

1920

Althaia

Bessie Z. Flatt

Margaret Richards

Mayme Christenson

Clara Felde

Enid Brown

See next page for additional authors

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Contributed by Miss Seche

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1920

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Vol. 1

Love from
Gladys.

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FOREWORD

On occasions the sum of the parts is greater than the whole; when two or three are gathered together another presence is summoned and abides. This truth is clear in any gathering whose purpose holds the possibility of touching with illumination the otherwise unsignifying procession of our lives. And in communities of immature tradition any group that seeks to draw a recognizing light to the dimly seen patterns about it, is serving, though in a humble way, some of the ignored but invaluable interests of civilization. The requirement laid on such a group is not distinction of achievement, but honesty of attempt. If more is added the addition is noteworthy - and not impossible - but it is not expected. The result, then, will often be fragmentary; the perfect forms do not come easily or at once; if the substance be actual the form will come in its own time, out of its own necessity. Any group taking such a direction, and trying to attain to that intense or clarified significance of life that we call art, will at intervals find it of profit to give to its work a concrete though unpretentious existence, which may attest, in other years, the validity of these, and point one way toward the desired country. When such a group is endeavoring to make literature - as Althaea is - the concrete result of its work can be a book. That book may not be large, it may have nothing in it of enduring value. But insofar as it is sincere, insofar as it is real, it will at least have justified the hopes that were held when, in the fall of 1918, the society was founded by John T. Frederick. The essential worth of the book, however, - whatever it be, great or small, - is not to be considered alone, for in the long hours of its making, hours commingled of the joy and pain of creating, its makers have moved nearer to that region where life breaks, and its issues are seen to be those of peril and of light. And in that vision there is a courage that saves.

R.S.

AN ADVENTURE IN FRIENDSHIP
By Bessie Z. Flatt

The chill wind of a late November day whistled about the little tar-papered shack with its smoking roof-jack. It drove the loose wisps of grass scurrying here and there on the cracked, frozen ground, which was worn bare on the sheltered side of the building. The door, black and thickly lathed, opened and closed again with a loud bang behind the massive figure of Bill Hollands. Setting down the pail of scraps which he carried he jerked at the collar of his sheep-skin lined coat, buttoning it close about his neck.

"Damn the wind," Bill muttered under his breath. Heavy, graying eyebrows pressed down and crowded together the deep furrows between the pinched black eyes. He picked up the pail and started for the barn, a few rods distant. His heavy leather boots clumped on the frozen earth as he walked. He threw open the barn door and turning began to scatter the scraps of food in his pail over the straw littered yard before the door.

"Here chick, chick, chick," he called in his gruff voice. A flutter of gray and white appeared in the barn door as the chickens, flying and scrambling pushed through. One, a young rooster larger than the others and the first one out, lifted his white wings and flew to the man's shoulder. He picked at the shaggy, black, short-cropped beard on the man's face and then peered down into the pail from which the man was taking a dried crust of bread. The rooster ate greedily from the coarse reddened hand. Now and then he stretched his neck as if to hasten the process of swallowing and closed and opened his eyes as he did so. The hard lines on the man's face softened a little as he watched his pet fowl. Finally, after the bird's crop had become stretched and hard, and his appetite had dwindled to a stage of indifference toward the proffered bits, Bill held out his hand.

"Better get down now and take a little exercise, Caesar. 'Twon't be long till you'll be penned up for all winter. Looks like snow now." Bill's face took on its accustomed harshness as the young rooster hopped to the ground and joined his companions, scratching in the straw.

The gray, milky clouds hung low, and the north-east wind blew moist and cold against the face of the man as he went about doing his evening chores.

Yes, winter was coming. But that was all right. Summer and winter were the same to him. Of course there was more to busy one's self with in the summer, and winter often dragged by slowly. But then, after all, it was better because he wasn't pestered so much by the neighbors. Of course they didn't bother him a great deal at any season now. They had learned to appreciate his feeling and so left him quite alone.

Picking up a neck-yoke which he had stumbled over, Bill threw it up into the wagon where one end of it leaned against the board which served as a seat. Just as he was about to turn around something on the crest of the hill caught his eye. A man riding a horse seemed to be coming his way. Bill's seamed face lengthened and his mouth was set in a hard, straight line. Wheeling about with a rapid determined pace he went into the barn. He soon reappeared leading two lively bays by their halter ropes. He glanced over his shoulder in the direction of the approaching man, Joseph Brant, who was now but a few rods distant. Assuming indifference, Bill stalked down the sloping hill, leading the horses toward the well. Joseph Brant drew up at the barn door and waited.

When the thirst of the horses had been slacked, Bill came leading them back up the hill. He jerked and pulled at the horses who were unaccustomed to the now leisurely movements of the man. Reaching the barn, Bill glared at Brant in a questioning manner. Brant, with watery blue eyes set deep and face red from the cold, said in an attempt at friendliness, "Looks like a bad night coming, Hollands." Bill grunted in reply and throwing the halter ropes over the backs of the horses, slapped them on their flanks as he urged them into the barn. Then he turned squarely about and faced Joseph Brant. "Well?" he said in his short gruff voice.

Brant drew the long dog-hide coat which he wore over his thread-bare knees and said in a hesitating voice: "I've got to go to town now!" The words came fast. "Woman needs supplies. The kids hauling coal and is using the big team and wagon. Thought maybe I could borrow yours." And after a pause, - "What's the chance?"

"Hell! Good's it ever was. Guess you know about how good." The words came sharp and blunt. Bill was about to turn away, his face puffed and red.

"I'll be back in the morning," Brant said, urging his request. "We need flour. The weather looks bad. Can't bring out much on a horse."

Bill stepped over to the barn door, picked up an empty pail and stalked to the house. As he slammed the door after him he heard Brant cluck to his horse, then the clap, clap of hoofs on the hard ground, growing fainter as the rider rode off in the direction of Stacey Center.

In a few minutes Bill re-appeared with a large coal scuttle and a rusty tin pail. At the back of the shack lay a large pile of lignite coal, slacked and crumbling. With great vehemence he carelessly threw in large pieces of the dull black coal, filling the spaces in both scuttle and pail, with the slacked fuel; this he shoveled in with a short-handled spade. After he had carried the heavy pails into the shack he hurried about the yard picking up tools from the ground and piling up boards. Now and then, as he worked, he looked anxiously toward

the low-hanging clouds.

Snow before morning, he thought. Let it come. He was ready. He had groceries on hand in plenty, vegetables in the cellar and lots of coal. By the looks of the hay stacks and the full grain bins, the horses and the chickens would surely be well cared for. It could snow -- for all him!

The day was fast going now. Dark would come early tonight. He would just take a look in the barn to see that the horses and the chickens were comfortable. He found the mangers in front of the two horses piled high with upland prairie hay, which the two animals were contentedly eating. Giving them each an affectionate pat, he stepped across to the other side of the building and stood for a minute watching the chickens in the gathering dusk as they leisurely and easily flew up on to the roost for the night.

Fastening the barn door Bill started for the house. Time to get supper he thought. He'd boil some of those rutabaggas and fry some pork. There wasn't anything much better on a stormy night, when a fellow was good and hungry, than mashed rutabaggas with plenty of pork grease on them. Just as he put his hand on the door-knob, through the gathering darkness, Bill saw three horsemen approaching. He knew by the slouching figures that they were Indians. He waited immovable. The leader, a broad-faced, half savage appearing red man, rode in advance of the others. He wore a limp, felt hat pulled low, and a hunting suit which fitted his pudgy figure loosely. In a low throaty tone, he asked: "We stay all night?"

Bill glared from one to another of the Indians. His eyes were red and fixed and his big hairy fists were clinched. "There's no room here for - white men - much less - you - red devils! The words burst forth in a choking voice but forceful.

"Storm is coming," spoke up one of the younger Indians, the slimmest of the three, as he rode up before the first speaker. A furry coon-skin cap covered all his face, but a small circle of crowded together features. A corduroy coat, soiled and torn, flapped against the yellow canvas leggings that he wore.

"We have far to go. We can sleep in barn." "We get lost, we go on," the third Indian urged, spitting on the toe of his leather boot.

"Go - you black hearted devils, I've given my answer." The words came explosively from the man, standing, black and rigid beside the three men who sat awkwardly on their jaded horses. The Indians looked from the great hulking form of the man to one another. The older one, his face twisted and drawn, grunted something to his companions. The slim one shook his head and growled a reply in a low threatening voice: "He not never do this to us again." And spurring his pony to a trot he rode off down the hill, followed by the other two. As they neared the foot of the hill one sud-

denly wheeled his horse about, rode half way up the hill, and stopped. A malicious smile spread across his coal-smirched face as his eyes, beady and roving, took in the scene at the top of the hill. In another minute he was off again and with his companions rode into the thickening gloom.

Bill stood staring after the retreating forms of the horse-men until they disappeared in the distant darkness. Gradually his great body relaxed and his arms grew limp at his sides. The wind switched the bottom of his coat and howled about the little black home. Immovable he stood until the first flakes of falling snow were blown sharply against his face. Shivering, he clumsily dragged his feet into the shack.

Shedding his big coat, Bill hung it on a spike driven into a two-by-four near the door. Over the coat he hung his cap. Pulling himself together with a hunch of his shoulders he approached the tiny two-hole rusty stove with its round drum in the pipe. He replenished the low burning fire and shook the grate with a thunderous rattle. From a pail on a box in the corner he filled the tea-kettle and set it on the stove. With a jack-knife he peeled the rutabeggas, which he placed in a kettle where they boiled noisily. Slices of pork were soon spattering grease over the now red-hot top of the stove.

A dimly burning lantern, suspended from a hook on a rafter of the low ceiling, struggled to throw its light into the farthest corner of the room. In this shadowy corner was Bill's bunk - a few boards nailed to the side of the wall on which hay was piled, topped with a confusion of soiled bed clothing. At the foot of the bed ran a shelf on which was piled, in a neat row, a number of much used books. An old almanac and numerous articles of clothing relieved the bareness of the walls. Near the stove stood the rough board table and in a convenient corner was an ill-constructed cupboard piled high with tumbled and disorderly heaps of dishes and utensils.

Bill moved heavily about the room as he set a plate, knife and fork on the red oil cloth of the table. A loaf of coarse dark bread was placed, with a butcher knife, conveniently near the plate. Hastily made coffee completed the preparation for supper, and taking the food from the stove, Bill sat down to the meal.

He ate greedily of the mashed rutabeggas swimming in grease. Numberless slices of fried pork disappeared rapidly. He gulped down the black coffee and chunked off the bread as he needed it. As his appetite diminished a look almost of contentment softened the lines of his face.

At length he leaned back against the wall. The box which served as a chair tilted upon one edge. He filled and lighted his pipe. Thin clouds of tobacco smoke drifted idly about the form of the man. His broad, white forehead, with veins standing out contrasted sharply with the shock of thick black hair. Below the forehead the nut-brown face, seared and

wrinkled, told of rough weathering. The heavy gray flannel shirt, clean but wrinkled, was turned open at the neck exposing a high muscular chest, brown like the face above.

Outside the wind howled and sometimes made the little shack quiver. White flakes of snow pelted against the solitary half-sash of the room. Already a little bank of snow lay pressed against the panes at the bottom of the glass.

Bill watched the crystals of snow as they struck the glass and thought of his unpleasant and unusual experiences of the late afternoon.

Brant, the dog! Why did he insist in thrusting himself in where he wasn't wanted? He sure had stepped on the bold fool hard enough before so that he should have understood had he been supplied with any horse sense. A plenty wasn't enough, evidently, for some folks. The rest of the neighbors were more considerate of his feelings. But Brant - Damn! If he wanted human companionship, wouldn't he find it? In fact he'd never come out in this God-forsaken country but for his overwhelming desire to get out of the society of people. Bah! they were false, animals were better, truer.

He'd seen the time when he'd thought differently, been different. The need of social being about him had been unusually keen in his make up. But that was all changed now. Some way when Jim, his college pal, and later his business partner had played false, the world had taken on a different aspect. More grim, more hard, more uncertain. He'd lost a lot of faith in man then but that was a small matter, compared to what came later.

Oh Heavens! Why must he think of it now? Why couldn't he forget? It was just such a night as this, that night eight years ago when he found out that Myrtle was playing false too. He had returned home unexpectedly from a business trip late in the evening. The snow was being driven before a mighty blast as it was this night. Eager and expectant, glad to be home a day earlier than he had anticipated, he found not the girl with the trusting brown eyes, but a woman - changed, untruthful, dishonorable. She hadn't denied the charges he brought against her. There was no use.

It had been hard to leave but that was the only thing to do, in fact the only thing he wanted to do - leave her forever! It hadn't taken long to decide on what he would do. Life on a homestead would supply material needs. As for spiritual, - well he had none now. His spirit was dead. The world was false, a sham and he wanted none of it.

