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Belles Lettres

1945

Belles Lettres

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FOREWORD

We, the editors, endeavoring to maintain the standards set by previous volumes as being representative of various types of writing by Eastern students, present the eleventh annual volume of *Belles Lettres.*

IF

Chappie Fossett

If we could be together now, my day would be complete;
If I could know that you are near, and feel our glances meet.
If I could get the courage that it takes from stars above
To tell you this, my darling, you are the one I love.

If you knew you are the only one that makes my skies
turn blue—
If you understood my feelings and the way I care for you.
If little things I do and say could make your heart feel light
Like the little things you do for me that make my hours
bright—
I need no other people near to cheer me when I'm low.
I want to say "I love you"—and now, sweetheart, you know.

This is my way of saying that you mean the world to me;
It all began that April day by magic fate's decree.
So don't you see, my darling, what I'm trying to convey—
That I want you for my very own—forever—not a day.

THE MYSTERY OF THE LLOYD HOUSE

Sarah Barker

The night was black and stormy. Rain fell in torrents, and now and then the black sky was suddenly lighted by a streak of lightning followed by a crash of thunder. A strong wind fiercely whipped the trees, almost bending them to the ground.

Two men were struggling along a mud road, pushing their way against the drenching rain and the savage wind. The countryside was enveloped in darkness. Suddenly, a streak of lightning struck a tree in a nearby field, and there was a deafening crash of thunder as the tree fell across the road behind the men.

"Lord, I wish I had never listened to you, Joe. If it hadn't been for your bright idea about taking a short cut home to beat the storm, we wouldn't be out here on this god-forsaken road. No one lives over here and there isn't a chance of finding shelter anywhere. Lord 'a mercy, I'm wet."

"Ah, shut up," retorted Joe. "If it hadn't been for you staying so long at the store in the junction, gabbing with that little blonde, we would have been home before

the storm broke. Anyway I think there is an old deserted house farther up the road where we can stay until the worst of this is over."

The men sloshed their way along the mud road in silence. Then, suddenly, Joe stopped and caught his companion's arm.

"Look, Ed, through those trees. There's the house I was talking about. No one lives there and it is probably nothing more than a shack, but it will keep the rain off."

Ed turned and looked in the direction in which Joe was pointing. A sudden streak of lightning illuminated the countryside for a moment, and Ed saw a large brick house standing back from the road amidst a group of tall trees.

With one accord the men turned toward the house, pushed aside the gate that had fallen from its hinges, and began walking up the long-unused driveway to the house. The wind violently beat the trees along the driveway, and the rain continued to fall in sheets. There was no sign of life in the house as the men approached. The wind tore at the house unmercifully, and a shutter, loosened by the force, fell in the porch with a loud crash. As there was no protection from the storm on the wide porch, the men began to look for some way of entering the house. Suddenly Ed stopped.

"Hey, I thought you said no one lived here. Well, look, there's a light coming from that window."

"Well, that's strange," answered Joe. "No one has lived here for years, I'm sure. But maybe some one has moved in lately and I haven't heard about it. Let's look in that window and see who is in there."

The men walked over to the tall window and looked in on an old fashioned parlor. The room was lighted by an old kerosene lamp, made of dark red glass, which sat on a table in the center of the floor. The lamp cast a dull red glow over the room, disclosing several pieces of dingy antiques. There was a tall secretary in the corner, its empty shelves thick with dust and the glass cracked in one of the doors. A dirty, faded love seat was placed in front of the marble fireplace. With the exception of the lighted lamp, there was no sign of life. Ed was the first to speak.

"Well, whoever lives here certainly hasn't bothered to clean the house. It doesn't look as if it had been lived in for years and years. Look, there's dust inches thick on the furniture and all over the floor. There's even cobwebs

on that old love seat. No one has set there for many a year."

"Yeah," replied Joe, "it does look deserted, but there is the lighted lamp. Some one must be here, but I wonder where they are. The rest of the house is dark. Anyway we can't stay out here in this downpour. Let's try to raise somebody."

"Wait a minute," said Ed. "I don't like the looks of this house. There's something death-like about the place."

"Oh, what are you afraid of? Come on, anything is better than being out in this storm."

Joe started to walk toward the door, but, suddenly, Ed gripped his arm.

"Listen, Joe, do you hear anything? I would have sworn I heard music. Wait, there it is again. It is music, Joe. Somebody is playing a piano."

"Yeah, now I hear it," answered Joe. "It is a piano and the sound seems to be coming from the other side of the house. But where? The house is all dark except for this one room."

