

FRANK'S MORAL ENERGY

'Can He Write His Own Speeches?' a Personal Acquaintance Asks.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

In the light of later developments in the Frank case and in part answer to two questions recently put:

1. Why is so much publicity being given to this case in New York?
2. Is Leo Frank capable of writing the speeches attributed to him, or were they prepared by his counsel?

I am asking you to reprint a letter published in THE TIMES of March 14, 1914:

I first met Leo Frank in a children's library of which I was in charge from 1896 to 1906. He was then attending a public school in the neighborhood of the library and of his home. Between the ages of 12 and 14 years he read a finer selection of books than any boy who frequented the library. His delight in the great heroic characters of literature and history remains one of the vivid memories of years which marked the beginnings of special library work for children.

The boy read with rare appreciation and intelligence, and like hundreds of other boys, was in the habit of talking with me familiarly about his reading and his future hopes and plans. In February, 1898, an exhibit of books and portraits relating to heroic characters was held in the children's room. The boys and girls were unusually interested in this exhibit and the subject of heroism and wrote papers about their favorite characters and their ideas of heroism. Leo Frank, then a boy of 14, wrote the following:

"In ancient times a brave man only was a hero, but now in modern times a hero has to be brave and good morally and virtually."

This sentiment characterizes the habitual mental attitude of the boy I knew during eight years of his life, from the age of 12 to 20 years. On entering high school, Leo Frank was transferred to the adult department of the library. Throughout his high school course, however, and during his college years, he continued to visit the children's room and to take a vital interest in its concerns and progress, and to share his growing experience with books and life.

The children's library does not segregate boys and girls. It approximates the life of a large family in recognizing no age limit and in its freedom of personal contact. In its insistence upon equal social rights and privileges it affords rare opportunities for the study of democratic relationships.

In this environment and as a resident of the neighborhood in which he lived, I watched Leo Frank grow from boyhood into manhood. I knew his mother and sister, also, during this period of eight years, and I know that the aspiration to be fine pervaded his daily life.

ANNIE CARROLL MOORE.

This letter was written after reading Leo M. Frank's statement when resented to death on March 7. His words, "I say that moral death is my terror," recalled other words of his spoken as a boy of 14. I was able to find them in his own definition of heroism. In so doing and in verifying his signature on the library register many memories were stirred, and I became morally certain that the boy I had known during eight of the most impressionable years of his life was father to the man sentenced to be hanged. It seemed incredible. I have been asking myself at intervals ever since: What is education about, any way, if there is to be no deep and continued interest in those who have passed into the life of the State and the nation?

Leo Frank is the first Jewish boy I ever knew, for I grew up in a Maine village and was partly educated in two of the old New England academies. During eighteen years of library work for children in New York I have come to know personally and through others the children of many races and religions, and I have grown to estimate more clearly and to value increasingly the fine mental, moral, and spiritual qualities to be found differently expressed in each race, religion, and individual.

There are two boys who stand out from all the others I have ever known, who remain with me in persistent memory as to their characters and their tastes in reading. One, a little Scotch boy, who died fifteen years ago at the age of 9. The other, Leo Frank.

Both were singularly gifted in their ability to express their thoughts concerning living persons and books. Both were also normal, healthy, happy boys, with the right kind of families and friends.

As the daughter of a lawyer who, for more than half a century, was deeply concerned with educational, moral, and social problems in their relation to the laws and in their still more vital relation to the life of the State, I know that the effect of the process of law is strengthened whenever the moral aspects of a case based upon circumstantial evidence are clearly set forth and long dwelt upon by the community and the country at large.

This is precisely what THE NEW YORK TIMES has tried to do with the Frank case, it seems to me, and as an unsolicited contributor moved solely by a strong human interest in the fate of a man whose boyhood has been an active influence in my understanding of boys of many races, I desire to express my appreciation of its efforts and those of other newspapers in setting this case before the people of the State in which Leo Frank was educated and beyond its boundaries.

Is Leo Frank capable of writing the speeches attributed to him?

That the speeches more than anything else reflect the personality and expressive style of the boy is my own opinion confirmed by his teachers of history and English and by others familiar with his philosophic turn of mind and his gift of self-expression. No one except Leo Frank could possibly have composed them. That he should have been capable of writing the last one under such circumstances after an imprisonment of eighteen months and in the face of death is a wonderful tribute to the sustaining power of the English language in the mind of a person who has something to say.

What has the process of education to do with this or with any criminal case? Very much more than we have been accustomed to think when the case in question challenges respect for the entire legal process. What then shall we do?

Shall we retire to our laboratories for educational research concerning the making of American citizens while the law takes its course with those we have already made? or Shall we declare the faith that is in us concerning persons whose characters are known to us?

ANNIE CARROLL MOORE.
New York, Dec. 18, 1914.