The veins in Bill's forehead showed knotty and blue and his mouth was drawn, tight. Gradually his head dropped and throwing his arms out on the table before him, so that one big,

rough hand lay over the cold pipe, his head sank on the table. The smoky lantern flickered and sputtered. But for the howling wind outside and the roar of the fire up the chimney, all was brooding silence in the room.

At length Bill straightened his tense body and leaned an elbow on the table with his chin in his hand. His thoughts were busy again, living over the first years on the claim. He had repulsed every effort of the neighbors to be social, and they took it as a matter of fact now. That is, all but Joseph Brant. He was an "ornery" beast, and yet there was something about him that was different. The first time Bill had ever seen him was that first summer on the claim. He was digging post holes with a spade. Joseph came with a post-hole digger and offered it to him but well, he'd kept right on digging and hadn't even recognized Brant's presence. But that wasn't enough - not for Joseph Brant. Any other man once repulsed in that way would have quit, but Joe came again, at long intervals. It had been almost a year now since Joe was last there. Brought a big basket of Thanksgiving eats. Made him mad that anyone should bring him things to eat. He remembered how Joe had looked when he kicked the basket off the steps. Joe hadn't said a word. Just picked up the basket and left - Now again today he'd come, but this time to ask a favor. - to ask a favor! It should have been granted perhaps. Brant wasn't the worst sort. But yet - no; he was glad he'd refused the rig. There was a certain enjoyment in seeing a man suffer. He deserved it. He was but one in the big family of so-called human beings.

Bill shivered and realized that the fire must be getting low. Beats all how fast this coal burns, he thought, as he got up to replenish the fire. He then began picking up the dishes, slamming them noisily. Suddenly his thoughts turned to the Indians. Ugh! he didn't want those dirty things in his shack, even had there been room. He wondered about that one fellow that started back. It seemed queer. He was so mad he could have shot the sneaking cur. Believe he would if he'd come all the way up the hill. He looked sort of threatening too. What if they'd come back and burn the barn or steal one of his horses. Indians were revengeful and, well, he didn't know as he blamed them much either. They had half a reason maybe for doing something low-lived. He wondered where they were now and if they'd they'd found shelter. After all they were human beings and probably whiter on the inside than some white men. There was plenty of room in the barn. Well, they likely got in over at Smith's. Be quite dark before they'd get there, though, and stormy too. But Brant, he beat them all. Must have wanted that team and wagon pretty bad; and Bill thought of Joe's apologetic voice as he asked for the rig. Perhaps he should have let Joe have the team. He might not get home in the morning if it should be storming. Mrs Brant would worry. Oldest boy wasn't more than a kid. There .. were other children too. Bill didn't know how many. Too late now,

but he wished he'd told Joe to take the outfit.

A violent gust of wind shook the little house as Bill, leaving his dish-washing, dragged his feet clumsily to the window. The shifty light from the lantern dimly lighted the darkness without. Bill's eyes sought to pierce the gloom beyond the farthest line of light. Silent he stood, with one hand on a pane of glass, his face pressed close to the cold smooth surface. A bad night surely, and he thought of the whitening prairies and of the long cold winter days that were coming. Man's life was a struggle here, at best. His thoughts came slow, deliberate. There was much of grimness and little joy any place. And here on the prairie, it was doubly so. At the mercy of wind and sun and storm, man was wafted about, weak and helpless, without strength. Sort of seemed as if it were up to folks to hang together and pull together. It would ease the hardness and lessen the bitterness. He had failed. Had in fact only made life harder for others. What a waste of years, a dreary shameful waste. He had been nothing, had done nothing.

With a violent jar the door was suddenly pushed open by the strength of the driving wind. The snow swirled about the room and hissed on the hot stove. The lighted lantern flickered and went out. With a groan Bill stumbled to the open door and closed it. After re-lighting the lantern he turned and crossed to the table. For a time he stood gazing into the gray, greasy dish water. Then plunging into the work he soused the dishes up and down in the water, slopping it over on all sides of the pan.

Bill wished as he worked that he might do something for the Brants. But what? He'd heard, in some way, that the coyotes had taken all of Brant's chickens. Why not -- why not give them a chicken -- a nice fat rooster! He didn't want all his anyway. He couldn't possibly make use of more than thirty. Just the thing; in the morning he'd carry a nice young rooster to Mrs. Brant. That is - if it wasn't storming too bad. Anyway, if Brant hadn't got home he might be of some help to them. Yes, he'd do it.

Bill's face lighted. He whistled cheerfully as he threw out the dish water and put on his big coat. Better catch that rooster to-night. Will want to go down pretty early in the morning.

Taking the lantern from its hook, Bill made his way through the storm to the barn. Old Jack whinnied when he opened the door, but he paid no attention to Jack. He made his way to the chicken roost where the chickens noisily objected to their late disturbance. He picked out a big gray fellow, but he was thin. Queer! He'd fed them good, too. Another one proved to be in the same condition. How about Caesar? he thought. No, he couldn't spare Caesar. He certainly was fat and in good condition too. Just fine for roasting. He picked up the pet, but at once returned him to his place next to the speckled hen. He couldn't find any that was just satisfactory. Then, after standing undecided

for some time, he quickly grabbed Caesar, and returned to the house.

When Bill had entered the unusually cheery room he turned the now empty coal scuttle over the white rooster. Quickly he moved about the room making preparations for the night. Then having completed them he rolled into his bunk.

* * * * *

A bright morning sun with two miniature suns on either side, shone down on a white world. The wind still blowing a little, drove the loose snow gently over the hardened banks of white. Joseph Brant, returning from town pulled his cap still lower. With reins caught over the pommel of the saddle he swung his arms in the frosty air. The horse which he rode staggered through the hard drifts of snow. Two bulging grain sacks of provisions knocked against the sides of the heaving pony at every step.

Passing over a prairie swell brought horse and rider in view of home, several miles distant, and in the immediate neighborhood of Bill Hollands.

"What's this mean?" said Joseph Brant, gouging the startled pony with his heels and violently jerking the reins. The pony turned in response and in another minute Brant had drawn up before the place where Bill's shack had stood.

Ends of blackened, charred pieces of partly burned timbers stuck out of the glittering white snow. A man's shoe, shriveled and distorted lay half buried. The top of a stove was just visible above the whiteness surrounding it and over to one side, near where the door must have been, stood a coal-scuttle, upside down. The drifting snow was fast leveling the ruins.

FRONT STREET
By Margaret E. Richards.

Into the noisy street
Riot dark eyed, tousle haired children,
Their thin faces chalky white wedges between
 manes of black curls,
They swarm on the crowded sidewalk
Under old rain coats hung over pawn shops
And crawl, unheeded by shifty eyed parents,
Under the feet of a high nosed woman
Who draws aside, slants a disgusted glance
And passes on to a club room
Where she gives a spirited talk
On "Giving the Child a Chance."
 In a tiny shop, pigeon-holed from the
 street
A dried up leaf of a man painstakingly
 rearranges
Tarnished gold watches, old rings with
 coiled snake settings,
A violin in a battered case,
A gold headed cane and a kodak
And his ghostly, greasy fingers open and
 clutch
As he reflects on the size of that retained
 soldier's roll
When he paid, with a swagger, a five dollar
 bill
For the return of his grandfather's watch.
 A wild clash of dishes cracks through
 the air
And a sign announces that we may eat
At the Doodle Bug Cafe'
From whence comes a suggestion of onions
 and steak
Dissolved in the odor of day before yester-
 day's coffee.
 On a corner a negro stands, hands
 deep in mackinaw pockets
A black and white cap drawn low on his
 flattened nose
To cover his uneasy, shifting gaze
As he searches, unobserved, for his partner
 "The Swede",
Who must be warned that "the cops are onto
 the trail
And the whiskey still in his basement
Has gotta be moved, on the jump".
 The steps of the employment office
 are draped
With figures of men who will not be employed
Though the grain in the land goes ungathered
And the factories are forced to close.

~~Though the grain in the land goes
ungathered~~

~~And the factories are forced to close.~~

From the smell of hamburg and doughnuts
We know that a quick lunch stand comes next.

And across the street by the river

A fish packing company's building

Exhales the odor of codfish and herring.

From a door a red haired Irishman steps

And quietly returns as he sees in the distance

A glitter of gold buttons and swinging police-
man's club.

As the officer approaches the men drop
from sight

And though the remaining loafers respectfully
touch their caps

There are ugly scowls and low mutters

From the deserters who quietly return

In answer to mysterious signals.

The policeman passes on with a nod or
a lift of his cap

And a smile for the white faced children,

Though well aware of the scowls, the
mutters and signals.

A CASE OF PATENT LEATHERS.

By Mayme E. Christenson.

"Let's have everyone in position, please!" The primary teacher's voice had in it that quality which even "first graders" can detect - -the quality which comes when things are about at the breaking edge. There was a general scuffling of feet and crumpling of paper as the thirty-one youngsters in her domain wriggled and bounced into attitudes prescribed in "position." Thirty-one pairs of eyes looked expectantly at "Teacher." She looked out of the window at the bright April sunshine for a moment, then at the bunch of envelopes in her hand. There was a reason for this vigorous sitting in position - Teacher was going to hand out the report cards.

From her seat near the back of the fourth row, Esther Strand watched her as she passed down the aisles, laying an envelope on each desk. Esther's hands were clasped so tightly that they hurt; her feet were placed in precisely the right position on the floor, and her heart pounded so she was sure everyone could hear it. Teacher was coming closer. What would the card say? She had had "Excellent" every month heretofore, but what would it be now? All the misdoeds of the past month came up before her; - she was aware of them all at the same time - the time she hadn't kept her place in reading - oh, the everlasting shame of it - she had had to stand up beside her seat for ages; the time when she had spoiled her paper mat, and teacher had said, "Oh, Esther! I didn't think you would spoil yours," and she looked so sorry - that surely was enough, - and then the time she had chewed gum; but Esther didn't even want to remember that time. She had worried for days, expecting the teacher to call and tell mother. She sat even more tensely, as if to make up for any other deficiencies she might have possessed. At last teacher's skirts brushed by. The card lay on her desk. She unclasped her hands and looked at the envelope - there was the syrup mark Betty had put on it the last time she had it home. "I won't open it till I get outside," she decided. She rose with the others and passed out into the hall. As she reached the door, she looked back; Teacher gave her a tired smile. Now the facts must be faced. Esther stepped behind the door: "1-2-3-4-5-6-7- Please," she whispered, "let there be an Excellent this time and I'll be so good!" Then she pulled out the card. She looked where she knew the "behaving mark" was - and gave a deep sigh of relief. Well, she could face the world (and Ruth) once again. She had got an "Excellent". She pulled down her straw hat and put it on so energetically that the rubber snapped and stung her chin. Esther looked at it indignantly for a moment. "Now I have done it," she thought. She went slowly back into the room. Teacher was sitting at her desk with her face in her hands. Esther approached timidly. She gazed worshipfully at teacher -- she was so good. The object of her adoration did not look up. Esther stepped closer and touched her arm with her forefinger.

"Teacher - my rubber broke."

Teacher looked up and laughed. "Well, that's too bad." She picked up a safety pin and took the hat. Esther watched her as she fixed it.

"Our baby's so cute," she volunteered with a beam, - Esther was always beaming.

"What are you going to call him?" teacher asked, very much interested.

"Kenneth, I guess. Mother says she likes that. Father wants Marvin, but I guess it'll be Kenneth. It's Mother's baby, you know."

"I see." Teacher looked hard at the hat. "I'm sure your mother is glad she has a big girl like you to help her."

The slight figure in the absurdly short dress straightened. The wide mouth and gray eyes grew sober. "Oh, yes; I help some; Ruth helps more, of course. There's lots to do, 'specially since baby came. Mother says he's terrible expensive."

Teacher was having hard work with that pin; she had to bend quite low over it. Esther's pug nose, spattered with a few large freckles, made the seriousness in her eyes look droll, but at last the hat was fixed. Teacher smoothed the thin brown hair, Esther hoped she saw that it had just been bobbed again. It gave her such a trimmed up feeling. When she grew up she was going to wear high stiff collars like Teacher's.

"Good night, Teacher;" She backed out so quickly that she collided with the janitor, who deposited himself, two brooms, a pail, and a mop on the floor so suddenly that he didn't know what had happened. Esther gave one look at his florid countenance and decided to go home at once. As she scooted down the hall, she wondered what was going to happen next. She had such a shivery feeling inside that she didn't even want to stop and turn the loose ball on the post at the top of the stairs - -the one that squeaked so nice when you whirled it. Now, she had done it. The Janitor would probably come and tell Father - maybe he would have her put in the reform school. Esther shivered. The reform school was that awful place where Ruth said they put children who did awful things like this - what if he had broke a leg! No; he looked awfully mad - - but she hadn't seen any legs come off, or arms either. Well, she couldn't help it - but then grownups had such a funny way of thinking you did everything on purpose. She s'posed the janitor would grab her when she came back to school - - visions of his wrathful face and towering figure waiting for her made her feel so hot that she ran down the sidewalk as fast as she could go.

