

THE BUM AND THE PHILANTHROPIST

(An Editorial Fable by Berton Braley.)

BEFORE the heavenly gate they stood, and one was portly and smug and "good;" the other was scarred by an evil life, warped by destiny, marred by strife. A crooked, unlovely soul was he. St. Peter said, "Brother, who might you be?"

The warped one answered him, "Bill the Bum, wot lived his life in a rotten slum; I fought an' gambled an' stole an' swore, 'cause I thought that's all I was livin' for. I wasn't no good, I know; but, say—I played the game I was taught to play. I done the way I was learned to do, so dat's me spiel—an' it's up to you!"

St. Peter juggled his golden key and said to the other, "Who might YOU be?" The smug soul lifted his head in pride. "I'm a public character," he cried. "I'm Jonas Gouger, Philanthropist, I'm found at the head of every list of givers to tender charity, and heaven's the proper place for me."

St. Peter nodded his august head. "I'll add to that tale a bit," he said. "You're one of the men who ran a mill where children toiled through the weary day. You're one of the sort who used to kill the children's joy and their chance to play. Oh, you KNEW better, but 'gold was good,' though wrung from boyhood and maidenhood; you took it gladly for all its shame, knowing EXACTLY whence it came.

"Now, Bill don't rank with the seraphim, yet I'd take a sort of a chance on him; but what excuse has a man like YOU? Bill learned no better, but you—you KNEW! So I'll try Bill out for a little spell; but you, smug faker, can go to Hell."

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