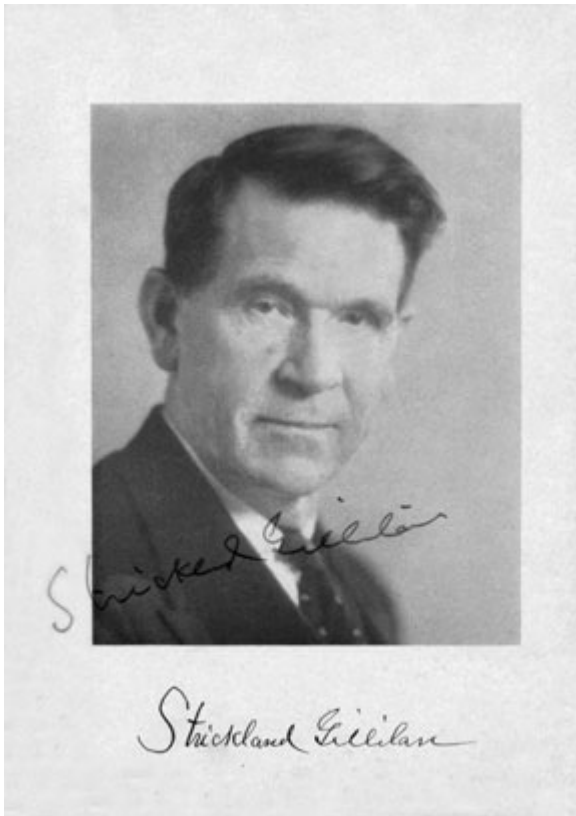


KATE'S NOTES: This profile of the life and works of Strickland Gillilan is a compilation from posts to the Gilliland Trails discussion forum.

Rediscovering Strickland Gillilan

by Kate Maynard



Strickland Gillilan, American journalist, author, poet, humorist and speaker, was an Ohio-born descendant of a Nathan Gilliland line which can be traced from Augusta County, Virginia back to Ireland and Scotland. (One of Nathan's sons -- James, Strickland's ggggrandfather -- dropped the "d" from the surname, not doubt to play tricks with generations of descendants, though you will find the family name alternately as Gilliland or Gillilan among the records.)

Gillilan's writings -- which ranged from the the satirical to the sublime -- made him one of the more popular authors and speakers of his time. After three years at Ohio University in Athens, Strickland started his journalism career at the Jackson, Ohio *Herald*, but this was only the beginning of a lifelong journey as an editor and writer. His career followed a path from rural Ohio across the country to

Los Angeles and finally back to Warrenton, Virginia, from where he contributed to the Washington Post. Yet it was not as an editor or even a journalist for which Strickland will be remembered.

Although I cannot verify the exact date of Strickland's first publication of a poem or short story, he had been a lyceum lecturer and after dinner speaker since 1899. Following three years on staff at the *Baltimore American* (1902-1905) he became a free-lance writer and by 1908 his poems were being published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, a magazine which would feature many of Strickland's poems in the years following.

One could debate just which of Strickland's writings most characterized his body of work but one poem in particular made its mark in the annals of literary history as the world's shortest poem. Titled "*Lines on the Antiquity of Microbes*", it is also known by it's humorous and minimalist alternate title, "*Fleas*":

LINES ON THE ANTIQUITY OF MICROBES ("FLEAS")

Adam
Had 'em.

Such flashes of Gillilan's razor-sharp wit were in contrast to the more sentimental poems which made him a favorite to his reading public, especially those which reflected the great respect and love he held for his own mother and exhibited by these two examples:

THE CRY OF THE ALIEN

I'm an alien — I'm an alien to the faith my mother taught me;
I'm an alien to the God that heard my mother when she cried;
I'm a stranger to the comfort that my "Now I lay me" brought me,
To the Everlasting Arms that held my father when he died.

I was born where God was closer to His children and addressed them
With the tenderest of messages through bird and tree and bloom;
I was bred where people stretched upon the velvet sod to rest them,
Where the twilight's benediction robbed the coming night of gloom.
But I've built a wall between me and the simple life behind me;
I have coined my heart and paid it for the fickle world's applause;
Yet I think His hand would fumble through the voiceless dark and find me
If I only had the faith that made my mother what she was.