It was a nice day -- there was a kind of wetness and shininess about everything. The main street with its rows of two story frame stores just seemed to be trying to see how much of the sunshine it could hold. Esther found herself skipping. Maybe the janitor would let her go- you never could bank on grown-ups. Why --if there wasn't Milly Thomas - and Billy, of course. You never saw Milly without Billy. Milly was scraping her feet on the sidewalk - so was Billy. Esther stared; here was something to look into, indeed. She never had liked Milly, but her curiosity got the best of her. "What are you doing that for?" she asked, looking hard at Milly's feet. Milly looked down, too. "Oh," she said, "I'm wearing my shoes out so I can get some new ones - they've got some beauties in at Benson's - - patent leathers. Here! Billy! What are you doing that for? You'll wear out your shoes - -Mamma'll spank you -- Stop!" Billy gave a last shuffle and stopped.

"I'm going to get a pair to wear to school, --don't you wish you were going to get some new ones, Esther? Pa always gets me anything I want. When I show him my shoes, he'll go with me down and get some swell new ones, see?"

"Does your father buy your shoes?" Esther looked at her in astonishment.

"Sure, I always get him to go with me. When Ma goes, she always fusses about how much they cost, and if I'm sure they fit, but when Pa goes, he says, 'Do you like 'em?' and I say 'yes' and he says, 'All right, you better get 'em then,' and I do. Say, Billy, stop kicking that post - -Didn't I tell you--" Whatever it was she had told him, Milly evidently thought actions spoke stronger than words, for she grabbed Billy under the arms and bore him, kicking and screaming, down the street.

Well, here was a new case of affairs! Milly's father bought her shoes. Esther tried to imagine her father in the role of shoe buyer, and look bewildered. Why, Mother always bought everything --Father - why he was home for meals, and Sundays, when he didn't go to church, but then he just ate or read a newspaper or slept all day, or else he and Mother talked about things she couldn't understand. She always kept out of the way, anyhow; he had such a big voice and a way of calling suddenly for things she had had that simply couldn't be found anywhere, although she was sure she knew where she had left them the day before. He was awfully good looking, of course, and mother thought he was awfully nice. He never said anything when he met her on the street and he always acted so kind of far off - -except once in a while when he got informal, and spanked. He was so helpless around the house, too. Mother and she and Ruth had to find everything for him. She wished he'd come with her and buy her shoes, though; wouldn't it feel fine to walk down town with him and into the shoestore, and have all the other kids watch her! None of them had any father so kind of high-up looking as hers.

Well, here was the shoestore. Oh --- of all the beautifullest, loveliest things she had ever seen --- there in the window was a pair of slippers; they were shining so they twinkled at her, and they had the tiniest, shiniest bows --- they were of the kind that is known as "Patent Leathers". Esther looked down at her shoes --- they were sensible laced ones --- the kind her mother always bought. If she could only get these. She had sixty-seven cents in her cup at home --- maybe she could save up enough to buy them --- and surprise the whole family. Wouldn't Ruth stare! It was worth trying for anyway. Ruth always tried to get the best of her, just 'cause she was older, and her aunts always sent her the nicest things. Aunt Eva always said, "This is a little more expensive; I bought it for Ruth because she always takes such good care of things --- and then she's the oldest, of course." And Betty always got the cutest things --- she could hear Aunt Ann's voice, "Oh, Esther! Let Betty have that! She's the smallest, you know!" Nobody ever said, "Let Esther have that, because she's in the middle!" And then mother was always saying, "Ruth keeps her clothes so nice that they always last for Esther-- But Esther's clothes never hold out for Betty --- she goes right through them. I never can keep her in clothes," and then she would sigh. Well, if you always got things like Ruth, and never got scolded, maybe it was easy to be cool and sweet all the time, but when you got her clothes and had her telling you just what to do --- well, you just had to bust something!

Esther was walking pretty fast, but when she saw the tall gray house with the poplar trees in front, she broke into a run. Mother would praise her report card, anyway. She'd get there before Ruth did. She scampered up the walk, across the lawn, and up the steps to the porch, slammed the screen door and bounced into the cool, darkened dining room. Mother was sewing by the window. The little streak of sunshine that came through the curtains played hide and seek on her brown hair. She raised startled brown eyes as Esther entered. "My goodness, Esther. You scared me! I thought you were going to tear the house down!" Esther grinned delightedly --- she knew mother was laughing inside. She was so nice --- she was tall and slender, and her hands were so cool and soft. Esther pulled the card out of her book and gave it to her, leaning against her shoulder with eyes on her face while she opened it. Mother looked at it carefully and went through the most satisfying signs of surprise. "Why, it's even better than last month! Excellent in deportment again; well, I declare! Won't father be pleased when he sees it? Be sure to show it to him tonight."

Esther knew how pleased father always was. He'd say, "That is good," and hunt around in his pocket for awhile and give her a nickel. That was one place Ruth couldn't beat her, anyway. She put the card in the book case in the parlor.

"Esther, come and play house!" It was Betty; she was

standing in the doorway regarding Esther soberly. She was four and had curly yellow hair and big blue eyes. Everybody cuddled her and called her a little dear. Esther loved to show her off. She followed her obediently to the back yard. "The house" consisted of a table, two chairs and a bed with three china dolls sleeping in it.

"Hello, Est-ter!" Esther looked up from her task of making the doll bed. It was Mabel Blinsky, the butcher's girl. With her was a tall, pale girl with big glasses. Esther eyed them suspiciously. Mabel was short and fat, with a braid of white hair and a shock of bangs across her forehead. She always had a cold, and talked through her nose. The pale girl had a scant gingham dress and buttoned shoes - minus several buttons.

"Can we come and play wit you Est-ter," Mabel asked, smiling toothlessly at her. Mabel was seven and had the distinction of having four teeth pulled.

"No," said Esther shortly.

"Why nod? This here is my cousin. I haf got some candy here" -- she patted a rounded pocket. Esther eyed it speculatively. "Well," she said, "You can come but she can't.

"Why?"

"Oh" - Esther struggled for the reason - her eyes fell on the buttonless shoes again. "She's got such nasty shoes."

"If she can't stay, I won't neither!" and the two marched off, turning around once or twice to make faces, which Esther returned with interest. She tried to shake off her irritation. Finally she left Betty and went back to the house. Mother was holding baby. He was round-eyed and bald and he had the velvetiest skin and tiniest fingers. Esther hugged him.

"Isn't he nice?" She looked up at her mother. Mother laughed. "How short that dress is, Esther. I do wish I could get my sewing done; it seems as though I'll never catch up." Mother got up and put the baby in the buggy.

"Take him out and wheel him around for a while, Esther; I must get supper," she said.

"Where's Ruth?"

"She's at Nellie's party - Oh, there she comes. Did you have a good time, dear?" Esther looked anxiously at Ruth. She was eight and everyone said she was going to look just like mother. Her eyes were brown and calm, her teeth were beautiful

and her figure was slender and dainty. Now she carefully removed her hat and put it in the hall before she sank down in a chair. "Oh yes, we had a real nice time. Nellie got lots of presents - we had ice cream and cake - m-m, it was good. Mrs. Dexter let us play all sorts of games afterward, and"

Esther wheeled the baby out. She wondered what kind of games Ruth could have played when her clothes were not even rumpled. She trundled the baby up and down the sidewalk, keeping a sharp lookout for the eagle. The eagle, for the benefit of the ignorant, is the bird that carries off babies to its nest. Ever since she had seen the picture of him carrying a baby in his claws, in Uncle Clarence's book, Esther had scanned the skies, expecting to see his black shape at any time. Well, he wasn't going to get this baby! She wondered if he could carry a buggy. She studied the sky carefully, but the coast seemed to be clear. She had run all the way to school more than once for fear he would swoop down on her, and she often dreamed of those big claws at night. She never told anyone about him - grownups always laughed. She walked up and down the sidewalk. Finally, Ruth came out of the back door, nibbling a cookie. "Want one?" she asked as Esther came up. She was disposed to be friendly, evidently. Esther took the cookie and disposed of it in short time. Ruth looked at the baby. "He's pretty near sleeping!"

"Is he really?" Esther peeped. "Yes sir! Won't mother be surprised! We'll wheel him down to the church, then he'll surely be sleeping!"

As they walked down the street, Ruth said, "I know something."

"What?"

"Will you promise not to tell anybody if I tell you? Honest, cross your heart?"

"Cross my heart and hope to die." Esther went through the process.

"Well, father and mother were talking last night and father says we're going to build this summer. He said he had to borrow about five hundred dollars, and then with what we have in the bank we're going to fix this house all up and build that new kitchen, and basement and sleeping porch mother's wanted so long! Now - remember, you musn't tell anybody that I told you. Mother said we'd be real careful for a while, so we can save a lot!"

"Whee! Won't that be great! Isn't mother glad?"

"Uh-huh--- I believe she's calling me ---, yes, she is-- I s'pose I'll have to set the table"--- and Ruth was gone.

Baby was sleeping. With pride in her heart, Esther wheeled him home. She set the buggy by the back step and tiptoed to the door, "He's sleeping," she announced in a stage whisper. She put her hands over her eyes and peered through the screen door into the kitchen. Lo and behold! Father was leaning against the ice-box. Why had he come home so early?

"You bring him in, Charles," she heard her mother say, then she beat a hasty retreat down the stairs. The Janitor! He had told father and he had come home to see about it. Father opened the door and she looked at him closely. If he was worried about it, he didn't show it. He came down the steps to the buggy.

"Open the door for me when I get up, Esther," was all he said. When the buggy was safely inside, she breathed again.

"Supper's ready," mother announced.

"Put on your apron," said Ruth.

While they were eating, Esther suddenly remembered the report card. She dropped her fork with a clang and in an instant she was in the parlor.

"Esther! What in the world --- come back here!" Her mother was regarding her sternly as she returned.

With the card held tightly in one hand, Esther stared from one to the other. "Why --- Why you said I should show it to him and he'll go right after supper ---" Her lower lip quivered.

"What is it?" father asked.

"My --- re--report card." Esther was winking very rapidly and swallowing very hard --- she wasn't going to cry before Ruth. She handed the card to him and slipped back into her chair, looking hard at her plate, and trying to swallow fried potatoes. The tears rolled down her cheeks so fast that she could do nothing but wipe them away. She didn't dare to look at father, but she knew he was looking at the card --- it took him a long time. She wasn't ever going to show any more cards, she knew that, when this was the way she was treated. She felt a sob coming. She tried to stop it, but it came anyway, and it was followed by more and more until she was crying so violently that she had to turn around and rest her head on the back of the chair. "Why, Esther -- mother didn't mean anything --- that wasn't anything to cry for --" mother stopped.

Betty rose to Esther's defense with a howl of sympathy so great that everyone jumped. At last even Esther gave a hysterical laugh, for it was funny. Her father put the card beside her plate. "Well," he said, "This is a pretty good report card; I'd break a few rules to show it, myself." He reached down into his pocket and gave her a dime and two pennies. Esther looked at him in astonishment. Then her wide smile flashed back at him. She had more money for those slippers. She would put it in the cup Aunt Eva gave her. Ruth rocked with laughter. "Oh," she gasped, "Look at Esther's face --- she looks so funny trying to laugh and cry at the same time!"

"Ruth!" father said sternly. He looked at Esther and had to drink a whole glass of water before resuming his supper.

"By the way, Clara, Burton foreclosed on the Taylor place --- they had the sale yesterday. Didn't leave a thing for Taylor, I guess. The boy was in town today. He said they didn't know what they'd do next. It's pretty tough for Taylor to see everything go like that."

Mother looked thoughtful. "Poor people," she said, "They don't think far enough ahead --- they were always borrowing and the money went as fast as they got it. Well, that's the way it goes."

"What did they do to them?" asked Ruth.

"They had to sell everything they had so they could pay the people they owed money to. They borrowed so much and couldn't pay it back, you see," mother explained.

"Why Esther! Now what's the matter?"

Esther was staring at her father with stricken eyes.

"Oh --- nothing," she said at last.

