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The Radcliffe Magazine

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DECEMBER, 1916

No. 1

EDITORIAL STAFF

MARY LEE, 1917, *Editor-in-Chief*

RUTH BABSON, 1917

ESTHER C. LANMAN, 1918

JULIA REYNOLDS, 1917

RUTH J. MACK, 1918

RACHEL L. FIELD, 1918

HESTER BASSETT, 1918

F. RAMONA OSBURN, 1918

RUTH O. SAWTELLE, 1919

Business Manager

Subscription Manager

MARJORIE WILLIAMS, Special

DORIS D. CUMMINGS, 1917

Assistant Business Managers

Assistant Subscription Manager

DOROTHY SUMMERS, 1917

MARION F. CHUTTER, 1918

MARTHA TAYLOR, 1918

Alumnae Editor

ELSIE M. PAINE, 1904

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LABOR

The high gods have created
A spirit of foam and flame,
Made him with love and beauty,
And Man they have called his name.
Unto his life they have added
Triumph and pride and shame.

They lent unto him a vision,
Forest and sea and cave,
Starlight, sleep and hunting,
And labor to crown the brave.
Yea, for the winning of triumph,
His labor the high gods gave.

Man has taken their bounty
And fashioned a path to go;
He has taken fate and glory,
Such as the gods bestow—
Love, and desire, and failure,
And labor to drown his woe.

SUSANNE KNAUTH, 1920.

"The Changing Years," *The Radcliffe Magazine*, April 1917. Awarded first prize in short story competition.

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APRIL, 1917

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CAUSTIC-CLAFLIN CO., PRINTERS, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

"The Changing Years," by Susanne Knauth, 1920, was awarded the first prize in the short-story competition. Honorable mention was awarded "Annelle the Serpent," by Olive White, 1919.

THE CHANGING YEARS

O Child of Nature, born among the trees,
What have the early days revealed to you?
In silver dawn, a genius of the breeze
You walked your meadows, brushing through the dew—
And in your eyes was wonder, and the grass
Quivered and shone around your naked knees.

Child of the Morning, you who loved the sky,
Whose wingéd spirit rose among the stars,
Look, in your hands the flowers are dark and dry—
The solemn years have raised their prison-bars.
And a new soul is in you; but the child
Is vanished, like the autumn butterfly.

Bound to another world, with newer ties,
 You worship not the phantoms of the moon—
 Twilight and dawn have faded in your eyes,
 And the old knowledge is a wordless rune.
 (O Child, above your roof the stars are white,
 And from the valleys come the faery-cries!)

To other gods your silent heart must bow,
 And human hands will shape your destiny.
 Love, love! Thou layest thorns upon the brow
 That in its golden morning faced so free
 The changing winds of life! O World, O World,
 Thy visions and thy stars, where are they now?

Little Nicholas looked across a mountain-river; a little farther down stream were the houses and sheds of a village, and someone was slowly crossing the water in a cable-guided barge. Nicholas had tramped through the woods all alone since daybreak—he was eager for human faces and the sound of voices, so he strolled along the reed-set banks, and met the boat as it touched shore. Because he stood motionless, with deep, dark eyes fixed on the ferryman, the old father asked him, with good-natured interest,

"Who may you be, child? You don't belong here. Where did you come from?"

"I am Nicholas," answered the lad, still solemnly. "I have come from the mountains. In my village they are not good to me, so I went to live with the birds up yonder."

"Have you no father, then?"

"He is a bird, too."

"What! a bird? you mean a gypsy."

"No, not a gypsy—a bird. Father and mother are both dead, you know; and when people die, they open their wings and fly away to the mountains."

"Oh, I see; angels, then, are a kind of bird; they fly away, do they?"

"Yes, that is what they say in my village."

Just then the ferryman's daughter, little Anne, had gathered up an armful of white waterlilies in her apron, and Nicholas held out his brown, elfish hand to help her out of the boat. Something like a mystic love sprang up between the children at the first touch of their fingers; they both were fairies, they had a world of romance in their hearts, that was a secret from the good village-folk. When the ferryman lit his pipe and waited for passengers, the two sat down on the leaf-covered bank, and put their hands together like Hansel and Gretel, breathing deeply with joy as they hung their bare feet into the stream.

"Are you going to live in this village now?" asked the girl, as she watched the current among the marsh-grasses.

"Yes, if they will not send me away. I sleep in the woods; when it rains, I build a hut. But there is not much to eat in the woods, and I must ask the good people for that."

"I will give you half of my supper—I have bread and milk, more than I need to eat; and we have potatoes every day, or corn-meal mush. Why, Nicholas," she exclaimed, throwing her arm over his shoulder, "what makes your eyes so wet. There! Don't, don't!"

He bit back a sob, and smiled.

"It's nothing; I had a pain, I guess." Then, with a burst of emotion he suddenly confessed, "That's just what we used to eat at Mother's! But now—oh, Anne!" They were silent for a while, and he looked across the mountain-river in to a blue, windy sky. When he spoke again, his sorrow was all forgotten.

"When we are big," he said, "we'll go away all by ourselves, over mountains and mountains—and mountains! and see all the things in the world. And we'll build a house, with a poppy garden all around it, and a pond with frogs—and little sailboats. Shall we?"

