

RHAPSODICALLY SPEAKING

ALICE JEAN FISHER

Like timid pizzicatos riding a sustained legato, the cricket sounds outside my window are cradling themselves in the fused night noises. Rising in gentle crescendos above them are waves of wind; now they waken the leaves; soft bits of breeze sift through screen and curtain to move a curl across my cheek — shyly, like a child fearfully touching a dog; and shyly too, retire till the now tremulous vibrato of the crickets plays the nocturnal solo once more. The wind mounts again. It throbs against these brick walls; rudely musses my hair, disturbing my thoughts; the sleeper on the bed behind me moves in unconscious annoyance. There is another wind from across the sea — hand made, man made; long expanses of water now serve to sift its violence to a sigh for us, but will it forever; how long will our nation's windows keep out whirl winds, world winds? My thin paned windows would succumb to hurricane or tornado; how long can a nation merely bar her windows to survive; how long can we remain unconscious as the sleeper?

This is a wonderful night; cool with augmented calm and subtle touch of breeze — ingredients for romantic things like rendezvous, intrigue, and dreams. Rendezvous — with the wind in my face blowing back my hair; a delicious feeling like pushing through soft high clover with eyes closed, a clean fresh feeling; blowing my clothes till my dress falls snugly over my body drawing sharply back from my arms and torso behind and whipping at my legs; blowing at my face till I fight to keep my eyes open and press my lips together to keep the cold air from my mouth as I walk — no! fly! to my lover. For it's cool and calm and breezy and wonderful on the

moor tonight; and I've a rendezvous. Briar and branch, stone and step fall away as I sigh on to our place, our little niche in the moor where the grass is cool and soft, and the wind sweeps softly above. Now I'm here, and the wind can't touch me; my dress falls about me in folds, and my disarrayed hair lies in ringlets covering my shoulders with wavy tendrils. Pillowing in the grass I cradle myself in the darkness and listen for him. Only crickets greet me; silent at first, in fear, then unafraid at my quiet they continue their serenade. Only that and the faint wind over me touches my ear; and then — a familiar sound breaks the rhythm of their song, and my lover reaches our rendezvous.

Intrigue — with horrible stealth I scientifically climb from bed to floor, and open the door. Treading with velvet steps down the corridor, down the steps, down the lower hall, down the front steps and out — out into the night with its benumbing cold, its eerie sounding wind and frightening crickets which stop at my approach, then haunt my departing step — out into the night I go. With wind tearing at my eyes, my hair, clothes, and heart I struggle to a niche in the moor, a meeting place. After centuries of waiting a figure appears; unseen, I wait till the hated back is close — then plunge in my blade. Simply as that my horrible deed is finished. I hurry back through the cold wind, past the crickets, out of the dark night, up the steps, through the corridors, and into my bed. How blessed the wind feels through the window; how pleasant the crickets sound.

Dreams — The wind rattling my window has torn my curtain off its rod and its flapping has wakened me from a deep slumber. It smells cool and fresh outside;

the crickets seem to invite me. It's not too cold; I'll throw my robe about me. The moor smells good tonight with fresh wind blowing the air clean; the staccato note of the crickets is almost cheerful tonight; they seem to be chatting among themselves about some huge secret. The wind is chilly; here's a niche in the moor protected from the breezes; the grass is soft and deep here. I can rest here while the wind blows over me; I can listen to the crickets, and dream — of a mariner steering toward this spot, standing at the helm of his ship with wind blowing through his whiskers and, what is more important, against his sails — of gypsies traveling hurriedly across the moor

toward the city, stopping at night to camp in this sheltered place, circling their wagons about the campfire; dancing, singing, telling mystic tales; then leaving the embers to die alone, all vanishing into the wagons leaving the wind to whip around the horses and dogs about the fire — of vanquished kings and leaders who sought refuge here with their ladies before fleeing the country — of knights, and tournaments in this very spot — of high romances in this windy place, so cool and refreshing; oh, so cool, so soft, so sleepy.

Still cool, and breezy, and melodious, the night flows on; dark, enchanting, mysterious, and wonderful.

THE FEEL OF THE SOIL

NORMA JACKSON

When we arose, the sun had not yet begun to send its warmth through the rich brown earth of this southern Indiana farm. However, we were to plant potatoes and had a big day ahead. Soon the equipment was ready, and off I ran beside the horses, loving every particle of soft, red dust that played between the toes of my bare, brown feet. The road to the field was covered with this powdery, fine dust. It was my childhood obsession to make footprints, handprints, and pictures in it. Across the field we went, my grandfather and I. Sometimes I ran; sometimes I rode. Through the green pasture, across a clear, small stream, through a lovely wood full of wild roses and waking birds, then at last we came to the newly plowed field.

Even the smell of freshly turned earth made my nostrils tingle and my heart beat a little faster. I was quite shocked to learn that we were not to sow potato seeds but were to place halves of potatoes face down in the furrows. Thus, I spent my day crawling on my knees beside the furrows.

Never have I had such an experience. The feel of that cool, damp earth between my fingers, sinking into it with my knees, the good, clean smell of it simply awed my young mind. Something akin to reverence struck me as I helped there in my childish way. Something of the power possessed by the soil, the richness contained therein quieted my usually wild spirit. All day I stayed by Grandpa's side. Running for the water jug, opening lunches, and keeping the horses out of a neighboring field were all a part of my job.

When our work for the day was finished, and I had watched this splendid soil which was my heritage cover the potato, I felt strangely light hearted. I knew that from that soil my people made their living. That wonderful, powerful earth had made my existence possible. Something greater than man was a part of this. Homeward bound in the twilight, hand in hand with Grandpa, dirt-covered, exhausted, but extremely happy, went I.