She never knew just how she sat through that meal. She was only conscious of a horrible, dull ache in her chest -- an ache that seemed to pull her down. She wanted to shake it off, to scream. She wouldn't think now; she would wait till she was alone. But she couldn't stop thinking. That heavy lump was in her chest --- cold and hard as iron. Everything was so kind of funny. The light was so bright and Betty was crowing again. "They borrowed so much ---", "Sold everything they had ---", "Father borrowed \$500---", "Pretty tough on Taylor ---", her head was reeling with the phrases. What did it all mean? What were people thinking of --- what could be the matter with father? After the others left the table, she sat for a moment as though stunned; then she jumped down from the chair and made a frenzied run into the parlor. She put the new money into the cup. She tried to sing, to recite "Little Jack Horner sat in a corner ---", anything to shake off this

something that gripped her with such a cold clammy hand. She sat down for a moment. The rush of phrases came back. She jumped up again and ran into her mother's bedroom where she sank down beside the bed and rested her head on her arm.

Now --- now, why now everything was wrong! What could father have been thinking of -- and mother; why now everything would be sold. They knew what had happened to Taylor and now they had borrowed money! Oh, why, why, why did people do things like that? Their house was so nice --- she could make out the familiar objects in the room. As she thought of anyone buying mother's work table with the cretonne linings in the boxes, or her low white rocker, or the baby's cradle, she began to cry again, trying to stifle the sounds so none would hear.

From the kitchen came the clatter of dishes. Still she sat beside the bed. The front door slammed. Father was going down town. How could they go on, and not think of what was coming? Didn't father know? He knew so much. Well, she could maybe get to bed before Ruth got through, then she wouldn't have to talk. She slipped through the dining room, holding her hands over her eyes so the light wouldn't hurt so. As she turned on the light in her room upstairs, she glanced at the mirror. Her eyes were so swollen, and her nose was so shiny, and she looked just awful. She turned the light out, and undressed in the dark. As she crept between the cool sheets, she remembered her mother's reproof at supper, and her eyes filled with tears of self-pity. Then she remembered the "new money"--- maybe she'd soon have enough for those slippers! How they would twinkle on her feet! How she would love to fasten those cunning straps in the morning--- but what was the use of thinking? The weight was back again. She turned and twisted, but she couldn't go to sleep. She had seen the auctioneer at Harrison's sale. He had a big hammer and a big loud voice. What if he should come here! Esther shivered. She tried to think of other things. Maybe things would come out all right. One never could tell. The slippers --- the money in Aunt Eva's cup, Betty's doll dress that she was going to make --- back to the slippers again, and so on, until everything was a hazy jumble. Then the ache would come back --- she would see the auctioneer's hammer and then the slippers would dispel him once more. At last she fell asleep.

It was bright daylight when Esther awoke. She remembered it was Saturday --- Saturday always feels so kind of different from ordinary days. She jumped out of bed. In a moment she was getting into her clothes.

She laced her shoes slowly. Just wait --- she was going to get some shoes --- they weren't laced. She was going to get some Patent Leathers -- they'd go on like nothing. Then she remembered last night. What was to be done about it? It was easier to think in the morning. Why, now she knew why father did it! Mother had wanted the house built over so long

and he liked her so much he'd give her anything. Now he'd borrowed that money so she could have it the way she wanted it -- and mother didn't know. Why father was fine! Maybe he was saving everything so they wouldn't lose anything-- Esther looked all around her. She'd help - she'd save - wouldn't he be s'prised? How - - well, that was hard to say. A thought came into her mind --that money in Aunt Eva's cup. She tried to forget that. She wanted those slippers, but she couldn't forget - then she remembered the auctioneer - "Oh, well, I 'spose I'll have to, but oh, how I hate these shoes!" She gave the bureau a little kick to relieve her feelings, and went slowly down stairs.

This was just like every other Saturday. She cleaned the sink, the bureau in mother's bedroom and the bookcase, before she went out to play with Betty. When father came home at noon, she studied him closely. She thought he did look a little worried. Well, he had her to help him now. The rest of the day she walked on air. It was kind of nice to feel sort of martyr like. When Ruth suggested buying three all day suckers, Esther regretfully said "No." Ruth bought two and gave Betty one - they both ate them right in front of her and Esther's mouth watered. She almost decided to buy one - but, no, she wouldn't either. It wouldn't be playing fair. Ruth was snubby all day. Esther wished she'd be nice and go with her down to Mourow's pasture and play Indian, but she wouldn't ask her when she was so smart! It was hard to take everything though. Ruth called her "stingy" and Esther forgot her saintlike spirit of martyrdom long enough to slap her promptly.

It was not until Sunday though, that things broke. Esther had seen Milly (and Billy) in Sunday School. Milly had her new shoes. Esther had turned her back and recited so diligently that the teacher was amazed. Esther had never been known to be so brilliant. Sunday School was a place where everybody told you how good you should be and about sisterly love --Esther didn't like to have it rubbed in. The sight of Milly's shoes spoiled the day for her.

After dinner things were very dull. Father took a nap and everybody had to be quiet. Esther slipped out and teased Brown's cat for a while. When she came in, she found Betty sitting on the floor before the register - dropping money down the hole - and the money came from Aunt Eva's cup. Esther gasped. Then something snapped. She set her teeth, seized Betty and shook her, shook her until she screamed. She had been too astonished to do anything but stare at first. Mother came in and pulled Betty away. With blazing eyes and white face, Esther followed her upstairs, where mother put her to think. In her hand she carried the cup with a quarter and two pennies in it. She was too angry to think. She was punished for trying to save her money. They'd be sorry yet - -she wouldn't tell, but they'd

be sorry. Then she burst into tears again. She threw herself on the bed. She had cried so much lately that she wondered if she wouldn't be sick she felt so funny - if she died they'd be sorry; and she cried herself to sleep.

When she woke it was dark. Her head felt so light and her eyes felt so puffy and tiny. She picked up her cup and started down the hall. As she reached the head of the stairs, she heard the baby crying. It was strange that he should be awake, but then, everything was wrong anyway. When she was way down, she nearly fell over in her excitement. There was father - rocking the baby.

"Where - where's mother?" she gasped.

"Mother went down to Aunt Nellie's. She's sick. She'll be back pretty soon."

Father's face seemed to suggest that hers was a return devoutly to be wished. He moved the baby from one arm to the other, but still he cried. Esther looked timidly at her father.

"Maybe I could make him laugh," she suggested.

"If you could - father got no farther. Esther ran lightly up and buried her face in the roll of clothes and baby - "Boo!" she said softly. The crying stopped. With a hiccough, the baby sat up. His round eyes fastened themselves on her face. She made another rush. The baby gurgled and waved his arms.

"Great work, Esther," said her father. Relief was written all over his face. Esther made another invasion, but this time results were disastrous. Baby caught her hair in both fists and yanked unmercifully. Esther winced, and shivers ran down her back, while tears streamed down her cheeks. "Here! Baby!" Father tried to pry open the little hands. Esther gasped. "Let him --pull-if he likes it--I guess I can stand it!" Her father got her hair loose, and threw back his head and roared. Esther laughed, too. So did the baby.

"Put him in the buggy and I'll wheel him," Esther suggested. After half an hour of wheeling, baby was safe in the land of dreams. Esther regarded her father solemnly.

"What was the matter today, Esther?" he asked. Mother said you had had a scrap." Esther dropped her eyes for a moment. Then she looked up. She decided he looked nice. She decided to tell him.

"Well, what was the matter?" he asked again.

She dropped her eyes.

"Oh, Betty dropped my money down the register - I was saving it."

"What for?"

"Oh -"

"Oh, what?" he looked at her quizzically.

"Well, you see, Ruth said you'd borrowed \$500 for that there building business - and then you said what happened to Taylor and - Betty dropped what I was saving down the register." she finished tragically. She handed him the cup. "This here you can have," she said.

Father was staring at her so funny. He ran his fingers through his hair, and got up and went to the window. Esther wondered what she'd done now. Finally he turned around.

"Do you think we'll make it, father?"

"Well, Esther, I guess I don't need this, but I'll take it anyway. Here's a dollar for you." He blew his nose vigorously. Esther stared now.

"You needn't worry about money, Esther. I guess father's got enough sense to keep this family going --with you to help, of course."

Esther climbed into his lap as he sat down.

"I'm so glad," she confided, with shining eyes.

"Goodness -gracious! Now I can get --" She clapped her hands over her mouth. "You wait and see!" she said.

"Oh, by the way, Esther, run out into the hall and bring in that box out there. Mother said you needed some shoes, so I got you some." Esther was back in an instant. She slowly opened the box. In their tissue wrappings lay a shining pair of slippers with tiny twinkling bows - they were of the kind that is known as "Patent Leathers."

JACK PINES

By Clara Felde

The little local chugged along, rattling over bridges rumbling through cuts, whistling at corners and crossings.

Esther shivered as she looked through the rain-splattered windows at the desolate country through which she was speeding. Patches of scrubby jack-pines, short stretches of dead prairie, ugly sloughs of green-scummed water, bordered by tall brown grass, flashed before her eyes in rapid succession.

"If it would only stop raining!" she thought. But didn't it always have to rain when one was feeling miserable? No use in wishing it would quit. There now, it was just pouring down. And those ugly pines! Wasn't there any end of them? She must be getting pretty close to Clear Rapids by this time, and the country looked just as wild.

Perhaps Aunt Jane was right after all. No one but Finns and Indians would live in such a wilderness. If she were only going to teach in Clear Rapids. Surely there would be some civilized people in a town of that size. But a little inland town like Sprucedell! Why hadn't she taken that little country school near home as the folks had suggested? But no, she would go to Sprucedell, and here she was. Oh well, she'd show Aunt Jane yet. It might not be so bad when she got there. At least she wouldn't be teaching alone, and Mary Robbins sounded like a civilized name. But then, she came from the next inland town, and Aunt Jane said that most probably she'd be just like the rest of the people out there. ... Still more jack-pines! And would it never quit raining? It was nearly six o'clock too, and there would be twenty miles to drive after she reached Clear Rapids. It would be dark and a horrid old Finn would be there to meet her. Oh, why had she come!

Esther's lip began to tremble and she reached for her handkerchief. Where was it anyhow? She was still fumbling for it when a shrill voice from across the aisle caused her to look in that direction.

A small gypsy-like woman in a red waist was leaning toward her neighbor with hands clenched.

"I wouldn' live there again hif ye giv me a thausan' dollars. No sir!" The black eyes flamed. "They his the mos' ignorant people I iver see, and the kids his reg'lar divils! They beat up my 'arry till 'e was black han blue 'n' that stiff 'e couldn' walk. The jack-pine savages! I'll 'ave the law on hem yet. The folks back in Indianer would be scandalize' hif they could see what I 'ad t' put up with in Sprucedell. You shoulda saw the 'aouse we 'adt' live in ---"

Esther turned toward the window. She didn't want to hear

any more. So that was the kind of a place she was going to? She wouldn't even have decent children to teach. Jack-pine savages! For nine long months. There was a rumble as the train went over another bridge. What an ugly slough! It had stopped raining but how damp and chilly it was. Those stiff, wet pines, one right after the other, made her feel like screaming. Should she go back home? Now there were some houses. But of course Sprucedell houses wouldn't look like those. People were putting on their wraps. How homely her sailor hat was. Well, she didn't care if it was. She yanked her traveling bag out into the aisle and set it down with a bang. Well, she was in for it now.

"Clear Rap--ids!" sang out the conductor.
It was the beginning of a year.

DAILY BREAD

By Enid Brown

The carpet on the floor is worn and old.
Beside the amber-shaded lamp
The father, in a warm dressing-gown
Smokes easily,
And reads an endless book.
Near by, the daughter rocks,
And sews a bit of silk and lace,
The while she talks of this and that,
A coming movie, or the stunning hats
She saw in some shop window on her way from work.
Outside the yellow circle of the light
The mother sits
With wistful, brooding eyes.
Her husband has just said contentedly,
"We always pay our debts; we've never lacked
Our daily bread."
Food, shelter, covering for our bodies, yes;
(Two shows a week, some classy clothes,
A steady beau, a bunch of lively friends;
Ah, yes; but there is other daily bread!)

The mother sits, with wistful eyes
And dreams of things that might have been;
Of life, in rich abundance, that has passed her by.
Her chance to hear Aida, Faust;
Her right to sound the depths of her own feelings.
And has she never lacked her daily bread?

FROM "INDIAN SKETCHES"

Ina Powell

With the decision to make a wreath, Dick's mind became clear again. He picked up a sack lying near, and, making sure that his knife was sharp, strode into the forest. He followed no well-defined pathway, but pushed his way through a hedge of scarlet sumac, past white birches and brilliant maples, brushing aside low-hanging branches of fragrant cedar. The long needles of Norway pines mingled with the shorter white pine needles to form a springy carpet throughout the forest. The tamarack, beginning to change to its winter yellow, made a splash of light against the blue of the spruces and the softer green of the balsams. It was so still in the forest that even the soft, sure-footed tread of the Indian startled a couple of red squirrels and sent them chattering to the tree-tops. Dick forged ahead, now crashing through underbrush, and again walking along the red-flecked moss of a log which blocked his way, until he came to a more open space in the forest. Here long runners of ground pine twisted and trailed in every direction, while low princess pine stood stiffly in all the dignity of its half dozen inches, trying to send out branches with the grace of its giant cousins. Dick nearly filled his sack with the trailing pine, adding a few of the stately princess pines, and carefully placing on top some shiny-leaved wintergreen with its bright red berries. Retracing his way through the forest, he was just in time to take his place in the canoe and, with long, sure strokes of the paddle, aid his brother in the passage across the blue-green water of the lake to their home on the opposite shore.

