges money sometimes. For years and years Mr. Darrow has been enlivening the intellectual purlieus of the city with his debates. And Mr. Darrow's debates have been always worth \$1, \$2 and even \$5—for various reasons. It is worth at least \$5 to observe at first hand what a cheering and invigorating effect Mr. Darrow's pessimism has had upon Mr. Darrow after these innumerable years.

The story concerns itself with a funeral Mr. Darrow attended a few years ago. It is at funerals that Mr. Darrow's gentle malice finds itself crowned by circumstances. For to this son of Schopenhauer death is a weary smile that is proof of all his arguments.

This time, however, Mr Darrow was curiously stirred. For there lay dead in the coffin a man for whom he had held a deep affection. It was Prof. George B. Foster, the brilliant theologian of the University of Chicago.

During his life Prof. Foster had been a man worthy the steel of Mr. Darrow. Not that Prof. Foster was an unscrupulous optimist. He was merely an intellectual whose congenital tendencies were idealistic, just as Mr. Darrow's psychic and subconscious tendencies were anti-idealistic. And apart from this divergence of congenital tendencies Mr. Darrow and Prof. Foster had a great deal in common. They both loved argument. They both doted upon seizing an idea and energizing it with their egoism. They were, in short, ideal debaters.

Whenever Mr. Darrow and Prof. Foster debated on one of the major issues of reason a flutter made itself felt in the city—even among citizens indifferent to debate. Indifferent or not, one felt that a debate between Prof. Foster and Mr. Darrow was a matter of considerable importance. Things might be disproved or proved on such an occasion.

They were to have debated on "Is There Immortality?" when Prof. Foster's death canceled the engagement. This was one of the favorite differences of opinion between the two friends. Mr. Darrow, of course, bent all his efforts on disproving immortality. Prof. Foster bent all his on proving it. Considerable excitement had been stirred by the coming debate. The death of the brilliant theologian put an end to it.

Instead of the debate there was a funeral. Thousands of people who had admired the intellect, kindness and humanitarianism of Prof. Foster came to the memorial services held in one of the large theaters of the loop. Mr. Darrow came, his head bowed and grief in his heart. Friends like George Foster never replace themselves. Death becomes not a triumphant argument—an aloof clincher for pessimism, but a robber.

There were speakers who talked of the dead man's virtues, his love for people, scholarship and the arts, his keen brain and his genius. Mr. Darrow sat listening to the eulogy of his dead friend and tears filled his eyes. Poor George Foster—gone, in a coffin; to be buried out of sight in a few hours.

Then some one whispered to Mr. Darrow that a few words were expected of him.

It was Mr. Darrow's good-bye to his dear friend. He stood up and his loose figure and slyly malicious face wore an unaccustomed seriousness. The audience waited, but the facile Mr. Darrow was having difficulty locating his voice, his words. His eyes, blurred with tears, were still staring at the coffin. Finally Mr. Darrow began. His dear friend. Dead. So charming a man. So brilliant a mind. Dead now. He had been so amazingly alive it seemed incredible that he should be dead. It was as if part of himself—Mr. Darrow—lay in the coffin.

The eulogy continued, quiet, sincere, stirring tears in the audience and filling their hearts with a realization of the grief that lay in Mr. Darrow's heart. Then slowly the phrases grew clearer.

"We were old friends and we fought many battles of the mind," said Mr. Darrow. "And we were to have debated once more next week—on 'Is There Immortality?' It was his contention," whispered Mr. Darrow, "that there is immortality. He is gone now, but he speaks more eloquently on the subject than if he were still with us. There lies all that remains of my friend George Burman Foster—in a coffin. And had he lived he would have argued with me on the subject. But he is dead and he knows now, in the negation and darkness of death, that he was wrong—that there is no immortality—"

Mr. Darrow paused. He had after many years won his argument with Prof. Foster. But the victory brought no elation. Mr. Darrow's eyes filled again and he turned to walk from the stage. But before he left the mourners sitting around him heard him murmur:

"I wish poor George Foster had been right. There would be nobody happier than I to realize that his soul had survived—that there was still a George Foster. But—if he could come

back now after the proof of death he would admit—yes, admit that—that there is no immortality.”

And Mr. Darrow with his head bowed yielded the platform to his inarticulate and vanquished friend and debater.