Anne drank in the idea.

"Yes," she said after a while. "But where?"

"That's what we'll find out when we see all the lands in the world. I want it on a hill, very near fairyland—and we'll find out where that is. Of course the fairies don't like to have people come really into their places; but very near! very near!"

"Yes," said Anne again, with a long breath. Her eyes were beginning to look a little like his—starry and vague. "Tell me more about it, Nicholas."

The sky was deepening now, and a blue twilight falling. Anne's father had collected his passengers for the next trip, and wearily pulled the barge along its cable, and it seemed to swing in a glimmering, airy space.

"We will hear the fairies all night," said Nicholas, speaking very low. "And we will go into the forests—the big forests where people have never been—and we shall see what it is like in the strangest places in the world. We shall be great discoverers, like Columbus."

"We learned about him in school," nodded little Anne. "But he sailed in a ship. He found America."

"And I should like to sail in a ship," returned the boy, catching the suggestion as one catches a breath of sweet air. "Then we would go over the ocean, with a great wind blowing, and the sails all noisy at night; father was on a ship once, and that is what it was like. He said the sails made

noises just like trees—rushing and screeching—when it blows hard. Yes, that's what I'll do! And I'll find a queer, queer island, with queer birds and beasts, and no people at all! Will you come?"

"Yes!"

"And if we find a treasure!"

"Then we'll come home some day," said Anne, "and give the gold and silver to all the poor people we see—those that have no houses and not enough to eat. By the way," she cried, returning from her dream, "it must be supper! Come home, we have to get supper!"

Hand in hand they ran along the river, to the boatman's hut under the willow trees. Anne went into the dark, low room and struck a light. It was close and warm in the room, for a smoldering fire glowed upon the hearth.

"Let's be outside," she suggested, fetching her bowl of curds from the larder and feeling in the box for a big piece of bread. "Come, we can sit in the willow!"

So they climbed halfway up a black, leaning trunk, above the water where the long willow boughs trailed down stream. Two iron spoons emptied the earthen dish; and the piece of bread was broken equally. Soon the village bells commenced to toll, and bats flew aimlessly around the fairy-children, in and out among the branches of their willow-tree.

"Now I must go," said Nicholas, after a long time. "Otherwise it gets so dark, I can't see where I go to sleep."

They climbed to the ground, and he walked out on a fallen log to wash the dishes in the river. Like a little elf he balanced his thin, childish body on the narrow bridge. Anne watched him anxiously till he came back and handed her the bowl with a last "Goodnight, and thank you, thank you!"

"Goodnight!" she answered, and kissed him before he went into the dark meadows to sleep.

He spent many a night in the neighbor's field, for Anne would not let the new comrade go away. All day they lived together among the tall grasses or in the willow-branches, where Nicholas could sit and watch the white flocks of the wind-shepherd graze in the sky, and could weave wicker-baskets to sell at the county-fair. Sometimes, too, he helped the ferryman to pull the barge from shore to shore. Often if the rain was running in squalls across the river, Anne's father would stay in his hut by the smoky fire, because he was well-nigh crippled with rheumatism; and Nicholas, standing very upright and smiling into the rain-flurries, was captain and crew of the ferry. So it was natural that when the yellow leaves fell on the water under the willow trees, and the nights grew bleak and long, the old man took the child under his roof.

This new arrangement was providential for little Anne; whether her father had had any foreboding or not, no one ever knew, but soon after the new arrangement was made, a long-threatening illness seized him; exposure, hardship and worry bore him down. Through one stormy autumn night he lay in fever, demanding water, demanding breath—and the two children, holding each other's shaky hands, looked on in painful terror. The next morning a neighbor came to their aid, and promised to tell Anne's uncle that old Clifford was doing poorly; but the uncle did not think it urgent to come before nightfall, and the old ferryman steered his own soul across the Great River, while Nicholas held his withered, rheumatic hand. Anne sat on the floor, her yellow head on the boy's knee. After a long time—when there was no sound except the patter of squirrels' feet on the roof—she looked up.

"He's flown away," whispered Nicholas. "Yes, I mean—I mean—he is a bird, Anne."

They sat together till evening was red on the willow-trunks outside. In the stillness, a sandpiper whistled, first from the banks where the ferry lay, then from the sands under the cottage-window. They waited longer; at last a rustle in the leaves told of someone coming.

"It's Uncle Herbert," said Anne, without moving.

That evening Uncle Herbert and his wife as well as several neighbors crowded the little hut, to show their respect for the dead and to make provision for the living. In the midst of it all, the two children, weary and shaken, stole away and hid in the bottom of the ferry-boat. For a while they talked solemnly of death, and of Christ, and of father; but then the childish nerves had to relax; their voices fell to a whisper, for they knew that they should have been very religious that night.

"Let's play this is a boat on the ocean," Nicholas ventured shyly. "There is no land in sight—except a coral reef, far away, like the one my father saw, with foamy waves running over it. And the ship might shatter on it—oh, Anne," he suddenly burst out, "some day we'll really have a ship! When I'm grown up!"