Dick leaped to his pony's back and started off, but with no sense of loneliness. The moon was at the full, and laughed merrily down at him as he followed the road which wound through the woods, the fall colors of the leaves seeming as beautiful when bathed in moonlight as they had ever seemed in the glare of the sun. The frogs croaked their night-song in the marshes as he passed, and occasionally the dark shape of a hawk or an owl stood out against the moonlit sky.

At last Dick reached the clearing where the dance was to be held. In the shadows were the huts of the tribe, from which a few belated squaws with papooses were emerging. In the center of the clearing stood a large, round house, made of logs, with holes to serve as windows cut rather high from the ground. In this house the dance was to take place. Dick was just in time. Fastening his pony to a tree, he made his way through the crowd, and was greeted with solemn ceremony by the White Pine chief, who motioned him to a seat at his side on a raised platform. The squaws,

dressed for the most part in neutral colors but with plaided blankets over their shoulders, ranged themselves at one side on the bench which ran around the wall, papooses of from two to twelve years squatting on the beaten earth floor near their mothers, some of the older ones darting at times through the crowd. On the other side of the room a group of dark-eyed maidens, a few in the shirt-waist and skirt or one-piece gingham dress which they had worn at school, many in beaded buck-skin, were laughing and chatting in much the fashion of their white sisters at a dancing party. In one corner the young braves had gathered around a huge kettle in which meat was stewing for the midnight feast. Each brave had donned the richest attire at his command, and glorified himself with paints and feathers. Dick's suit was of rich purple velvet upon which his mother and sisters had embroidered with red, blue, green, yellow and white beads the stars, pines, and deer-antlers which were the emblems of his family.

The center of the building was supported by four poles, and within the space thus formed lay the drum or tom-tom, a rude affair made by stretching a skin tightly over a framework. The four drum-beaters filed in and took their places. As they lifted the drumsticks, an intense stillness fell on the party; then slowly, rhythmically, solemnly, began the beat of the drum, and as slowly and solemnly the braves, maidens, and squaws took their places in an ever-growing circle. There was no choosing of partners for this ceremonial dance, - each one came when he wished until all formed part of the circle, which proceeded ever to the left with regular up, down, and sideward movements. Then the drummers accelerated their beating, quicker and quicker moved the circle, brightly and fiercely flashed the eyes, until the dance ended with a thump on the tom-tom. Laughing and chatting the circle broke up, and the drummers commenced a lively rat-tat-tat.

Then began the favor dances. Bead chains, moccasins, head-dresses, strips of calico, fountain pens, sacks of flour, blankets, and ponies were exchanged with seemingly little regard for relative value. No word was spoken, each brave stalked up to the maiden with whom he wished to dance, handed her a favor, and, turning, resumed his place in the circle. The maiden rose and followed him, taking her place at his side, holding the present, if it were not too large, in her hands as she danced. With heels together and heads erect the Indians rose on their toes, came down on their heels, and, moving first heels and then toes, took one step to the left and repeated the up-and-down movement. Around and around moved the ever increasing circle until one and all were smiling, swaying, and bobbing to the weird time of the music.

THE BETTER MAN

By George J. Smith

The referee's whistle blew shrilly. "Foul on Spencer," the official called sharply. "Holding!"

Bill's black eyes flashed angrily. "I wasn't holding," he protested, "just trying to block the throw."

"Are you the captain?"

"No!"

"Double foul on Spencer."

Without a word, the stocky guard of the Spencer school took his place under the basket. The Billings center walked leisurely to the white foul line and held the ball rigidly before him. The gallery of the big gymnasium grew quiet -- then suddenly a shrill cheer burst from the Billings rooters. Another point had been added to their total; the score now stood Spencer 30 and Billings 29.

Again the visiting center eyed the basket reflectively, twirling the ball carelessly with his fingers. Suddenly his body grew tense; the crowd resumed its attitude of expectant silence. The ball, turning easily, struck the iron hoop, balanced indecisively, and fell in.

Pandemonium broke loose; the score was tied and there was only two minutes to play.

Captain Carl slapped Bill on the shoulder.

"Go easy on the holding," he cautioned. "The referee is watching you." Bill's eyes gleamed resentfully. "I wasn't holding," he protested. "Anyone could see that."

The players glided to their places, eager, alert. From the north gallery rang the booming Spencer cheer. Guy, the Billings center, tapped the ball lightly to a waiting guard, who had shifted to one side. Bill, rushing forward, snatched it from the other's hands and started to dribble it down the floor. The whistle blew.

"Held ball!" the referee called. They jumped, and the opposing player, taller than Bill, knocked the ball sharply toward the basket. It struck the hoop and bounded back to Bill's arms. His opponent leaped at him, but Bill shot it to Carl who, in turn, passed it on a line to Charley who waited under the basket. A warning cry rang out from the Billings rooters. A visiting guard leaped desperately upon the boy prepared to shoot. The whistle blew.

"Foul on Billings, charging!"

Charley smiled pleasantly, trotted to the white chalk-mark and, with a graceful, nonchalant movement, tossed the ball fairly through the basket.

The Spencer supporters cheered wildly. Captain Carl, clapping Charley upon the back, sped to his position, his eyes shining, his lips phrasing words of encouragement to the team. The centers jumped; the ball shot back and forth; but suddenly a blue-suited

youth dashed upon the floor, hand held high. The whistle blew. "Time's up," the referee announced. He raised his hand for silence. "Spencer wins 31 to 30, and will play Helena next Saturday for the state championship."

When the din of this announcement had died away, Bill followed the other players into the dressing room. He saw Carl grasp Charley's hand and tell him he had played a great game. In his heart there arose a sullen resentment against the brilliant forward whose work had made the victory possible. He eyed his teammates speculatively. Flushed with the thrill of victory, they chatted eagerly, mentioning this good pass, that sensational shot; and always Charley was given the greatest credit.

Bill dressed slowly, pondering over the whim of fate which had let Charley return to Spencer after a year's absence. If he had only waited until after the basket-ball season, Bill would have been satisfied, for then there would have been no rivalry for the honor of being chosen the "best basket-ball man."

Since the Spencer people were very much interested in basket-ball, after the season closed a prize was always given to the best player by the business men of the town. This practice had been in vogue for only one year, and but one name was on this prize list, that of Captain Carl, who, although he had still a year to play, was voted the best man at the conclusion of his Junior term.

Everybody had believed that Bill would be the next name on the prize list, and Bill himself had thought so until Charley appeared to contest his claim. Charley had been the star forward of the school, and in every contest he had acquired the most points for his team. Bill, at guard, had done his best, but his work was steady and consistent rather than brilliant, and Charley had gradually become the favorite of the spectators. Bill, pondering rather sullenly over the probable outcome of the season, drew on his coat and made his way leisurely out of the dressing room, meeting Carl on the steps of the school.

"Some game, wasn't it?"

The captain spoke enthusiastically. "All we have to do now is to beat Helena and the championship is ours."

Bill walked along silently, filled with a sudden resentment at Carl's light heartedness. It was all right for him to talk; his name was on the prize list last year. But to Bill, the winning of the championship was only of secondary importance; the one thing that mattered with him was the honor of receiving the prize at the end of the basket-ball season. Suddenly he realized that all through the season he had been playing, not for the school, but for himself. Slightly abashed at this disclosure of his selfishness, he walked along silently, answering in monosyllables Carl's attempts at conversation. He wanted that prize --- but was he really deserving it? He tried to convince himself that he was, and resolved to prove it.

On the night of the next game Bill made his way listlessly to the gymnasium. What he wanted most then was to have the game over with; he felt that he never wanted to see a basket-ball court again. Charley smiled at him pleasantly, but Bill only nodded. Outside in the "gym" the rival rooters were cheering noisily.

Helena, twice champions, had brought over a large band of rooters; Spencer, in her home court, was not lacking in supporters either so there was a noisy bunch. It promised to be a great game.

In practice the Spencer team worked smoothly; up and down the court they swept; their passing sure, their handling certain. Charley was to play forward and the rest of the team should feed him. So always, when they reached the basket, the ball was shot to Charley, who tossed it neatly through the hoop. The Helena players watched closely.

At the sound of the referee's whistle, they took their places, eagerly. The ball shot into the air Carl tapped it to Earl; Charley dashed across the floor, took the pass from his fellow forward and flung it cleanly into the basket for the first score. Twice more the process was repeated before the Helena players got wise to the situation. But with the score six to nothing against them, they settled down to the playing which had brought them all the victories throughout the season, until, at the end of the half, the score stood eleven to nine in favor of Spencer. Charley had been the only man to make a basket for the leaders.

The second half started much the same as had the first. Spencer got the jump and scored three times before the visitors found themselves. And then, with his team eight points in the lead, Bill's long nourished resentment suddenly found an outlet. He refused to play according to directions. Snatching the ball from his opponent, he ignored Carl's shrill warning and, aiming hastily, caged a neat basket from his end of the floor. The Spencer rooters cheered wildly, but Carl faced him with flashing eyes.

"Cut out the long throws," he said shortly. "Pass the ball."

Bill took his place sulkily. Yes, that was it! Give Charley all the glory! The ball flashed into the hands of his opponent who in turn slipped it through the hoop for a basket. Bill had been caught unaware; his man had made a goal!

"Wake up," Carl warned him. "Come on fellows, get in the game!" Play went fast and furious. The ball shot back and forth, bodies clashed, cheers shook the walls of the building; occasionally the piercing whistle of the referee punctuated the din.

Gradually the Helena team were catching up in score; try as they might, Carl and his team-mates could not stop the onward rush of the visitors. Twice Charley broke loose and scored, but three times in succession the visiting center found the basket. Bill, in the thick of the scrimmage, played desperately. He followed his man closely, taking grim pleasure in thwarting his efforts to cage the ball. But in spite of it all, the visitors gradually closed the gap. With but two minutes to play, the score stood twenty to eighteen. Then a Helena forward, making a sensational shot over his shoulder, counted two more points for his team, and the game was tied.

The players ran to their places and stood waiting, tensely alert. Carl, arms raised, leaped upward, but his opponent, turning his jump, tapped the ball over the Spencer captain's shoulder. Bill and his opponent rushed forward and seized it. The whistle blew. "Held ball!" They were directly under the visitor's basket. Bill, glancing backward, saw the danger and jumped with all his might. But the Helena player, placing a heavy hand on his

shoulder, held him down and knocked the ball cleanly through the hoop. The visiting rooters, rising from their seats, cheered. Bill, filled with anger, rushed to the referee.

"It was a foul," he shouted.

"He used his arm."

The official looked at him quietly. "I think I'm capable of refereeing this game," he remarked. He held up his hand for silence. "The basket does not count," he announced. "Double foul--- holding, and talking to the referee."

Amid the most intense silence, the Helena center took his place carefully on the white foul line. Apparently unaffected by the tension of the occasion he glued his eyes on the basket, the crowd forgotten. Slowly, he raised his arms shooting the ball squarely through the hoop. A cheer arose from the Helena rooters but died down as Charley, with assumed carelessness, walked to the fifteen foot line before his own basket. His hand was steady as he took careful aim. Suddenly the ball shot out, struck the base board, bounded back, hit the front of the hoop, wavered for a moment, and then fell --- outside. A groan went out from the Spencer section.

Carl, eyes flashing with determination, sprang into position. The ball shot upward, the players shifted, and suddenly Bill found the ball in his hands, the nearest man ten feet away. He took a step forward, and still no one came to intercept him. And then, out of the mass of players shot Charley. For a brief instant he stood under the basket, uncovered, needing only the ball to bring victory to Spencer.

In that brief instant, Bill fought a fight with himself --- and lost. All the pent up resentment of a season of disappointment seemed to burst forth. He forgot the team, forgot the training of the past week, forgot everything except that Charley was waiting for the chance to gain glory and honor. A Helena player rushed toward him; he dodged, stepped aside, and then hurled the ball in a graceful semi-circle toward the basket. It struck the outer edge and danced crazily. Bill watched, fascinated, as the ball rolled lazily around the edge, hovered uncertainly for a moment, and then dropped in. The whistle blew.

"Time's up," the referee announced.

"Spencer wins."

A group of rooters climbed down from the gallery and carried Bill in triumph to the dressing room. Charley clapped him enthusiastically upon the back, and others hovered around, offering congratulations. Bill was hero; he had made the deciding basket, and had brought the championship to Spencer.

