



The Life And Adventures of
Young Sam Smiles

by
The Brotherly Order
of the New Thought,

or
“The Smilers”



A STORY FOR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN,
CONTAINING A MORAL, AND CERTAIN
PRINCIPLES FOR SPIRITUAL
IMPROVEMENT



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The Life and Adventures of Young Sam Smiles

I: Increase

NOT SO MANY years ago, and not so many miles away from wherever you are, there was a little town by the name of Increase.

Increase was a little town of white houses and pink-cheeked children, in the great rolling green and brown and gold of the Tri-City plains. It had a Mayor, who lived in a tall house with flags on the top, and it had a good wide road running through it, and it bustled on market-day.

It had two hundred simple and decent and upstanding citizens, one of whom was a young man by the name of Sam Smiles. He was tall, and strong, and sandy-haired, and handsome, and humble, and well-liked, and when he finally left Increase – when he was not much older than you are now – the whole town came to see him off.



His master said, “I release you from your apprenticeship. You’ll be a fine carpenter, wherever you go.”

The Mayor shook his hand and said, “Good luck, boy, good luck.”

The town doctor said, “And good health.” We know that it’s Right Thinking, not doctors, that cures the sick, but the people of Increase couldn’t know that yet, so don’t judge them too harshly.

“I am off to Jasper City,” Sam explained. “My apprenticeship is over, I have saved the princely sum of five dollars. I’m going after my darling Alma, who left town last year for the big city, to work in the theatre, and I’m going to ask her to marry me.”

The young women of Increase wept into their handkerchiefs.

The Floating World

! The Bluffs, Jasper City

Dear Sam, What a thrill it was to receive your letter! I have missed you and all back home so terribly. Reading your letter I thought I heard your voice at my shoulder, as if you had come to join me here in the city. It is as big and as noisy and as strange a place as you imagined best.

When Sam Smiles set out to do something, he did it. Without another word – stopping only to whistle for his faithful dog – he set off down the road.

II: Struggle Through Adversity

THERE WAS ANOTHER little town, just a few days down the road from Increase, by the name of Incubus. Incubus wasn’t nearly so nice a town as Increase. It was ramshackle, and dirty, and it was poor. It was poor because no trader with an ounce of experience would ever stop there, because he’d know he’d be cheated. And though it was poor, it was lazy: the town kept a dozen Hill-Folk in chains, and made those poor wretches do all their work.

Incubus had a Hotel. It had red lanterns in the window, and when Sam and his dog came walking past it was evening, and getting cold, and neither Sam nor his dog knew better than to just walk on in.

All around the bar-room there were the stuffed heads of various beasts, some not known to back-east science. The bartender had one eye. He said, "Whiskey?"

Sam shook his head. "Water."

"Beer? Coffee?"

"Water."

"Please yourself."

There were so many young women of bad character that Sam didn't know where to sit, or even where to look.

A soft and pleasant voice said, "Over here, kid."

He sat down at a table across from a smiling man, who wore a long coat, and a finely-made hat, and long handsome mustaches. Cards were spread out on the table, and liquor.

"I don't gamble," Sam said.

"A friendly game, to pass the time. You're bound for Jasper, I'll bet. I'm headed west. We'll play and you can tell me about where you're from and I'll tell you about where you're going. No harm in that."



Well: no doubt you're a young man (or lady) of the world. If we tell you that that roguish gentleman, under his coat, carried an extraordinarily ornate silver revolver, and that he smelled slightly of gunpowder, and that Sam's dog, outside the window, was barking like crazy, you'll guess what Power rode him. And so you'll guess how come young Sam couldn't say no to him, and how come Sam was in no time entirely bamboozled by him.



It took Sam ten years to save five dollars. It took him an hour to gamble it away.

“Guess you’ll be going back home, then.”

Sam shook his head and made himself smile. “A little bad luck won’t make me give up.”

“Suit yourself.” The gentleman gave him a wicked grin. “You can tell ’em it was Handsome Jack Slater who took your money. Don’t get that name wrong, now.”

That night Sam slept under the stars.

III: Good Manners To All

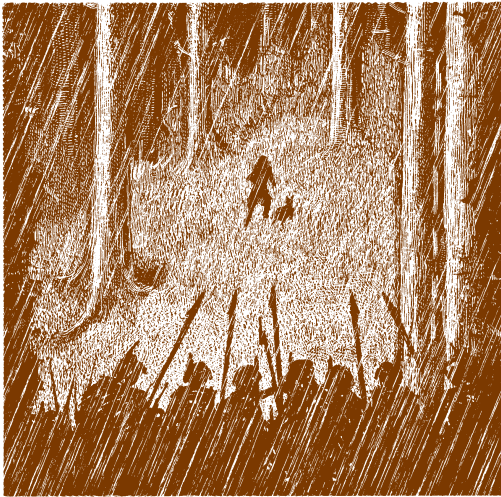
THE ROAD WOUND high into the hills, and it got cold, and before too many days had passed Sam was near-freezing, because he’d sold his coat for food. And he ate that food, and then he was hungry too. So was the poor dog.