When the great world came and called me I deserted all to follow;
Never knowing, in my dazedness, I had slipped my hand from His —
Never noting, in my blindness, that the bauble fame was hollow,
That the gold of wealth was tinsel, as I since have learned it is —
No, I've spent a life-time seeking things I've spurned when I have found them;
I have fought and been rewarded in many a petty cause;
But I'd trade them all — fame, fortune and the pleasures that surround them,
For a little of the faith that made my mother what she was.

The second example is one of Gillilan's most oft-quoted:

THE READING MOTHER

You may have tangible wealth untold:
Caskets of jewels and coffered gold.
Richer than I you can never be—
I had a mother who read to me.

But perhaps the most popular and most quoted of all Strickland's verses is the humorous "Finnigin to Flannigan", written in Irish brogue and ending with the famous, "Off agin, on agin, Gone agin.-Finnigin."

FINNIGIN TO FLANNIGAN

Superintindint waz Flannigan;
Boss av the siction wuz Finnigin;
Whiniver the kyars got offen th' track
An' muddled up things t' th' divil an' back
Finnigin writ it to Flannigan,
Aftther the wrick wuz all on agin:
That is, this Finnigin
Repoorted to Flannigan.

Whin Finnigin furst writ to Flannigan,
He writ tin pages-did Finnigin.
An' he tould jist how the smash occurred;
Full minny a tajus, blunderin' wurrd
Did Finnigin write to Flannigan
Aftther the cars had gone on agin.
That's th' way Finnigin
Repoorted to Flannigan.

Now Flannigan knowed more than Finnigin-
He'd more idjucation-had Flannigan;
An' it wore 'm clane an' complatly out
To tell what Finnigin writ about
In his writin' to Muster Flannigan.
So he writed this here: Masther Finnigin:
Don't do sich a sin agin;
Make 'em brief, Finnigin!"

Whin Finnigin got this from Flannigan,
He blushed rosy rid-did Finnigin;
An' he said: "I'll gamble a whole month's pa-ay
That it'll be minny an' minny a da-ay
Befoore Sup'rintindint-that's Flannigan-
Gits a whack at that very same sin agin.
From Finnigin to Flannigan
Repoorts won't be so long agin."

Wan da-ay on the siction av Finnigin,

On the road sup'rintended be Flannigan,
A rail give way on a bit av a curve
An' some kyars went off as they made th' shwerrve.
"there's nobody hurted," sez Finnigin,
"But repoorts must be made to Flannigan,"
An' he winked at Mike Corrigan,
As married a Finnigin.

He wuz shantyin' thin, wuz Finnigin,
As minny a railroader's been agin,
An' his shmoky ol' lamp wuz burnin' bright
In Finnigin's shanty all that night-
Bilin' down his repoort was Finnigin
An' he writed this here: "Muster Flannigan:
Off agin, on agin,
Gone agin.-Finnigin."

In addition to his many poems, Strickland Gillilan also penned short stories, wrote several songs (the most famous of which, the wickedly sharp *The Poison Squad*, is reputed to have led to the passage of the Food and Drug Act of 1906) as well as a number of novels that are still available on today's market. In a supplemental post I will provide a bibliography of his published works and some vendors from whom his books may be purchased.

Who might have guessed this small town lad of humble beginnings would become one of the most beloved poets and humorists of his day? If Strickland Gillilan gave any early indication of his future success it was certainly not apparent to his tutors, as this anecdote from *Time Magazine* will attest....

Prophecy

Monday, Oct. 23, 1939

Strickland Gillilan of Washington, D. C. is a veteran newspaperman, onetime president of American Press Humorists, best known as author of the line: "Off agin, on agin, gone agin, Finnigin."

Big, booming Dr. Cassius M. Shepard of Columbus, Ohio is an outstanding orthopedic surgeon, a topflight amateur photographer and gardener. Trim Arthur C. Johnson is editor and associate publisher of the Columbus Dispatch, president of the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society, a trustee of Ohio University.