But somehow, something was wrong. Even in the tense excitement of the moment, he noticed that Carl, the captain, out of all the team, did not come forward to show his appreciation. It took an hour or more for the team to dress; there was so much to talk about, so many plays to review, that it was after eleven before they adjourned to the office of the coach for the selection of the boy who should receive the prize.

The captain was the first to enter the office. He seated himself on the ink scarred chair, his elbows resting on the desk, his head buried in his hands. His unseeing eyes stared into the distance. He wanted to see Charley get the prize, for Charley had

been faithful to the team all season. Again and again he repeated the phrase, trying to convince himself that he was right. His eyes wandered to the walls of the room, covered with pennants and pictures. In one corner hung the purple and white banner of Spencer. He gazed at it lovingly. It was his school, the school he had fought for through four memory-filled years.

Suddenly he was aroused by sounds, and far down the corridor came the sound of voices in heated argument. Footsteps approached the door, hesitated a moment, and then the basket-ball players entered. The boys had a look of anxiety mingled with that of pleasure; all except Carl, who stood looking at Bill with a queer expression on his face. Over the heads of the others, Bill caught the look, and blushed crimson. The joy of victory seemed suddenly to have deserted him.

After all the boys were seated the captain nervously arose and called the meeting to order. It became so quiet that only the tick of the big clock was audible. At last Earl arose. "I want to propose the name of Bill," he said. "He's the man who won the game tonight; he deserves the prize."

The others started to clap; all but Carl, who sat with elbows on the table, his brown piercing eyes fixed questioningly on Bill, and suddenly a new thought surged into Bill's almost reeling brain. He arose and held up his hand.

"I want to withdraw my name," he said, "and propose Charley. He made the most points; he's been the star of the team all season." A number of the boys began to protest, but Bill shook his head. "I nominate Charley for the prize," he said.

At this point the captain spoke. "I'm glad to see that Bill is so generous."

Then Earl arose. "It's all right to be generous but Bill deserves the prize, and if I can help matters he's going to get it, too."

At this statement the captain's face became white as though he were fainting. "Well, we will vote on it," he managed to say at last. The vote was made, and ballots taken up and counted. Three votes for Bill and two for Charley. The only votes against Bill were his own and the captain's. When Bill saw how the captain was trembling he arose and said: "Boys, I absolutely refuse to accept the prize. I am not worthy of it."

The captain felt somewhat relieved but Earl, on the contrary, became excited. "Now boys," he said, "It's getting late, so try to settle this affair immediately. Bill received the largest number of votes, why not name him the champion and let it go at that."

The captain was about to announce Bill elected when Bill arose, "Boys, I feel grateful to you for your confidence in me, but I feel that I'm not worthy of it so let me say again, I shall not accept it under any circumstances. Let this be final."

All of the boys protested except the captain who stood speechless before the group, gazing thoughtfully at the purple and white banner which hung on the wall. "Well boys," he managed to say at last, "We've got to get down to business so make it snappy." Why, Bill's the man, of course," snapped out Earl. "No! I won't take it. That settles the matter," replied Bill as he fixed his black eyes on Earl. And then the boys, realizing that it was of no use to argue, elected the star forward unanimously. Bill added his

voice to the cheer which followed the announcement. His resentment had gone; he felt that he had paid in full for his mistake.

On the way out of the building, he met Carl. "Good work, Bill", he said, evenly. And in the Captain's eyes Bill saw a new look - a look of affection mingled with respect.

"THEM RUGS"

By Gretchen Gilbertson

"You roll up these dining room rugs, Father, and hang them on the line. Then come in and put the parlor furniture on the porch so we can clean that rug."

Mother's voice was brisk and as she spoke she started sweeping with long, vigorous strokes of the broom for this was Saturday morning. Thru' the open doors and windows, Father's voice could be heard singing as he leisurely shook the rugs and hung them on the line preparatory to beating.

The sweeping stopped and Mother's voice broke in on the song as she called sharply out of the window, "Do hurry on, Father, I'm waiting for you to move the table and I haven't got all day to wait either."

"Oh, Mother," drawled Father as he started for the house, "What's the use of getting so nervous and excited over a little work. Can't we just as well take our time and not get all heated up?"

The big drops of sweat rolling down Mother's round, fat face and the damp, gray hair sticking to her forehead bro't forth the last remark and it was a bad one.

"Nervous! Heated up! I'd like to know if you wouldn't get heated up if you had as much to do before dinner as I have. And besides I'm not nervous. "But her clear voice shook as she moved the plant stand and chairs over to clear a place to scrub.

For a few minutes nothing could be heard but the swish swash of the water as Mother scrubbed and the scraping and bumping of furniture as Father dragged rockers, table and chairs out on the front porch. Finally Father could stand the quiet no longer so he hesitatingly asked, "Do we have to get thru' before dinner?"

Mother stood up and dried her hands on her faded, blue scrubbing dress before she answered in a bored tone, "Yes, of course, we have to be thru' before dinner. Mrs Johnnie and Mrs Beggs always get thru' with their Saturday cleaning before dinner and I'm not going to be slower than them even if I am older. Here please help me move the buffet. All right. Now I guess you can beat them rugs."

Glad of a chance to get out in the fresh air, Father started for the clothes line but as he passed the kitchen stove, the coffee pot still standing since breakfast proved too much of a temptation for him to pass. The rattle of cups and the bang of the cooky jar cover told Mother plainly what was going on in the kitchen.

"Now if that ain't just like a man, stopping to drink coffee right in the middle of a job! He'd stop to eat if the house was on fire!"

Regular muffled sounds coming from the back yard a few minutes later told Mother he was at last performing his duty tho' not for long.

"Good morning, Biggs. Isn't this fine weather? How's your garden coming? The onions and lettuce are up in our garden but I guess the cut worms have taken the radishes!" With hat off, the cool spring breeze blowing thru' his gray hair and beard, Father stood talking to their neighbor. The sound of his pleasant voice made Mother jab/scrub rag into the corners more vigorously than ever.

"I'll never get thru' with this work if that man doesn't get in here to help me," she argued to herself. "Men are more trying than children when it comes to keeping them at their work. Father!" Her voice was impatient. "Father, I'm waiting for them rugs!"

N U T

By Helen Spencer

He was known as "Nut" to everyone in the village, a title for which we were to blame and for which he never quite forgave us. First it had been "that nut of a Moran" but it was Elizabeth, who in telling of his latest escapade called him just plain "Nut" and the name appealed to us as being so entirely suited to him, that we all took it up. In less than two weeks time, he was rechristened "Nut" by the whole community.

It was the night before the first big dance of the season that I met him. We were all new to the town, the teachers and I, and all extremely anxious to get to that dance. One of the first things we had done upon arriving was to take a census of all the eligible young men, and then decide who was going to belong to whom. Being only sixteen and a high school junior, I had to bide my time and remain in the background, while the rest of them debated on the bookkeeper in the First National, the new young dentist with the cute mustache, the bachelor druggist, the barber with the sleep pompadour, and the clerk in the hardware store. I was perfectly content, however, for in going uptown for groceries for mother, I had spied through the pool hall window, a young fellow in a striped sweater with waving, movie-actor hair and a wicked little twinkle in his eyes, who, I had decided, would just about meet my needs.

Strangely enough, however, after everything was in readiness except the getting acquainted, these young eligibles did not seem to realize that they were among the favored few, for here it was the night before the dance, and so far only Elizabeth had

succeeded in securing an escort, and merely a substitute at that.

We were in the drugstore eating ice cream sundaes, -- Elizabeth, her admirer and I -- when Moran approached us and was invited to join the party. I thought him handsome with his gray eyes and black curly lashes, his effeminate mouth and straight white teeth -- only, I did wish that he were a trifle more slender. When we left the drugstore he walked home with me and inquired if I were going to the next dance. I shook my head. The outcome was that he would call for me the next evening at nine o'clock.

How excited I was the next night! When mother inquired as to who this new Romeo was, I had to confess ignorance, but what I lacked in actual knowledge I made up in vivid description of his curly eyelashes, his dark eyes, his witty remarks.

He came promptly at nine, looking handsomer than ever in his well-fitting dark suit and modish overcoat. Even mother was captivated by his polished manners. When he inadvertently let slip an "I haven't saw" in his conversation I passed it over and attributed it to accident.

The dance was a wonderful success. Francis' dancing easily surpassed that of any of the other boys, even though he was a trifle bulky. I was sure that he must be a favorite because of his easy familiarity with those who had been pointed out to me as the "elite" of the town. Helen, the youngest of the teachers and my personal friend, who had come up to the dance with the bachelor druggist, smiled amusedly at me, but I was sure she was only envious. Her bachelor had not learned anything new in dancing since the days of the three step and the polka. All that night I dreamed of Francis and dancing until in the morning mother called me, and I went to school with a throbbing head.

That afternoon in sewing class, during a temporary absence of the instructor, the girls opened up a discussion of the dance. Every boy there was brought before this unrelenting jury, judged as to his appearance, his dancing, his general behavior, and then passed on in favor of some one else with more interesting flaws to point out. The girls who hadn't attended asked me whom I had gone to the dance with and I told them. They smiled, were silent for a few moments, and then switched the conversation to other topics. I inquired of the girl sitting next to me if she knew Francis Moran. She nodded.

"What does he do?" I asked.

"Well, most anything I guess -- puts on storm windows, shovels snow, polishes stoves -- anything he gets a chance to do." She put it bluntly without any softening frills. "He's awfully silly, don't you think?"

I was mortified. What must people think of me, going to a dance with him? Right there, that little chapter in my Book of Romance was closed for Francis Moran.

After that I found it almost impossible to evade him. He asked me to go to dances, parties, and shows until I had exhausted all my stock of excuses and flatly refused, giving him no further explanation than that "I didn't want to go." I believe it amused him to watch me squirm, and to see how far my originality went in

inventing valid sounding excuses. Occasionally he would turn the tables. One day he stopped me on the street saying, "I've two Chautauqua tickets for tonight. Are you going?"

I was deep in an explanation of how I couldn't go with him, because I'd promised to take mother, when he interrupted with

"Well, you needn't get so fussed. I didn't ask you to go with me. I just asked you if you were going."

I was deeply offended. But when I attempted to move on, he blocked my way and said, "Shake hands before you go, Spaggett, and don't get sore."

He had taken to calling me "Spaggett" my third week there. Helen had been nicknamed "Snooks" and Elizabeth was "Sweetie"--- There was no use protesting, or he never would have let me pass, so I had to swallow my indignation while he held my hand and delivered an eloquent apology, consuming about five minutes' time.

There was no use in becoming angry with Francis. He simply wouldn't have it. He would bother you until you were so tired of him that you would forget your annoyance just for the sake of having a momentary peace. And it was worse than ever to attempt to assume a dignified "high and mighty" manner. More than once I was amused to hear him call out to some modest young girl in passing, "Hello, sweetie, do you love me today?" and to watch her confusion when he would insist on holding her hand for as long a time as it appealed to his fancy.

It was some time before father finally succumbed and agreed that "Nut" was the only sensible thing to call him. He had breezed into our store one afternoon with an extended hand and a loud "Hey, Spaggett, put 'er there!"

Father stormed.

"It may be all right for him to be so familiar with you kids, but when it comes to an old man like me -- it's too blamed impudent! I wont have it!"

From then on, father was firmly convinced that Nut's intellect wasn't quite what it ought to be.

In spite of all his faults, we liked to have Francis around. We liked to hear and watch him cheer at the basket-ball games, until his face flushed purple and his voice was hoarse. He sounded cheery as he came down the street, his hands deep in his loose brown sweater pockets, his cap over his right eye, whistling away at "Turkey in the Straw" and "Alabama Jubilee" as though he had not a care in the world. We were amused at his funny stories and bits of gossip, as he raked our lawn, or cleaned our storm windows.

So when the war broke out and he enlisted in G Company and left for training, we missed him. Reports reached us of how stunning Nut looked in his uniform, how he was becoming slender and trim and straight under the heavy training, what a good soldier he made, how all the girls in V-- showered him with attentions. Once before they left, he came home in a car with some other soldiers. How important he was in his uniform! He greeted me patronizingly, inquired "if the old burg was as dead as ever," and secretly confided in my ear the precious news, that he was engaged to the "swellest girl in V--," and "take it from me, she's some baby!"

He wrote letters to all the girls from the various training camps and from France. They were all very much the same.

Asiar and Ruth and I would compare ours to detect variations from the general theme. The substance of mine, gathered from a maze of misspelled words, would be:

"It's been raining ever since I got to France. Had a letter from Ruth yesterday and one from Asiar a week ago. They sure have some cute girls in this country. Wish I could have another dance with you."