Wind drove rain and snow hard along the hilltops and Sam leaned into it and pressed on and did his honest best to smile.

A spear fell at his feet, quivering in the dirt.

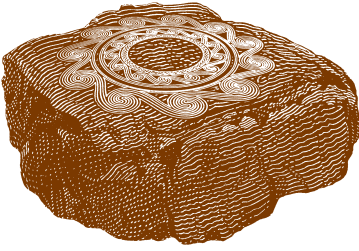
“Well,” Sam said to the dog, “I guess that’s a kind of a sign.”

Out of the rain and whistling winds stepped six long lean figures, red-eyed



and bone-white and black-maned. Three before him, and three behind him, and who knew how many others watching from the hills.

Maybe you’ve met chained Folk, working the fields wherever you live, or making roads. Likely you’ve never met the wild and free Folk, up in the hills they call home. They are not the same.



The rain ceased like a curtain being pulled back, and all around was red mud and the strange carved stones of the Folk, and there was no sign anywhere of the road. The dog jumped up and barked. Sam spoke softly, to calm it.

“I apologize, gentlemen, if I’ve intruded.”

The tallest of the Folk stepped forward.

“I’d say we could share a meal, if I had anything to offer.”

Sam couldn’t help but shiver, and not just from the cold, but he looked into those burning red eyes and he smiled.

The tip of a spear drew a design in the mud – a pattern that spiraled and curved like some ancient shell preserved in stone.

Not knowing how else to answer, but knowing it would be bad manners to say nothing, Sam knelt, and with his finger he drew a picture of Alma in the mud.

If you ever do meet the wild Hill-Folk – or, as some call them, the First Folk – they may be kind to you, or they may be cruel, and you may never know why, just like with everything else in the world. But if you treat them with respect, just as you must treat everyone with respect, they may repay you; and if they don’t, at least it will have been good for your own character.

The dog lunged. A spear took it in the throat. Then the rains came back and the Folk were gone, and as Sam looked for a place to bury the dog he stumbled across the road again, which was maybe as the Folk had planned it.

IV: Honesty Is The Best Policy

DOWN ON THE OTHER side of the hills there was a broad plain, and not too long ago it had been a battlefield – in those days there was a good deal of fighting in that country.

We’ll not dwell on the things Sam saw. We’ll think of better and more edifying things, like how brave it was just to keep putting one foot in front of the other, when he was so hungry and so far from home and so far still from Jasper City.

Evening fell and the plains turned from red to gray to black. What tumbled across them in the cool night breeze wasn't weeds but wire, coiled and barbed, like the Line leaves behind wherever it goes to war, or wherever it seizes and encloses land. Sam climbed down into an old trench and out the other side and then there was a bright light in his face and the clatter of machine-guns being readied and before him loomed a checkpoint of the Line: a black tower of guns and wire.



They took him to a basement, and tied him to a chair, and shone an electric light in his face. Most likely you've never seen an electric light. Imagine staring at the sun, but it's cold and dead.

Voices barked at him. "Are you a spy?"

"No, sir."

"Are you saying we're lying?"

"No, sir."

"Then you are a spy. Are you working for the Gun?"

"No, sir! Certainly not."

"So you are a spy, but not for the Gun? Who for?"

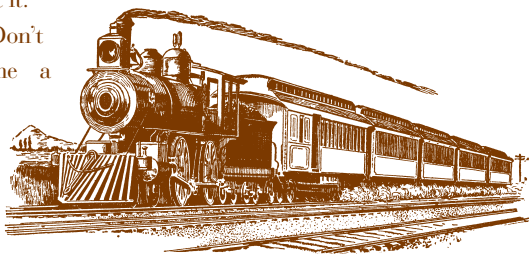
And so on. They kept telling him he was lying, but he wasn't. And so in the end they had no choice but to let him go.

On the way out, 'round back of the checkpoint, there was a concrete wall. A man was chained against it.

"Kid! Hey, kid. Don't suppose you'd give me a cigarette?"

"I don't smoke."

"No. No, I bet you don't." The man slumped, so that his



chains went clank, and he sighed. "In five minutes the firing squad's going to come back. They're just loading up their rifles now. Then I'll be dead, and no one will remember my name. And not even a last cigarette."

"I remember your name. It's Handsome Jack Slater. You took my money, but it was my own fault, really, and I forgive you."

A smile crossed Handsome Jack's face, which was too bloodied now to warrant that name.

"Why are they going to shoot you, Jack?"

"You know what I am, kid."

"I guess so." Sam nodded. "Maybe you deserve it. But I'm sorry anyway. I guess you went wrong somewhere, from lack of character, and it could have happened to any young man who isn't careful."

Jack beckoned Sam over, and whispered in his ear.

Precisely five minutes later the firing squad shot Jack dead – punctuality being one of the Linesmen's few virtues.

V: Friends Are Worth More Than Gold

SAM RODE INTO Jasper City in the finest of coaches. When he stepped out onto Commerce Square he wore a dandy suit and a very handsome necktie and a top hat that gleamed in the sun, and a dozen grubby street urchins came running to carry his bags. He stayed in a very fine hotel.