"But, Nicky," put in the girl sorrowfully, "I won't be here; you know, I'm to go with Uncle Herbert tonight, to live, and then to a school somewhere." She put her head wearily on the edge of the boat, and fixed her grave, gentle eyes on his face.

"But you'll come back; as soon as girls are grown up, they come back. And then it is just like the fairy-tale, we are married and live happily ever after—only we go to the faraway lands together, and find the islands where the black men live and—where the birds go in winter." His voice fell again to a murmur.

"What will you do till then, Nicholas?"

"I'll live in the house as soon as your uncle and all the people go—and your father is carried away—and I guess I'll run the ferry, like him."

"Till I come back?"

"Yes, till you come back."

A faint wind swept down the river, and rocked the boat, making the lily-pads scrape against its sides.

"Then we'll be on the ocean, and sing songs, all ocean-songs like pirates. But we won't sink other people's ships! That is, not unless they are pirates, and try to sink us."

"Won't it be dangerous, Nicholas?"

"Yes, only we'll be at home on the water, like Columbus in the Fourth Reader: 'As much at home as a gull on the foaming sea.' You remember?"

Anne dropped her hand into the water, which felt warmer to the touch than the night-air.

"I don't like gulls—much," she said softly. "I like birds that build nests, and have light-blue eggs, like robins. And I don't like sailing as much as building the house near Fairyland."

Nicholas thought a moment.

"Well," he suggested, "we'll just sail for a while; then we'll find an island, and build a house to live, and when I do go on the ocean I'll always come back to you."

"Yes! And there we'll have the garden with coral walls, where the fairies come!"

"Look, Nicky, there's the moon."

Over the water, the moon-phantoms moved and melted, and the reeds along the shore grew black and silver instead of grey.

"That means it's late," he whispered. "You're getting cold, too. Let's find your uncle." They climbed ashore over a heap of damp logs, and ran silently along the path, to the house of death under the willow trees.

Lonely and monotonous was the life of the little boatman, after his fairy companion was taken away. Sometimes a boy from school would stroll along the river, and sit on the bank, smoking corn-silk and talking; or the passengers in the barge told him the gossip from both banks of the stream. But usually he was alone. So he learned a great many things that only children and fairies think about—the pictures that appear in the clouds overhead, if you study them long enough; the paths of silver-fish among the weeds, that no eye but his could discover; and especially, the lilt and twitter of his birds, that came year after year from the most magic countries in the world.

"When Anne comes back," he told a certain frog of old acquaintance who lived in the lily-patch regions, "I'll tell her the goldfinches are down in the swamp, and the redwing has eggs and little ones in the bog under the cranberry bush. And—oh, lots of things, when Anne comes back!"

But season upon season went by, and Anne did not come back. Sometimes Nicholas tried to imagine what the school was like where she lived, and whether she had told the other girls about her seafaring future, about the ship, and her lover; but as he grew a little older, he knew that she would never tell anyone. His own dreams had undergone some alarming changes; the island was a little vague now—the hill near fairyland had quite faded out of existence—but cities and wildernesses, tropical seas and foreign ports were displacing the palace gardens of former days.

Once as he was touching the farther shore of the stream, his heart suddenly gave an extra beat, for among the waiting passengers he recognized Anne's Uncle Herbert and his wife. A tall young person in a navy-blue suit stood between them. As Nicholas approached, his breath came faster and faster, and a dim idea suddenly became true—this was Anne! This grown-up, self-possessed creature, as tall as her uncle, and dressed in a smart blue suit—this was his little bright-haired Anne of the fairy-tale! She stepped into the boat; he sprang forward to take her hands, with a half-choked "Annie, Annie!" but at the sight of her shoe, its pointed toe and high heel, he suddenly felt hot shame come over him because of his own bare feet. He withdrew his gentle, ungainly hand from the touch of her dainty glove; and then, with throbbing heart, he turned away and grasped the slippery cable and the boat seemed to swing and rock on the even water as though they were in a storm. Whether she spoke to him, he did not know—there were so many voices, some outside and some inside his head. And when he stole a look at her later, she was holding her hatbrim so that the shadow was on her face, and she leaned sideways, looking down into the stream.

When she left the boat, he had recovered himself enough to help her step over the stones and logs of the shore.

"Thank you," she said, a little shrilly. Then, with a faint blush, she added, "You must come and see me, Nicholas." He tried to answer; but all the time he was thinking how their hands had touched on the first day, and how different it was now—perhaps, he thought, it was because of her glove.

On the village street he met her again, just when the stars were glimmering in the twilight. The young people stood under Uncle Herbert's lighted window, and felt a world of old things reviving that would not be spoken, and sorrows that could not be said. They talked for a few moments

of their village acquaintances, of church-meetings, and of Anne's school. But he did not dare say a word about the goldfinches, nor the dreams of the past, nor the ambitions of the future. Very timidly he asked her at last,

"What are you going to do now, Anne?"

She raised her eyebrows a little.

"Stay home," she answered calmly. "What else did you suppose?"

He nodded dreamily. His eyes fell upon the bright window of her home. Behind the window was a bird—a little brown thrush, fast asleep in its gilded cage.

Then suddenly he said, "God bless you, Anne!" And he was gone, through the deepening twilight.