In Ruth's letter there would be the ever present rain, the letters from Asiar and May, the cute girls, and an inquiry about her brother Paul. Asiar's would probably contain a hearty thanks upon receipt of some kodak pictures, in addition to the customary remarks.

After a year and a half Nut came back from France. He was still good natured, still telling funny stories, but he seemed older and more tired. I had just come home from school for vacation, and was having my car filled in front of the garage one evening when Francis invited himself for a ride and I gladly consented to give him one. He had lost his faith in women, he told me. His sweetheart had thrown him over, had fallen in love with a slacker hotel clerk, who stayed at home, while he, Francis, was across fighting for his country.--- I smiled as I thought of the report that Francis' duties the whole time he was abroad had been waiting table at officers' mess.--- He couldn't stand girls anyway; they were a queer lot. Never wanted to have anything more to do with them. "Of course I don't include you, May." he ended apologetically, and I accepted his apology.

I gave him all the sympathy I could and tried to console him in the best way I knew how. I told him he was too young to become a cynical "woman-hater", that he probably hadn't met the right girl yet, and that he should not judge us all so harshly, because one of us didn't know a good man when she saw him. Anyway, he was too good a fellow to worry about a mere girl, who had proved herself so unworthy. But Francis refused to be consoled. He was going West, away from them all --- to try to forget her. Maybe some day she'd realize and be sorry. His voice broke. I glanced at him anxiously as he quit talking and sat with his head on his hands. I thought for a while, that he was going to cry, and became dismayed at the thought of what to do with a man in tears. But he suddenly began to whistle, made a remark that set us both laughing, and was again himself.

I heard of Nut once more before he left for Montana. It was the night that the Armory burned down in V-. They were making ready for a big home-coming dance for the soldiers, when the whole building, an old frame structure, burst into flames and was all ablaze in a few seconds. Amidst the confusion and excitement, some gallant young soldier climbed up the flag pole and rescued the flag. Of course it was Francis. We could imagine what a hero he considered himself, and how proud he felt. We wondered if his sweetheart regretted just a little, her choice of sweetheart when she might have had this noble flag rescuer.

Then Nut went West. I got one card from him, failed to answer it, and did not hear again.

The Easter after came early in the year. Our week of vacation from school was a warm sunny bit of spring, following close on the heels of a violent stormy spell. I sat on the porch step one even-

ing, endeavoring to regain my breath after my unaccustomed exertion of raking the lawn. It was still and clear, and just a trifle cold. From the neighboring yard, where bright flames were mounting in a great pile of brown and gray, a heavy column of smoke veered across the lawn, bringing the odor of burning grass and damp dead leaves. In an adjoining vacant lot, a group of small boys were playing baseball. Their shrill voices pitched higher and higher, in a heated argument as to who was next batter, and whether or not that ball was a foul.

A little scurry of wind scattered my pile of leaves back over the newly raked lawn. I dropped the rake in disgust. Down the street just rounding the corner came Ruth on her way to her sister's house.

"Hello, May," she called when in hearing distance, "What are you doing?"

"Nothing, It's all undone." I answered, pointing to the fruitless result of my toil. "Come on over."

Ruth seated herself in a lawn chair nearby, and leaned forward, clasping her hands over her knees.

"May, did you hear about Francis Moran?"

"Francis? Why dignify him so?" I answered laughingly. It seemed strange to hear him called anything but "Nut" from her lips.

"Well, what about him?"

"He's dead!"

"Dead!" I echoed stupidly, staring at her with open mouth.

"Yes. Froze to death in a blizzard. I just got a letter from brother Paul. He works on a newspaper in the same place that Francis was."

She drew the letter from her coat pocket and read it to me. He had written it clearly and vividly. Francis had gone to town to buy supplies for the farmer for whom he had worked, and the two little boys had gone with him for the ride. On their way home a sudden violent storm arose. The sleet and snow came down so fast and thick, that the blinded horse and driver could go no farther. He had wrapped the children up in the robes and put them in the bottom of the wagon, seating himself so as to ward off the biting icy wind from their helpless little forms. In the morning they found them. "He had fallen over them" Paul wrote, "face down, his arms out-stretched and his hands still holding down the gay plaid robes. His back and arms were covered with a thin coating of ice and sleet. The horse, lying on its side in the snow, looked like a shining dark bronze equestrian statue, rudely torn from its base and thrown to the ground!"

After Ruth had finished, we sat silent for a time. Then we talked about Francis as we remembered him. The basket ball games, with Francis executing a jig and whistling his own accompaniment of "Turkey in the Straw", the dances, with Francis annoying the orchestra in an effort to get the name of this piece or that one that we had especially liked to dance by; the wild rides we had had in the cushionless Ford, while he worked in the garage. We wondered if his girl had heard, and where he would be buried. Neither of us knew where his home was, or whether his parents still lived.

The moon rose round and cold and brilliant. The rosebush out on the edge of the lawn, traced a black distorted zig-zag on the shining white of the cement walk. Ruth shifted her position in the chair, and drew her collar about her throat.

"Do you remember the night Francis took us to the movies, May?"

I nodded.

"We thought it was such a novelty to go to a show with a soldier boy. He'd just enlisted then," she continued thoughtfully.

I was thinking of that first dance I had gone to with him. It had been moonlight then too, bright as day. What a wonderfully good looking boy I had thought he was.

A car whizzed by. From down the street a flood of high thin whistled notes quavered, died away, and then rushed down the scale into the swinging tunes of "Turkey in the Straw". We turned. It was the boy across the street, late as usual, bringing the milk.

GOOD FRIDAY

By Theresa Anderson

Along the deserted streets of the drab little prairie town, on a particularly gray Good Friday, late in the month of March, a very small girl slowly and carefully picked her way between small pools of dirty water and soft snow with which the spring thawing had inflated the streets. Under one arm she carried a book disproportionately large for such a little girl to be carrying, its bigness being emphasized still further by the exceedingly snug fitting gray sweater which she wore, down whose back hung two severely braided bright red pig tails.

Her attention was directed straight in front of her, except for the occasional glance from side to side to verify by the surroundings that the course she took was the right one. It seemed that her destination was the tall wooden church at the far end of the town, for when she reached it she stopped to gaze up at it. From an open window high above her, she recognized the familiar strains of the song her class was to render on Easter morning.

"The Strife is o'er, the battle done!
The victory of life is won!"

This seemed to decide her, for with a peculiar brace of the shoulders, and a renewed grip on the book, she stepped bravely up the wooden steps leading to the entrance, and with a smart pull of the door succeeded in opening it sufficiently to admit her own little self.

Once inside, however, all her bravery disappeared as the damp chilliness of the interior struck against her body. It was as if she had been touched by a cold clammy hand, and she began to shiver violently. "When I stand in contemplation, of thy dark and dismal grave." From within the voices of the balcony were more

distinct and now the low rumble of an old organ could be heard in accompaniment. The child shrank against the wall, suddenly overcome by a sickening dread. These words unconsciously uttered by the group of singers above had taken on a real and terrible meaning for her. This was the day on which Christ had suffered and died. Could it be that his spirit was in the church then and caused the odor of thawing snow to make her dizzy and weak and stop her breathing? If she could only get out into the open air again! But she was powerless to move and could only stand and stare ahead of her. She saw the sun slowly descend until the last red peak had sunk below the roofs of the houses. Then a shadow seemed to creep in and settle itself over all the objects in the church until they were but dim outlines in the dusky interior. Darker and darker it seemed to grow until at last nothing but the purple stained glass window was discernible, upon which the head of Christ could be outlined, the bruised head with its crown of thorns.

All at once she was aware that the labored tones of the instrument above had ceased, also some one seemed to be approaching her from the balcony stair; and in a moment she recognized the voice of her Sunday School teacher.

"Why Lola, dear, why are you standing here all alone in the dark? Why didn't you come up stairs? We needed your help on the song."

"I guess I couldn't a' sung anyway, my throat feels so tight and queer."

"I should think it might, after breathing much of this air. Mine feels somewhat the same." She opened the outer door and they both passed out. "Maybe you'd like to wait here and walk home with the rest. It's pretty dark to be going home alone."

"Oh, no, I'm not a bit afraid."

"Well, good night then, Lola."

Her teacher stopped and kissed her good-by. "Don't forget Easter Morning. It's going to be a glorious day; and we need your help on the song." With that her teacher departed and Lola, inspired by the new thought, that of an Easter day accompanied with white dresses and lilies, turned her footsteps homeward along the same path which she had come, and was soon swallowed up in the darkness.

By Ester Motz

The night was clear and cold and still; yes, very still. It was that awful stillness, broken only by the occasional snap of twigs or crack of the ice in the ditch along the road, that made one feel the cold much more. All about, for miles it seemed, lay endless heaps of snow, smooth and straight, except where a roadway had been broken. The long furrow that constituted the road was at first marred by only a dot far away. Soon the dot

seemed to grow larger and larger until it took the form of a human being, evidently a woman. An immense shawl was wrapped over her head and covered her almost entirely. In her arms the woman carried a large bundle to which she spoke occasionally. Once she stopped as she shifted the heavy bundle from one arm to the other. The shawl fell back and revealed the form of a child. "She's sleepin' yet," the woman muttered to herself. "It's funny how she can sleep; but then, she don't know what I'm doin'. Maybe she thinks she's on her cot at home."

Home? Was there such a place for her now? The thought brought back stinging memories: It was too much -- and that road seemed endless. The woman drew one hand from under the shawl and held a small dark bottle to her lips. Ah, that felt better. She could walk better now, altho the bundle she carried seemed to grow heavier with every step. Yet, for that bundle she must keep on, she must! Her folks had said she wasn't fit to care for the child. Since Jim had died they had hardly left her alone with the baby. They had been afraid that when she was under the influence of what the phial contained, she would injure the child. Hurt her own child? Did they think she had lost the last spark of humanity? It was true, she was a slave to the dope she carried but thru it all the intense mother love lived.

Jim, the baby's father, had always been so kind. Nell had relied less and less upon the pleasure the bottle furnished while "he" had lived. Before he came she had never known the meaning of love. As the 'black sheep' of the family, Nell had never received nor expected love from anyone. Her brothers and sisters had pleasures, of course. That was to be expected; but for her there was always work. Up before the sun and up until long after the night crept on, she had worked, worked, worked. After that she was always too tired to think of pleasure other than that afforded by the hard bed upon which she sank at night, too weary to notice that the bed was not clean.

And then had come the day when she had been sent to Aunt Sade's on an errand. The day had been very hot and the road long and dusty. Beside the road, the timid shoots of grass had been scorched by the merciless sun as it beat down day after day. Far away on either side of the road stretched the burned fields, but beyond that were trees. How she had wanted to run over there and rest beneath the trees; it must be cool there. But she had hurried on; the way to Aunt Sade's was long and Nell must return before dark. The hot ground had burned her feet and her head had throbbed as the merciless heat beat down upon her. At last, Aunt Sade's house, a poor, delapidated looking shack had appeared around the bend in the road. Maybe Aunt Sade wouldn't mind if she rested a while, the child had thought; her feet seemed so very heavy. The ground had seemed to rock, too, and sometimes to spin past. How strange the house had looked, and where was the door? As she had reached the steps the door had been opened and the figure in the door seemed to spin around Nell.

That was all she had remembered until she lay on a cot and the tall, thin, extremely thin form of a woman bent over her. "Feelin' better now, honey?" How strange, thought the child; no one had ever called her that before. "Uh huh," she had answered and closed her eyes. It felt so good to be there. With her eyes

closed she could see such beautiful things. There were great trees making shade everywhere. Beautiful ladies, handsomely dressed men, beautiful children were playing about. Within a little group of trees a great fountain bubbled, and flashes of red, purple, blue, and gold played in the sun. Where did all the water come from, the child wondered. Farther along, she could see a small stream coming from the fountain and children were playing about there. She wondered if she dare go there, too. No, she guessed she mustn't. She didn't belong and maybe they'd send her away.

"Want a drink, honey?" The cracked tones of Aunt Sade had roused the child from her stupor. "Dope makes you feel good, eh? Knew it would. I'd'a been crazy in this God forsaken wilderness if it hadn't been for my little bottle. Jest you lay there till you feel like gettin' up." The child had smiled and dreamed on.

Yes, so it had begun. The woman, as she trudged along the road, sighed as she remembered. Aunt Sade had given her some of the stuff in a bottle when she had gone home and told her how to use it. Nell had used it ever since.

The bundle in her arms grew heavier and heavier as she stumbled on. Her footsteps began to be marked by blots of red which became larger and larger as her steps became more irregular. She shifted the bundle again and peeped at the child. She still slept; it was well; let her sleep. If she could only reach the village before that stupor overtook her. Her head felt so strange now. Well, she must go on.