Handsome Jack's last whispered words had been words of repentance. And because Sam had been kind to him, and honest, he'd also whispered the location of his hoard of ill-gotten goods, which even after Sam had mailed back whatever could be identified to its owners amounted to more than \$4,000, which was even more back then than it is today.

He went to Swing Street – where the theatres are – looking for the Floating World – where Alma was, at least according to her letters. He asked, and people grinned nastily, though some of them at least were helpful enough to point up to the glowing red house up on the cliffs overlooking the city.

At once his heart sank. He took off his top hat, and loosened his handsome necktie, and he felt like an imposter in his dandy suit, a mere boy again.

He knew what he'd find up at the Floating World. He went anyway.

If you don't know what it means to be a fallen woman, we won't be the ones to tell you. Suffice it to say that a young lady or a young fellow in the big world can take many wrong turns if they don't exercise their moral character every day, and more than one of those wrong turns leads to such notorious dens of vice and iniquity as Jasper's Floating World.



He left her weeping on a velvet loveseat in a red-draped room, and walked out, weeping himself, and went down into the city, and for the first time in his life he drank. He bought whiskey and wine for a hundred false friends in a dozen hotel bars. Not one of them truly cared for him, and worse, he – having been such a fool – no longer cared for himself. And so late in the evening he found himself on the bridge over the River Jass, staring over the edge, contemplating the long drop into slow black waters.

There was a hand on his shoulder, and a voice said, “It’s a hard world, isn’t it? Even for a rich man like yourself.”

Sam said, “I’m not rich.”

“I used to be,” said the other fellow, who Sam couldn’t help suspecting was also about to jump. “But I was robbed of it, by a son-of-a-you-know-what name of Handsome Jack. So now here I am.”

“Money isn’t everything,” Sam said. “It doesn’t make you happy. Believe me.” It suddenly struck him that he’d been cruel to Alma, for whom it wasn’t too late, because it wasn’t ever too late for anyone, even Handsome Jack. “Or good,” he added.

“What you need,” Sam said, “Isn’t money.”

Another fellow approached the edge. Sam couldn’t tell what his particular sorrow was, but there was something – you could see it on his face. Sam called him over.

“There should be a place to meet,” Sam said. “So no one ever has to be alone, or lost, or fallen. A place to talk and work on being good people.”



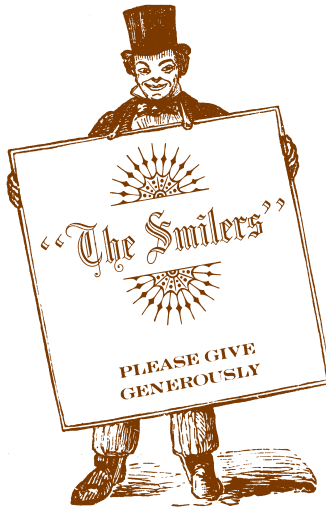


His two friends from the bridge nodded, and Alma nodded, and there were half-a-dozen other men and women there, all sitting in a big circle, and they nodded, too, and smiled.

“There should be a meeting-circle in every city,” he said. And inside of six months he’d spent every cent of his \$4,000 on good works and the building of meeting-halls. Over the coming years it would return to him sevenfold, as it always does. For wealth comes easy to men of good character, because the world is not so wicked as it seems; and earning wealth is good, but giving it away is better.

“We’ll call ourselves the Brothers of the New Thought,” Sam Smiles said. But most folks were already calling us the Smilers.

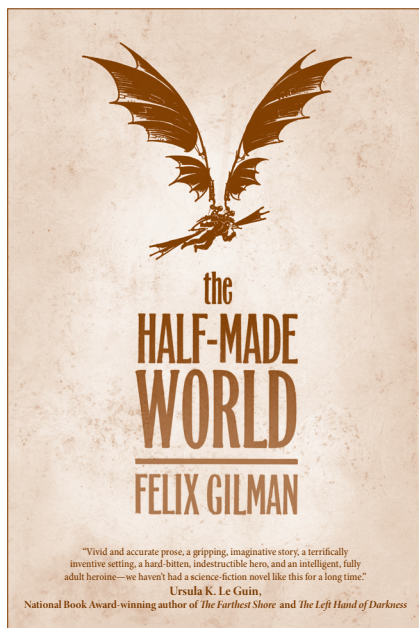
THE END



GENTLE READER, if you have learned something from this story, please be aware that printing is not cheap, and that generosity is a sign of good character, and that every dollar you give away shall be repaid to you sevenfold. Just as it was to young Sam Smiles! Please consider making a suitably generous donation to your local chapter of the New Thought, or Smilers, whether you are in bustling Jasper City, or broad-shouldered Keaton, or down in the fine old fiefdoms of the Deltas, or up in the windy Opals, or even out in the very farthest wildest West.

If you can't find a chapter in your town, why not start one?

Or perhaps you might consider purchasing *The Half-Made World*, coming soon from Tor Books, in far-off New York City – in which you may learn more regarding the Smilers, and the Agents of the Gun, and the Line, and the First Folk, and many other interesting things – though sadly, the book has no moral.



tor-forge.com/thehalfmadeworld