Down by the river, the old ferry swung and groaned in its moorings. Nicholas, with a strong pole in his hand, walked out over the shallows, and stepped into the boat. Without a word he cut the heavy ropes, and pushed off from shore. The current caught him; all night long it carried him down stream, between the mountains, between new towns and villages, always seaward, to the haven where the great silver gulls came in from the ocean waves—he steered with his pole.

Just before dawn he passed through a forest land. A great dome of stars was overhead, paling a little directly down the river; and in his imaginative soul he heard the beating of waves on craggy shores, and the scream of sea-birds that wheeled before the wind.

SUSANNE KNAUTH, 1920.

ANNELLE THE SERPENT

"Be ye goin' out, sir?" As he spoke, the host of the "Sea Dog" bent across the table towards the guest who had just entered the common-room. "Heard ye comin'."

"Why, yes, why, yes," the young man condescended to answer, the while he critically adjusted his scarlet necktie in the broken mirror opposite, which was the sole ornament of the apartment not actually maritime, and hung below a print of the host's former ship, the original "Sea Dog." "Why, yes," he repeated when he had arranged the tie to his satisfaction.

"'N' I don't say as I blame ye. Reck'n ye ain't seen sich a beach 'n an age."

"Quite fair, but where 'zactly is this Benham's house, Captain?"

"Oh, tha's up the beach futher, roun' the little cape, reck'n ye'll find it."

"Forget-Me-Not," *The Radcliffe Magazine*, April 1918.

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F. RAMONA OSBURN, *Editor-in-chief*

HESTER BASSETT, 1918

ESTHER LANMAN, 1918

RUTH SANBORN, 1918

RUTH O. SAWTELLE, 1919

RACHEL L. FIELD, *Sp.*

ELIZA DAVIS, 1919

RUTH J. M. BLUMGART, 1918

ETHEL KIDDER, 1919

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ELIZABETH MUNROE, 1920

Alumnae Editor

ELSIE M. PAINE, 1904

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FORGET-ME-NOT

Who art thou, giving me Forget-me-not?

*"I am thy marshland of the cedar-grove,
The mystic childhood land, thy first great love,
And in my heart thou find'st Forget-me-not."*

Who art thou with the blue Forget-me-not?

*"Thy garden of the early days am I,
Where thou hast known warm winds and April sky,
And all my speech is blue Forget-me-not."*

Who art thou of the wild Forget-me-not?

*"The Spring, the Spring! I am thy soul, the Spring!
Hast thou forgotten?—Take the buds I bring,
O wintry heart, the wild Forget-me-not!"*

S. KNAUTH.

(It was thirteen minutes after eight.)

The first time, I thought it merely an accident. The second time, a coincidence. The third time I knew it to be a general practice. But I wondered. The first sat in the seventh row. The second had wonderful black hair. The third used lilac scent.

(It was fourteen minutes after eight.)

I looked about me and everywhere saw the same thing. Dowagers, debutantes, demimondaines.

I leaned toward Hyperia. She was turned away.

(It was fifteen minutes after eight.)

"Dearest", I asked, "why should all these women do it now? The lights will go out in a moment—no one will look at them."

But Great Heavens! She, too, was powdering her nose!

H. M. N.

Miss Jane Cowl, in "*Smilin' Through*", is a pretty actress in a pretty play.

* * * * *

Both times we went to *The Riddle-Woman*, the audience was composed mainly of women. Now we are convinced, as before we suspected, that woman is the greatest and most interesting mystery to herself.

The Vampire has more admirers among her own sex than among men. Women love to see and to read about, though not to come in competition with, those strange, slinking, emotional, s-shaped, sad-voiced creatures, with such queer eyes, such mysterious hair and such questionable manners; who simply capture, enthrall, devastate and destroy all men whom they ever meet.

(Continued on page 16)

THE TRUANT SOUL

By Susanne Knauth

Bare heels in the deep, wet grass,
Treading strawberries wild—
Long hair, caught up in a mass
On the boughs of a hemlock tree;
O, lonely, beautiful child,
Kissed by thy lovers three,
Thistle and nettle and briar—
Thy lovers with lips of fire—
How shall a man's desire
Covet or follow thee?

The rain in a silver flight
Touches thy lifted brow;
Shining like hawthorn white,
Thy shoulder brushes the fern;
For thee with a silent vow
Clovers and kingcups burn,
And the ripe, red cherries bleed.
No one shall follow thy speed,
Whatever his love or his need!
And where thou passest, O free and bright,
There, thou wilt not return.

The wind of the years has knelled
Some secret bell-flower chime—
Hands in the night upheld,
That only the moonbeams fill!
And lo, thou art passed from time;
O laughing and strong and fair!
Gone is thy dewy hair,
Gone, like a song of the air—
Thy breathing hushed in the meadow thyme,
Like music suddenly still.

Winning Story in the Magazine Competition

The Road to Fortune

BY SUZANNE KNAUTH '20.

The rag-man's donkey-cart bumped happily along a road that was inches deep in dust. On the seat huddled the twisted old man, blandly grinning in the enjoyment of fresh tobacco and his boy's steady stream of conversation. Young Elias was telling his father a story—his favorite pastime on the road; he was always finding magazine stories, or bits of them at least, in the rubbish he collected from six-hundred back-doors.