Last week these three men had a simultaneous and peculiar attack of nostalgia when they learned that old Dr. Charles William Super, onetime president of Ohio University, had died in Athens, Ohio at 97. They had good reason to remember Dr. Super. When they were undergraduates together at Ohio University more than 40

years ago, President Super rose solemnly before the whole college one day, pointed a solemn finger at them and cried: "Gillilan, Shepard and Johnson—I haven't the slightest doubt that all three of you will end up in a penitentiary."

Well, he didn't end up in the penitentiary, though Gillilan's self-deprecating retelling of this dire bit of prophecy no doubt made him a penny or two on the speaker circuit for years to come.

I hope those of you unfamiliar with Strickland's work (such as myself until recently) will check out a selection of his work and share your favorites and/or opinions. (See the bibliography in the next post.) In the meanwhile, here's some basic biographical and genealogical information on Strickland Gillilan.

Strickland Gillilan's entry from "*Who was Who in America*":

GILLILAN, STRICKLAND, journalist; b. Jackson, Ohio; s. Lewis and Mary Alice (Clare) G.; attended Ohio U. to junior yr.; m. Alice Hendricks, Mar. 27, 1894 (died 1901); 1 dau., Marjorie Hendricks Ellensen; m. 2d, Harriet Nettleton, June 9, 1903; children – Harriet Nettleton Buchheister, Burdette Strickland. Began newspaper work on Jackson Herald, 1887; on Athens (O.)Herald, 1888-1892; city editor Daily Telegram, Richmond, Ind., 1892-1895; city editor Richmond Daily Palladium, 1895-1901; reporter and editor Marion (Ind.) Daily Tribune, 1901; on staff of Los Angeles Herald, 1901-1902, Baltimore American, 1902-1905; free-lance writer, 1906--; also lyceum lecturer and after dinner speaker, 1899--; broadcaster. Well known writer of humorous stories and verse. Past pres. Am. Press Humorists. Author: Including Finnigin, 1910 (including the popular line, "Off agin on agin, gone agin, Finnigin"); Including You and Me, 1917; Sunshine and Awkwardness, 1918; A Sample Case of Humor, 1919; Laugh It Off, 1924; Danny and Fanny, 1928; Gillilan, Finnigin & Co., 1940. Address: care B. S. Gillilan, Arlington, Va. Died Apr. 25, 1954.

Strickland's obituary, from *Time Magazine*, April 1954:

Died. **Strickland Gillilan**, 84, oldtime Midwest newspaperman turned humorist, best known for his 1910 Irish-dialect railroader poem, Finnigin to Flannigan ("Off agin, on agin, gone agin.—Finnigin"); in Warrenton, Va.

Vitals and Family Tree (corrections/additions welcome) Please note that because some records of these individuals may list either spelling of the surname -- i.e., with or without the "d" -- when researching this line it is always best to cross reference your sources.

Strickland Gillilan

Born 21 Sep 1869, Scioto Twp, Jackson Co, OH

Died April 25, 1954, Warrenton, Virginia

Spouse: Alice Hendricks, m. March 27, 1894 (died 1901)
Children: 1 daughter, Marjorie Hendricks Ellenson
Spouse: Harriet Nettleton, m. June 09, 1903
Children: Harriet Nettleton Bucheister
Burdette Strickland

Pedigree:

Lewis Gillilan

Born 6 Apr 1830, OH
Died 25 Mar 1892
Liberty Twp, Jackson Co, OH
Burial: Fairmount Cem, Lick Twp, Jackson Co, OH
Spouse: Mary Alice Claar
Marriage: 15 May 1856, Jackson Co, OH

Jesse Gillilan

Born 19 Dec 1802
Greenbrier Co, WV
Died 5 May 1864, Jackson Co, OH
Burial: Emory Cem, Madison Twp, Jackson Co, OH
Spouse: Mrs Jane Loucks
Marriage: 16 Oct 1851, Gallia Co, OH
Spouse: Elizabeth Coleman
Marriage: 11 Dec 1823, Gallia Co, OH

James Gillilan Jr

Born: abt 1780, Greenbrier Co, WV
Died: bef 1840, OH
Spouse: Margaret Boggs
Marriage: abt 1802, Greenbrier Co, WV

