

Armor Against Death

I

At last the hour of peace, the voices stilled,
The contest ended at last. The citadel
Is saved, and the sudden ambushes are over.
The night is lovely and quiet where we dwell.

The armor of love, invisible, inward-shining
Putting it on together, let us sing.
No weapon can penetrate it, nor one arrow.
O, unassailable, O, perfect thing.

II

As silver frost upon a flower, the spell is laid
Upon my heart; as snow falling lightly
Whitens a ruined field, my heart is made
Lovelier than itself, transfigured brightly.

How beautiful the world! But, heart, you know
Your own enchantment, brief as frost or snow.

BETTY RICHART

Return

DOROTHY STEINMEIER

Martha smiled the way she always smiled when someone said something nice to her. Someone was always saying something nice to her, it seemed.

Years ago when she had spoken her first "piece" on the Children's Day at the church and had forgotten the last three lines, she had cried upon the stage in front of all the church people. Her mother had kissed her and said it didn't matter. Her pink ruffled dress made her look like a doll and she didn't need to say anything. Her daddy had told her that he would get her an ice-cream cone. Aunt Sue had remarked that her curls were pretty. Her mother's cousin Sam had chucked her under the chin and said he would let her ride his horse down the lane and back next day.

Yet she hadn't wanted everyone to be so nice to her. She wished that

someone would tell her that she ought to be spanked for forgetting those lines when she knew them and that she made too big a scene for a seven-year old. But no one had.

When they were twelve years old and she and her cousin Jane had run away down to the wood, slipped out their lunch in the morning and stayed away all day in the wood playing Indians, and hadn't come back until nearly dark, everybody had been frantic. Jane's mother was there, too. She was awfully worried about Jane, but she had spanked her hard and made her stay in the house all next day.

It had hurt Martha to see Jane cry, but Martha's mother had cuddled her and said that she was so glad her darling was back and she never wanted her to run off again. Grandmother had baked the prettiest little party cake, just doll-size and with pink