"This is out of a real book with covers," he prefaced the tale. "It's the one I was telling you before we got to the Falls. When that guy Silas went by the graveyard, he got a sort of fit from sittin' on the fence—because it was a graveyard fence, I s'pose—I didn't quite understand, but just then a man came along and he says 'Hello, Silas' an' Silas didn't budge (that was his kind of a fit) so the man tried to shake him—and just there the page was torn out, Dad, but I made up the rest. The man went on, scared to death and white in the face as a gravestone; but Silas sat there—no, I guess he stood! till after dark. Then a sort of a fog went over the graves; but Silas by reason of his fit saw that it wasn't a fog, it was the dead risin' up, as quiet as a valley-mist, an' as many as there was headstones; then he—"

Their donkey had turned up a country lane, a short cut to Essex, and the new outlook between the fields, white with potato flowers or green with young corn, took Elias unawares. But what immediately fascinated his gaze was a deep, dark grotto by the roadside, a little down the bank, where a dark-bottomed pool pictured wavy, up-side-down hazel bushes, and melting streaks of sky.

"Oh, Dad, let's have our dinner down there! We can hitch Katrina to the sign-post we just passed. Let's, Dad!"

"Whoa," said Owen, between his teeth and his pipe. "Whoa, ma'am. Now, where did you want to set?"

The boy's straw-colored head was between his knees, as his hands groped under the seat.

"Down by the water," came the voice from below, somewhat muffled. "I've got the potatoes. Where d'you put the coffee from breakfast?"

"In the mug, back in the cart. There's a tin box over it to keep it from spillin'."

They backed Katrina up to the sign post, then scrambled down the

bank to the hazel cover—Elias tumbling like a puppy, old Owen descending with many a growl at the loose pebbles and clematis vines.

But in the deeper recesses of the grove, they found another traveler at rest. He was a dark, squinting man, lying propped on one elbow, and he talked unintelligibly to himself.

"Hello," cried Elias, landing his coffee in safety on the moss-bogs. "Nice day! Mind if we set here a while?"

The man looked up; once roused, his swarthy face was animated, and he pushed back his hat with a touch of good breeding.

"Set down," he said, and pulled himself together, ready to talk, as Owen appeared in the thicket, fighting with a cat-brier.

They spread the picnic, compared tobacco, and exchanged remarks about the dry season.

"And what might be your business, young feller?" the dark man inquired of Elias.

"Rags," answered the boy promptly. "Rags from Essex an' Dawsonville and the Falls. What's yours, mister?"

"Well, 'taint so regular. I'm what they call a fortune teller—it's a great vocation, I tell you!"

"Can you tell if folks have a fortune? How can you?" Elias was quite devoured with interest; his gentian-blue eyes at once were dark with mysterious ideas.

"Oh, that isn't the art! No, it's—" he dropped his voice impressively—"it's the fortune that's still coming to you, young man, that I can read in the palm of your hand!"

Elias spontaneously held out his little paw; it was rough and solid, like any boy's hand, and showed no signs but smudges.

The man studied it critically, squinting more than ever.

"But I'll have to charge a bit," he warned. "Just a dime! For your whole, all-yer-life fortune."

"Can I, Dad?"

The rag-man humphed and balked at the proposal, but when the stranger exclaimed on the unusual significance of that hand, and came down from ten cents to eight, Owen was persuaded.

"Now," began the fortune-teller, in a sort of inspired pagan chant, "I read here a promising future rising from the humble past" (Owen grunted disapprovingly at this allusion), "the boy is destined to become a writer of romances, an author of famous novels; he shall taste the sweet fruits of literary fame—" then, suddenly returning to his natural voice, he concluded, "that's all I can tell for eight cents, young man."

Elias had kept his clear, searching eyes on the stranger's face; slowly they had brightened at the ominous words, until they were almost wet.

An old, unspoken fantasy in the boy's mind had been materializing as the fortune-teller spoke,—the vision of a story-writer, sitting at a desk with drawers, and writing on new sheets of paper with purple ink! When the dissertation ended, Elias withdrew his hand, spell-bound.

"Thanks," he said, with the smile he gave to strangers almost from habit; and continued to stare at the prophet, his sensitive mouth moving a little.

Meanwhile, Owen had gathered up his mug and the tin potato dish, and lifted himself stiffly from the damp ground.

"Come on, son. We've got to be in Dawsonville before dark. Nice day, mister!" He nodded to the fortune-teller, who had stretched himself once more at full length upon the moss, and was staring into the cold quiet spring.

Elias rose reluctantly and followed his father, climbing through tall grass and brushwood up the roadside bank, then leaped like a monkey from the hub of the wheel to the driver's seat. Here he lay back luxuriously with closed eyes, while the white road flowed away under the wheels, and the sun made freckles on his stubby nose. The cart jounced him pleasantly. But soon he blinked, sneezed, and sat up again.

"I guess I'll get down and walk a bit, Dad. Katrina's so slow."

As he trudged beside the donkey, his bare toes leaving sprawly tracks in the dust, he watched the clouds that drifted lazily eastward. The unusual silence made Owen look down from his perch and inquire, "What are you thinkin' about, Elias?"