James Gillilan

Born: 16 Mar 1748/49, Augusta Co, VA
Died: 14 Feb 1844
Falling Springs, Greenbrier Co, WV
Spouse: Lydia Armstrong
Marriage: abt 1770, Greenbrier Co, WV
Spouse 2?: aft 1817, Jane Smith (b Ireland, 1746)

Nathan Gilliland

Born: abt 1720, Ireland
Died: 1790, Greenbrier Co, WV
Spouse: Jane Donahue
Marriage: abt 1745, Augusta Co, VA

Samuel Gilliland

Born: abt 1690, Scotland
Died: abt 1740, Bath, Virginia
Spouse: Elizabeth Smith

John Gilliland (or Guililand)

Born: abt 1665, Scotland, prob. Ayrshire
Died: Unknown
Spouse: Agnes Craig, of Saltcoats, Ayrshire, Scotland
Marriage: 1685, Scotland

Strickland Gillilan's Published Works

A. BOOKS available online:

1) *Sunshine and Awkwardness* (1918)
<http://www.archive.org/details/sunshineawkwardn00gilliala>

2) *Including You and Me* ([1916])
<http://www.archive.org/details/includingyoume00gilliala>

3) Google downloadable book
A Sample Case of Humor
<http://books.google.com/books?>

id=9P0hAAAAMAAJ&dq=gillilan+strickland&printsec=frontcover&source=web&ots=AoNvbJwuM4&sig=6KiyJfuFjjeox_5kmjVowLqIw6s

B. SOURCES for Strickland Gillilan books:

1) Amazon.com:
<http://www.amazon.com/s?ie=UTF8&keywords=Strickland%20Gillilan&index=books&page=1>

(Some volumes currently unavailable; check website for availability)

A Sample Case of Humor (unknown binding) 1919; (hardcover) 1920
Gillilan, Finnegan and Company: Waif Gems selected from the writings of Strickland Gillilan by Homer Rodeheaver (P'back) 1941
Including Finnigan: A Book of Gillilan Verse (Hardcover) 1914; (unknown binding) 1916
Gillilan, Finnigan and Co.; *Waif Gems* (unknown binding) 1941
Sunshine and Awkwardness (used and new)
Including You and Me (hardcover) 1916, 1917, 1921
Danny and Fanny and Spot, the Fox-Terrier Hero (hardcover, illustrated) 1928, 1939

Danny and Fanny: The Laurel Cliff Twins (unknown binding) 1928
Poetry Corner and Inspirational, Number 2 (p'back) 1977
Laugh it Off: Including Songs of Sanity (unknown binding) 1924
Folks Need a Lot of Loving (unknown binding) 1916
Finnigan to Flannigan: An Irish Dialect Story in Verse (unknown binding) 1898
McKinley and Roosevelt Campaign Glees and Rough Rider Jingles (unknown binding) 1900

2) Columbia Books ABAA/ILAB
<http://www.antiqubook.com/boox/cou/books18000.shtml>

Gillilan, Strickland. *Including You and Me*. Chicago: Forbes & Company, 1916. 191pp, sm 8vo, no jacket, green cloth, inscription on 1st free ep, else near fine with only minor shelf wear.

Gillilan, Strickland. *A Sample Case of Humor*. Chicago: Forbes and Company, 1919. 113pp, sm 8vo, yellow cloth, no jacket, bookplate on 1st ep, inscription on 1st free ep, some discoloration to eps, else VG+ with minor shelf wear.

3) Alabris
<http://www.alibris.com/search/books/author/Gillilan,%20Strickland>

Sunshine and Awkwardness (used and new)
Including Finnigin; a book of Gillilan verse (several copies)
A Sample Case of Humor (several copies)

4) Barnes & Noble
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/>

Sunshine and Awkwardness (p'back, new)

C. POEMS AND SHORT STORIES

The FictionMags Index offers the most complete index of Gilliland's published in magazines and periodicals.

<http://www.philsp.com/homeville/fmi/0start.htm#TOC>

Key to abbreviations: <http://www.philsp.com/homeville/fmi/abbrev.htm>

<http://www.philsp.com/homeville/fmi/s726.htm#BOT>

(Listed in this small section as Strickland GILLIAN)

GILLIAN, STRICKLAND (chron.)