Nell's mind wandered back again to the days of her girlhood - It had been easier after her visit to Aunt Sade. The little bottle had made her forget the harsh treatment which became more harsh as she grew older. One day her father had discovered the bottle. Nell would never forget the beating he had given her. She had never quite forgiven her father for that. They (her folks) had never given her any pleasure; why should they care about the pleasure she derived from the dope? She had done her work and it was easier then. But Aunt Sade had given her more; how and when no one knew but herself, and the girl had grown to womanhood, still a slave to the dope.

And then Jim had come. Nell would never forget that. She and Jim had often talked of their first meeting. - - - "Got any work fer me?" Mr. Drake looked up from his task of sharpening the scythe and saw before him a young man, a veritable physical giant, his blue overalls fitting too snugly to his huge form; his cap set back on his head, and a broad grin on his face. "What kin ye do?" Drake continued, turning the grindstone.

"Oh, most anything I guess. Aint very perticular; done most anything lately." Jim continued to grin.

"Well, I do need a new man about the place, and you look strong an' hearty. I might try you. But you've got to work if you stick round here."

The grin left Jim's face. "Oh, I wa'nt plannin' on hangin' roun' doin' nothin'".

"Well, it's about supper time an' I guess you'd better come in an' have a bite. We'll talk business later."

Just then a young girl of probably seventeen slouched out thru the door. "Supper's ready, Pa." The words came automatically but at sight of the stranger the girl flushed slightly, relieving the frightful pallor of her complexion. With a glance at the stranger she turned back into the house and did not appear again that night. Jim wondered who she was. Why did she not eat with the rest? Evidently she was a servant, he decided.

The evening passed and Jim was to remain. In the morning he was aroused by the clang, clang of the breakfast bell. "Say, you lazy bum, ef you figger on stayin' here you aint goin' to lay in bed all day." The harsh tones of his new employer made Jim almost sorry he had asked to stay. Then the vision of the girl of the night before came back to him. Who was she, and what ailed her? Her face, beautiful naturally, but aged by the life she led, looked unnatural, almost uncanny. Her dark eyes, sunken and heavy rimmed, held such a hopeless, tired expression that Jim's rough heart was touched. He must find out who she was. Hastily dressing, he climbed down the ladder from the loft where he had slept and went to the kitchen from which the inviting odor of coffee and griddle cakes issued. The meal proceeded in silence and Jim was sent to the field.

At noon one of the younger children brought Jim his lunch. "Say, kid, who's that girl at your place; that one with the awful white face?" The child looked at him in surprise.

"You mean Nell? Aint you never heard of her? She's one of the family but she don't right belong, Pa says. She allays was kinda funny and now she takes some stuff, -- dope, pa says it is. He licked her fer it once but it didn't do no good." Jim finished his lunch in silence and the child left with the empty pail.

Days and weeks had passed into months and it had become a general comment thruout the country that that new hired man at Drakes was in love with that queer, half-witted girl who took dope. As Nell dragged herself along the road she laughed hysterically at the recollection of the comments her final marriage to Jim had caused. What did that strong, healthy man want with that sickly girl? No one had understood and everyone had wondered, excepting the two most concerned.

"D'you reckon you'll be happy keepin' house fer me?" Nell's lips parted in a smile as she was lost in the dreams of the past.

"There aint nothin' I'd like better," she had replied. "I never cared fer nothin' but the dope afore you came; seems now I can't think of nothin' but you. I don't use the dope any more, hardly.

Then they had been married and had been happy in their little home across the way. Nell came to rely less and less upon the little bottle for comfort and the day came when she left off its use entirely. Her cheeks had taken on a bloom they had never known before. Little by little the hollows in her cheeks had rounded out, the circles disappeared from about her eyes, and a new look had entered her face. Then the baby had come; how happy she and Jim had been! "She's agoin' to look jest like

you, Nell, her eyes is the same dark shade." As Nell recalled this, tears came to her eyes. She tried to brush them away but there were too many. Besides, the bundle was so heavy now, it seemed she must lay it down. - But wasn't that a light ahead? Her numbing senses seemed to waken as the prospect of a near end to her journey came in view. Yes, surely that was the village. She must go on, she must. The child stirred in her arms and uttered a feeble cry of "Mummy", then was still.

Nell paused a moment to rest and then dragged on. Somehow, it seemed that Jim was ahead there calling her on. She could see him at times, she thought, - first as he had always looked and then as he had looked all crushed and bleeding when he had been carried into their little home. No one seemed to know how it had happened but passers-by on the road had found him there, pressed beneath the heavy wagon. Evidently there had been a runaway. Nell could hardly understand at first. Jim, her Jim, the only one she had ever cared for before Baby came, the only one who had ever cared for her; could it be he who was lying there? His great body lay helpless and his kind face smiled at her, but he spoke no word. For a while he lived and then came the day when he was taken away in the rough coffin of boards.

It seemed to Nell she could never smile again. There was nothing now to care for. "Better come to our house with the kid. You can't starve an' worry yerself to death here, folks'll talk. Ma's kinda worried about the kid."

Meekly, dumbly she had followed her father to her old home, the place that held nothing but bitter memories. Then she had once more resorted to the old comforter - the phial that brought forgetfulness. The summer had passed and winter had come. Nell was back in the old rut slaving from dawn until dark. At first she didn't care but when they tried to make Baby work, that was too much. Baby was four now, and Nell would not have her spend her life as she had spent hers.

"That kid's goin' to work fer her eats here. A poor old man like me can't afford to feed two families without they work". Her father's tones were more harsh than ever.

"But she's so little, she aint big enough to carry them milk pails," Nell's pleading voice only made her father more angry.

"Then take the cussed brat an' get out," He gave his daughter a menacing look. "But don't you never say you wasn't offered a home. If you'd leave that dope alone you might get another man."

"I couldn't marry again, 'twouldn't be right to Jim. But that baby aint goin' to slave like I done. Jim says to me: "Give the girl a eddication. We aint had none but she's agoin' to ef I kin make it." He couldn't an' I'm agoing to. The dope don't hurt me much an' it gives me strength to work an' I recon I earn both our keeps here." Hardly knowing how she dared, Nell answered her father sharply. More harsh words

had followed until the family retired. Nell, however, lay awake staring at the rough boards in the ceiling of the attic where she lay. Her child wasn't even allowed to sleep with her any more. But what could she do? There was nowhere to go and they might starve. Here, at least, the child had food. Would it be right to leave, even for her sake? Then a thought occurred to her: what if she were to die? What would become of Baby then? Even in her dulled mind Nell realized that she could not hold out much longer; the dope didn't seem to work so well lately. The thought roused her almost to a frenzy. She couldn't stay; she must leave and take Baby along. Death would be preferable to experiencing a Hell such as she had gone thru. The child must not be left to that.

Then an idea had come. Did she dare? At least she might try. Rising stealthily, she wrapped a shawl about her and climbed down stairs. There on an old cot lay the baby, asleep. Carefully lifting her from the cot, Nell started out. She hardly knew where she was going, but go she must.

The incident of the evening passed fitfully thru Nell's mind as she neared the village. Yes, there was a light; it must be morning and someone was rising. Or was it evening? Nell couldn't remember. The stupor was fast overtaking her and she must hurry. As she stumbled along she reached the door of the little house and rapped timidly. The door was quickly opened and a little woman drew back, astounded at the figure on the steps.

"Fer land sakes, come in. What ails ye? Why Pa, its a woman an' she's all in, carrying a baby, too." Her round, good-humored face took on an air of deep concern. "Put on the kettle, Pa."

She reached out her arms to take the child. Suddenly relieved of her burden, Nell reeled and fell to the floor.

"Why, the poor things fainted; help me get her to the lounge, Pa." Between them they bore the frail burden to the cot in the corner of the cozy little room. In the center of the cot a huge gray cat, aroused by the unusual proceedings, stretched itself lazily and jumped to the floor. Flashes of light from the fire in the stove danced upon the wall, lit up the rude cupboard, flickered across the checkered table cloth, died down, and flashed again. After nosing about the empty saucer behind the stove, the cat discovered the sleeping child and curled itself up beside her. The child still slept and only moved slightly as the heat from the little stove crept thru the heavy coverings.

"Who is she, d'ye know, Ma?" The man looked down at the white face of Nell.

"I think it's old Drake's daughter, - the one what used to be a dope fiend. She married Jim Larry some years ago. You remember Jim was killed last summer." The man nodded.

"Must a got tired of living with her dad; aint no one kin get along with that man. Where's she hit for, I wonder?" Ma was busy mixing a hot drink and answered with only a shake of her head. Then Nell moved - "Baby, where is she? Have they

taken her again?" Her eyes were wide with terror as she looked from the kindly face of the man standing beside her, to the motherly figure stirring the mixture in the cup. The older woman came quickly to the cot. "Never mind, honey, Baby's all right -- sleepin' there by the fire. Jest try to drink this an' ye'll feel better. That's the girl. Now lay back an' rest. Ye must a walked a long ways. It's early mornin' an' I reckon ye've walked most all night by the locks of ye. Can ye drink a little more?"

The terrified look left Nell's face as she sipped the hot drink. Her mind was a jumble yet; - she couldn't seem to remember how she had got there, only that it felt good to be there. The stupor was returning and a different feeling was accompanying it. There was something she had meant to do; what was it? The cry of the waking child revived Nell somewhat and she stretched out her arms in the direction of the cry.

The older woman went quickly, picked up the child, and brought it to the mother.

Nell remembered now; she had come to give the baby away. Yes, that was it. She glanced about the little home. The fire in the little stove burned brightly. The steam from the tea kettle rose into the air and made Baby laugh gleefully. This was a home, tho't Nell, and it reminded her of her own little home with Jim. Jim was calling again, too, and she felt she must make haste.

"They wanted to make her work as they did me," she began, her eyes resting on those of the motherly old woman who sat on the edge of the cot, her knotted hands twisting the edges of her blue apron. "After Jim went, I took to dope again an' I guess I'm about done for. Baby couldn't stay there with Pa and Ma; they'd kill her with work. Last night we had words an' I took Baby an' went." Her voice trailed off into nothing and her eyes closed. They soon opened again and with added effort she continued her story.

"I tho't I could get someone to take her." Her arms tightened about the child. "She ought to learn somethin'; Jim wanted her to. They don't care for her anyhow, only to make her work, but they wouldn't try to get her back. We saved, Jim an' me, an' I've the little bag of money here. I hid it so Pa wouldn't know." Again the stupor overtook her and the speaking ceased. The older woman wiped the tears from her eyes with her apron and the man turned away to the window.

"I tho't as how some one'd take her. The money would help an' she could help in little things about the house. She's four, now, an' folks say as she's real bright." Her pleading eyes gazed at the woman. No one could resist that look. The thing seemed a little impossible at first, but Nell was sinking rapidly and a decision must be made.

"What do ye say, Pa? Can we take her? Seems there aint no one else here as could. Mrs. Jenkins is a motherly old soul, but land knows she's got enough with her own." The woman's voice carried a note of pleading.

"It's been a long time since we've had children aroun', Ma." The man came and laid his huge work-hardened hand on his

wife's shoulder. "We can't turn her out an' seems like the good Lord sent her to us, Ma"

Nell's eyes opened. "Jim's callin' to me now; it's getting louder all the time. I hope it aint askin' too much -

"Never mind, dearie, the baby can stay. It's been lone-some here all these years. We'll do the best we can by her."

"Thanks, ye're better'n I thought folks could be. An' ye'll call her Nell? Jim would want it, I guess. He's callin' so now, I guess I've got to go." The voice trailed off into silence, the tired eyes closed, and the frail body relaxed.

THE PRAIRIE

By Gladys E. Johnson

I

A glaring sun, a dusty path: my thought
Turns to the sun-baked prairie's silent sweep,
Where brown earth and blue sky are stretched and brought
Together. In a long, red line they creep - -
A stumbling file of driven, red-eyed steers,
Dusty and over-heated, marched for days
To feed upon the green-tipped, glinting spears
Of copper-colored grass, stretching to haze.

The sun sets and the prairie droops to rest.
An evening wind blows up where clouds amass,
And cools the cattle, sniffing air. But best --
It carries whiffs of copper-colored grass
To nostrils which today along the trails
Were filled with dust. The prairie never fails.

II

The gray of eastern sky brightened with red
And yellow flame, fading of million stars,
Rustling in sagebrush of a wind soon sped,
The morning songs of meadowlarks, whose bars
Of prairie songs can reach the purple gloom
Of distant tree-filled coolies; and the sun
Gleams on the two gray red-blotched rocks that loom
Above the late wild roses: Day's begun.

At noon thin waves of heat move along the hills;
Strong winds that scorch race through the sun-dried brush,
Where larks with drooping wings and open bills
Seek shade. Roses have lost their smell, their flush;
Along the road dust chokes the goldenrod
Who owns such terrible power? The prairie god.