"Silas Marner on the fence. I'm makin' up a story. Do ghosts ever tell people's fortunes, Dad?"

"There was a ghost appeared to your grandmother, the day before her uncle died an' left her fifty dollars. I don't know as he really told her anythin' about it—the ghost—but anyway she knowed there was something goin' to happen."

"Really? Well, then—there was a funny white ghost quite close to the fence, and Silas says, as if he was talkin' in his sleep: 'whose blessed spirit are you, comin' out o' the grave?' and he kind of hung on to the fence because so many ghosts made him feel shaky in his legs; and the blessed answers with a voice like—" here the story broke off again, this time with a cry of pain.

"Whoa!" cried Owen, jerking Katrina out of her half-slumber. "What's up, Elias?" The boy was sitting in the road, holding his foot between both hands and breathing hard.

"Run a nail in my foot," he said.

Owen climbed down and stood over him.

"Is it out?"

"No. Say, Dad—don't You can't get it—here, let me do it."

But all efforts were in vain. The nail was deeply wedged in the lad's instep.

"Awful nasty place," remarked Owen. "Guess we'll have to get a doctor on the job. I'll drive up to Dr. Loring's at Dawsonville and let him try his hand. Come!" He took the child in his arms and raised him to the seat, then clambered up beside him and drove Katrina at uncommon speed toward the hamlet in the next valley. Before a neat brick house, surrounded by hedges and grass-plots, he drew up and tied her to a granite hitching-post, took Elias on his back, and tramped up the path to the arched doorway. A trained nurse answered his summons, and looked in surprise at the rag-picker with the twelve-year-old son clinging around his neck, while the injured foot bled profusely down Daddy's shabby trousers.

"Please miss, can we see Dr. Loring, d'you suppose? My boy's had an accident, miss."

"I'm beginning to pick up junk with my feet," answered Elias, recovering his self-possession as Dr. Loring laid him on a snow-white couch in the office, where everything smelled of antiseptic and medicine. He liked the doctor's face; it was young, clean-shaven, but full of funny wrinkles when he smiled.

"Well, well, how did this happen, little man?"

Elias sat up, his face rather pinched, for the doctor was hurting him.

"I was walkin'," he said, "longside of Katrina, and makin' up a story about Silas Marner, for Dad; and we were talkin' about the ghost tellin' his fortune; then something kind of stung me, and I had a nail, sir."

"And what a nail! Now, see how brave you can be, sonny—just a minute. There!"

Elias set his teeth and hardly winced while the doctor worked; but as soon as he could he stole a look at the foot to see how much of it had been cut off, and felt surprised and a little disappointed when he found all his toes intact.

"Dad," he said to the nervous old man across the office-table, "this is some desk, ain't it; if I had such a desk I'd write and write the most wonderful stories, lots better ones than Silas Marner—about fellers like him," pointing his thumb at the doctor's shadow in an adjoining room. "Isn't he great! Look, Dad, he gave me a chocolate candy—have a bite!"

Then, Dr. Loring, who came and went almost as softly as the nurse, stood over him again, stroked back his sun-bleached hair and looked into the dark blue eyes. So much tenderness made Elias wiggle.

"Say, Doctor, can I walk on it now?"

"No, my boy; you'll have to go to bed for a few days. Do you live here in Dawsonville?" he asked, turning to Owen.

"Yes, sir; down behind Mullen's store."

"Well, I'll come to look you up pretty soon, and see how it's healing; and don't you try to walk till I let you!"

So Elias was driven home and put to bed. Here on the straw mattress in his wooden "bunk" he lay and saw the sun rise the next morning, and the next; once Dr. Loring came to treat his foot and give some of his precious business time for one of the talks that delighted the boy's heart.

"Now, Elias, if there is anything you want very much, you may tell me—a book or a toy you can have in bed, because I've had to hurt you so much and you've been a brave boy," said the benevolent friend, smiling at the amazement and bliss in the child's face. "I see, there is something?"

"Yes, sir—but it ain't just a book, nor yet a toy."

"Well?"

Elias drew a long breath and half closed his brilliant eyes.

"A pad of real new paper," he said, trying to be modest, but feeling dreadfully presumptuous, "and a pencil with it."

"What for? To draw pictures?"

"No, mister—to write stories for Dad, for him to keep. You see, when I go to work in a few years—maybe on Perry's farm, Dad says—I won't be here to tell him stories, and he'll have to learn 'em from the paper; and then other folks can have 'em when he's through! I've got the stories, but they're on awful messy paper."

He brought a pack of variously colored scraps from under the pillow, very obviously gleanings from the rag-picker's cart, covered with large, careful handwriting. The doctor looked into his earnest face.

"I see," he said. "And do you think you would write finer stories, if you always had paper and pencils, Elias?"

"Oh, yes, mister—doctor; when I'm grown up I'll have a real desk with blotting paper, like you have in your house, and purple ink, and I'll write stories to make people stare!"

The doctor promised a new pad of paper, and went on to his next patient in town. Elias lay back on the pillow, his manuscripts still in his hand, and a smile of satisfaction about his lips—he was thinking of the beautiful hand-written copy; "with pictures," he told himself, "with pictures around the edge, and fancy capitals!"