* The Test, (pm) *Battle Stories* Oct 1927

Battle Stories #63 1933

* Trailing a Lecturer, (sl) *Woman's World* Apr, May 1914

- * Weeping Willie, (ss) People's Story Magazine May 25 1922
- * What I Know About Oxen, (ar) Farm Life Jun 1925

<http://www.philsp.com/homeville/fmi/s727.htm#TOP>

GILLILAN, STRICKLAND (W.) (1869-1954) (stories)

- Shadyside (pm) The Cavalier Jan 20 1912
- Local vs. Express (pm) The Cavalier Feb 24 1912
- The Uncomplaining One (pm) The Cavalier Mar 16 1912
- Compensation (pm) The Cavalier May 25 1912
- The Undercurrent (pm) The Cavalier Jun 29 1912
- The Reaction (pm) The Cavalier Jul 6 1912
- A Very Short One (pm) The Cavalier Jul 20 1912
- Bareheaded Girls (pm) The Cavalier Aug 3 1912
- A Comforting Thought (pm) The Cavalier Nov 16 1912
- An Anchorage (pm) The Cavalier Jan 18 1913
- To the Egotist (pm) The Cavalier Mar 15 1913
- Man and Man (pm) The Cavalier Jun 7 1913
- Dubs of Destiny (ss) The Cavalier Aug 9 1913
- A Reward of Atavism (ss) The Cavalier Aug 30 1913
- An Invoice (pm) National Magazine Jan 1914
- A Dixie Lullaby (pm) National Magazine Mar 1914
- He Knew My Father (pm) Munsey's Feb 1915
- My Eyes (pm) Munsey's Mar 1915
- His Title to Glory (pm) Munsey's Jul 1915
- Telling It to Your Wife (pm) Munsey's Apr 1916
- A Man's Way (pm) Munsey's Jul 1916
- Sex Obligation (pm) The Smart Set Jul 1916
- When He Goes to Play with the Boys (pm) Ladies Home Journal Sep 1916
- Among His Own People (pm) Munsey's Oct 1916
- The One I Hate (pm) Ladies Home Journal Jan 1917
- (Untitled) (pm) The Girl's Own Paper and Woman's Magazine Aug 1917
- As I go on my Way (pm) The Girl's Own Paper and Woman's Magazine Sep 1917
- 1917
- Ma's Day in Bed (pm) Munsey's Nov 1917
- The Helpful Physician (pm) Munsey's Dec 1917
- A Blue Chariot for Annalizer (ss) Railroad Man's Magazine Nov 16 1918
- Vicarious Palship (pm) The Saturday Evening Post Mar 29 1919
- Life's Crowning Mystery (pm) All-Story Weekly Nov 15 1919
- One Peaceful Sunset (ss) Live Stories Aug 23 1923
- The Youth (pm) Argosy All-Story Weekly Feb 14 1925
- The Alibi-er (pm) Argosy All-Story Weekly Nov 21 1925
- Perfection (ss) Argosy All-Story Weekly Jun 11 1927
- Dead Line (pm) The Saturday Evening Post Jul 9 1927
- The Nature Nut (pm) The Saturday Evening Post Aug 27 1927

- Another Bete Noire (pm) The Saturday Evening Post Jun 1 1929
- Good Riddance (pm) The Saturday Evening Post Jun 8 1929
- Down to Date (pm) The Saturday Evening Post Oct 5 1929
- The Speed-Trap Town (pm) The Saturday Evening Post May 17 1930
- The Short-Order Complex (pm) The Saturday Evening Post Sep 19 1931

GILLILAN, STRICKLAND W. (stories)

- Contact with the Soil (pm) The Saturday Evening Post Jan 11 1908

D. PAY-PER-VIEW ARCHIVES (Washington Post)

1927 »

WRC TO PRESENT TALK BY STRICKLAND GILLILAN - Pay-Per-View - Washington Post

1930 »

WASHINGTON WASH By STRICKLAND GILLILAN - Pay-Per-View - Washington Post

1954 »

Strickland Gillilan, 84, Dies; Humorist and Public Speaker - Pay-Per-View - Washington Post

E. Strictly for fun!

A handwriting analysis of Strickland Gillilan

<http://analyze-your-handwriting.com/handwriting-analysis-043/>