Late that night, a murmur of voices roused him from his sleep. The windows were dark and a great blackness hung between the timbers of the ceiling. But on the worm-eaten table in the middle of the cabin, a lantern burned with a restless, oily flame, throwing fantastic expressions over the faces of two speakers. One of them Elias knew at once for his father,

even before opening his eyes; the other he recognized as Cap'n Perry, who owned the farm with Perry's pond and sometimes hired little boys to catch bullfrogs. The two men, bending their gray heads near the lantern, were talking in half hushed voices.

"I couldn't give him up for a fortune, I couldn't," said Owen, with a quiver of excitement. "He's all I've got in this world."

"He'd come back to you with his fortune made," returned the Captain.

"He'd come back betimes, maybe, to put me in my grave."

"Then you'd have him a rag-picker when he might be a gentleman?"

Owen placed his clasped hands on the table and for a moment studied a moth that burned its wings in the light.

"He'd come back," he said gravely, "to tell his father 'I'm done with you'; he'd write books for them as could read print, maybe; you know I can't read but what he's learned me, his own hand-writin', bless his young heart!"

The captain pushed back his worn officer's cap to scratch his head, dubiously.

"There's that to it," he admitted. "But ain't it a sin to keep him on the donkey-cart when the doctor wants to send him to a fine school? 'Twould be the makin' of him, Owen."

"'Twould be the death o' me," insisted the father, fighting against his own conscience. "Still—the doctor wants to make him a writer, now."

Elias was sitting upright in bed, the thatch-colored hair hanging over his brow, and his eyes shining with excitement.

"It's my doctor," he cried. "I told him about the stories—he's goin' to send me a pad with a new pencil tomorrow—he wants me to be a writer, just like the fortune-teller said, Daddy, and here's the fortune, here's the fortune!"

Owen walked over to the wooden bed, and sitting beside his child, laid his knotty hand soothingly on the patch-work quilt.

"The doctor wants to send you away, Elias," he began tremulously, "to a big school, to learn about bein' a writer; but it's far away, ever so far! Now,—" he glanced at the captain, but still addressed the boy—"I put it up to you son, if you'll go. I won't stand in your way."

"Oh, Dad, I knowed it was comin'—not like that, but some how, you know; it's the fortune! It's what the man said when he saw my hand." In wonder and awe, he looked into his little palm, trying to find a sign.

The visitor, feeling his mission completed, set his cap straight and went out of the smoky hut, stooping in the doorway. A gust of cool air made the light quiver and sent Elias under his gay-colored quilt. He and his father talked long and intensely about the new plans, the future, and

the mystery of fortune-telling; but Elias could not talk about their separation. Gradually he grew weary in spite of his excitement, and his eyelids dropped as he cuddled deeper and deeper into the pillows. A dull thumping and scratching was audible from the other side of the wall.

"Oh, dad, we've talked too loud, we've waked Katrina! Let's be quiet—awhile—" then he drew a few warm, even breaths, and lay in perfect content while Owen sat beside him, agitated but silent.

"God bless him," whispered the rag-picker after a long while. "I know he's goin' to be ashamed of his dad, but that's the way it is—God bless him!" And he tucked the covers round the bandaged foot.

As soon as Elias could walk, Doctor Loring took him home for a visit at the brick house. A week later they went together to the school, and the boy could scarcely contain himself when he—the proud owner of a new gray suit for school, and a black one for Sundays—met the boys who were to be his schoolmates. He liked them all, and talked so incessantly that at night he complained to the doctor of "tongue-weariness" and a "funny throat"; but nevertheless, morning found him as lively as ever, lying in bed and listening for sounds from the adjoining rooms. A clock struck six; so he jumped up, dressed himself, and ran downstairs, his new shoes waking echoes in the great halls and stairways.

With a sort of instinct he found his way to the library. There were hundreds of books—big yellow dictionaries, red morocco books in a foreign language, and any number of stupid text-books. At last he came to the fiction-shelves, and let his eyes rove over the array of titles. Suddenly he uttered a little shriek of joy, and seized upon "Silas Marner."

"It's got the page that was torn out," he whispered, climbing upon the writing-table and tucking his feet under him. Soon he was lost in the story. The rising-bell, filling the house with clamor, could not rouse him; the breakfast-bell made no impression whatever; only when a teacher came in and exclaimed "Elias!" he shut his book, looked up with dazed blue eyes, and slid off the writing-table.

During his first week, he learned the meaning of discipline in all its terror. He could not read any of the coveted books, because he had to study arithmetic or French or detestable historic dates; if he talked to the boys in school, he was scolded; if he talked to the teachers at dinner he was silenced; yes, they even sent him to the head-master's study because he had gone downstairs for a chat with the janitor!

His great consolation was the writing desk in his room, with blotting paper and ink-bottles. Here in a special drawer lay his manuscripts, which he pondered and admired in the early hours when the school was still asleep; he, little, restless bird, could never sleep after the sun was high and the sparrows awake in the eaves. Often he managed to sneak out

in the morning with the ice-man or the baker's lad; then he rode on the delivery wagon through the town, made the acquaintance of a dozen cooks, house-maids, knife-grinders, peddlers,—all those interesting people who plied their trades in the street or in basement vestibules. If then he was late for breakfast, and received hard words or punishment, he made new resolutions, stayed virtuously in his room, and wrote delightful anecdotes, often sitting all alone and giggling or almost weeping as his pen moved across the paper. The English master wondered at the ease and imagination and quaint sagacious criticism that pervaded his themes; the boys sneaked away during study hours for a chat with the kind-hearted, genial lad, who seemed forever to bubble over with funny stories about coal-hucksters, laundry-women, horses and pussy-cats.

"Childhood impressions," said the teachers, when these tales and inventions reached their ears. "What a wonderful memory he has!"

But one day he was missing from the dreaded arithmetic lesson, and after half an hour's search was discovered ten streets away, happily grinding a hand-organ to the tune of "Nearer, My God, to Thee"; and all the while he chattered to the organ-man who sat on a doorstep in the sunshine, resting his weary arms.

"It's a nice business," said Elias, smiling at a fat man with a paper, who frowned back from a parlor window. "It's always outdoors, with lots of nice people, just like home! My father has a donkey-cart up home—his business is rags."

Soon after this escapade, a tempest broke over Elias at school. He had failed in the Spring examinations. For an endless, silent hour he was left to sit in the chapel, to contemplate his offences. The stained-glass windows let in a dim, long beam of light; the empty seats were stern and regular; and Elias sat on the piano stool, alone, alone in all the world, his hands clasped between his knees. He had abused his opportunities; he had disappointed Dr. Loring's hopes, and he could never, never be a great author for Dad to be proud of! The thought of Dad brought a tightening pain to his throat. Poor Dad, now his boy was a failure! The headmaster had often punished Elias and threatened to expel him for truancy. He had even been called "the incorrigible rag-picker," who would never be anything else.

Elias went to the great arched window and set it open a little, for the room was hot. A tender breath of spring came in to meet him, consolingly, cheerfully, and he looked out into the school-yard where the blue wistaria blossomed over the warm brick wall. Then his young heart ran away with his reason. He threw his weight against the window-frame till the hinges yielded, the great panes swung back, and in a moment he was out, across the wall, in the street, running for the open country. The

sky was blue, with a few fleecy wind-clouds; the meadows gleamed with dandelions, the woods with bloodroot and marsh-marigold. With the instinct of a little dog he found the dusty, hilly road to the falls, to the outskirts of Dawsonville—

But here a new sorrow overtook him at sight of the pretty brick house. How many hours had he spent within, lying on the bear-skin rug, reading to his beloved doctor or gazing into the open fireplace! For a moment he stood like one in an evil dream, undecided what to do; then, finding a bit of paper and a pencil in his pocket, he wrote a letter confessing his failure, his flight, his despair, and ending with the words, "I hope you will not be angry all your life that I am no good, and that you will find a much nicer boy. I left my things at school because I couldn't get them when I ran away. The suit I've got on I'll send back to you as soon as I get my old one at home again, because I hope you'll find an awfully nice boy to wear it and go to school and do well so you can forget about me and the way I failed.

"But, dear, Doctor, don't get too mad, because I do love you, ever and ever so much! And Mrs. Loring too. And I thank you for trying to make me a writer. Elias."

He sneaked up to the white front-door, slipped the letter through a crack, then turned and ran away, feeling like a coward and a traitor.

"But writing's so much easier than talking," he said over and over in self-defence. "I couldn't talk—now, now, with him—and the letter was the best I could think of."

On this same day in June, while the meadow-larks rose out of sight in the sunny sky and the chestnut leaves waved in a bewildering maze of green and yellow, old Owen was on his way home from Essex and the Falls. Katrina was nearly asleep; her one little bell was silent, she walked leisurely, and Owen huddled on the seat behind her, weary and bored. A slight jarring of the wagon roused him; Katrina stood still, as a little boy, dressed in a trim gray suit, leaped forward out of the rank wayside weeds, flung his arms round the donkey's neck, and burst into passionate tears, his face against the rough gray hide.

"Oh, Dad, I'm a failure, I'll never be a writer and I've run away—Dr. Loring won't ever want another boy—and oh, Dad—" this with a fresh storm of sobs—"I've left my new stories behind in the writing-desk!"

When Owen recovered from his first shock of surprise, he and his son climbed up on the seat together, both smiling through their tears.

"I guess you're all right," said the old man consolingly, wiping his broad cheek on his sleeve. "I guess me and Katrina want you more than

all the grand doctors in the world, anyway. Tell me what they done with you, son."

The afternoon light was creeping up the hillsides, and a brook talked to itself in the high grass beside the road. Elias watched Katrina's ears, as they wagged with every measured step. It was good to snuggle against Dad's shabby elbow, to feel the sunshine on one's face and breathe the smells of earth and hedges. Presently the boy opened his eyes; and unspeakable happiness came over him, as he saw the white farmhouses nestling in their hollows between the quiet, familiar hills.

"Dad," he said pensively, stretching his arms and smiling, "maybe I'll be a story-writer this way, too, and write things for you to read, the way I used to last year; perhaps I'll never need any desk and things to write good stories—as long as we're on the road, always, and—oh, look, Daddy, quick, there's a bunny!"