The two men stood there in the blackness of the night. Amidst the rage of the storm came the faint notes of a piano. Perplexed, the men stood there in silence. Unconsciously, Ed still gripped Joe's arm tightly. The music played on.

Then, abruptly it stopped. For a moment there was silence. Then, the shrill, piercing scream of a woman rang out in the night. The horror of the sound transfixed the men and they stood there, terrified and motionless by the window. Suddenly, as they watched, the door to the room flew open and there in the doorway was a young girl in a long white dress. Grasping the door with her hands, she gazed wildly about the room, and then slipped to the floor in a heap.

"Joe, look, Joe," screamed Ed. "There's a knife in her back! There's blood all over her dress!"

"Oh, God! She's been murdered!" exclaimed Joe. "Quick, we ought to do something. Maybe whoever did it is still in there. Come on!"

The men ran to the front door. They started to push it open, but at that moment they heard a sound that turned them cold with horror. A shrill, cackling laugh came from inside. It echoed and re-echoed through the house.

It seemed to come from everywhere at once. With one accord the two men raced out into the blackness and safety of the storm.

A short time later found Joe and Ed, pale, terrified, and drenched, turning in at the white frame farmhouse where the sheriff lived. After much knocking and banging, the white-haired sheriff appeared in the doorway in his night shirt.

Well, come in, boys. What's all the rumpus about at this time of night?"

Frantically Joe and Ed related to the sheriff what they had seen.

"Sheriff, you've got to go over there," exclaimed Ed. There's a maniac loose in that house. A girl has already been murdered!"

"Now wait just a minute, boys. You must have been over at the old Lloyd place. Are you sure you haven't been indulging in too much at the junction? I was over by that house just yesterday, looking for a stray cow, and there's not a soul in that place. No one has lived there for years."

"But, sheriff we are both cold sober. And I tell you we saw a girl lying on the floor with a knife in her back," shouted Joe.

"Tell me, boys," asked the sheriff, "what did this girl look like?"

"Lord, I was so scared," said Ed, "when I saw her, but I know she was blond and she had on a long white dress. It had a big skirt—you know, a hoop skirt—like they used to wear back in Civil War days."

"That's what I thought you would say," said the sheriff. "Boys, I think you have seen Isabelle Lloyd."

"How could we have seen Isabelle Lloyd?" asked Joe. "All the Lloyds have been dead for fifty years."

"That's just what I mean," replied the sheriff.

"Are you trying to tell us we saw and heard a ghost?" exclaimed Joe. "Don't be foolish. I tell you there's been a murder."

"Sit down, boys; I want to tell you a story," answered the sheriff. "I have often heard old-timers tell of the ghosts at the Lloyd house, but until tonight I always thought the story was a lot of poppycock. But you boys looked too scared to have made up this tale.

"It seems old man Lloyd had two daughters, Isabelle and Harriet. Isabelle was a beautiful girl—tall and blonde —and she was the belle of the community. Harriet was just the opposite. She was rather a mousy creature—drab brown hair and sallow skin—and people just ignored her, because Isabelle was so charming and lovely. Harriet was always a little on the queer side—maybe it was because Isabelle outshone her all the time. Anyway, as she grew older, the family saw that her mind was affected. They hired a nurse to stay with her, but everybody thought she was harmless enough.

"Then, one night for some reason or other Isabelle was left alone with Harriet. While the family was gone a storm came up. It was a terrible night—just such a storm as we have had tonight. Well, Harriet suddenly lost what little mind she had and became a raving maniac.

"The story goes that Isabelle was in the music room playing the piano. She was an accomplished musician. Well, Harriet stole a knife from the kitchen, slipped up behind her sister, and stabbed her in the back. Somehow Isabelle was able to run from there to the parlor where she fell in the doorway. They could tell by the trace of blood stains on the floor.

"Later old man Lloyd came home. There was Isabelle on the parlor floor with a knife in her back. Harriet was found hanging by the neck in the attic."

Joe and Ed sat there in the front room of the farmhouse, listening to the old man's story, too stunned to speak. Finally, Joe turned and looked at Ed.

"Ghosts! Ghosts in the twentieth century! Lord, I need a drink."

MEMORIES

Bob Ryle

Going by like passing minutes,
Repititous in their ways,
Are my thoughts of retrospection.
Candid thoughts of retrospection
Ever mindful of her days.

Can't the sands of time be wetted
And their swift advance delayed?
Recognizing my dejection,
Oh, the gnawing of dejection,
Lest one thought of her be strayed.

BALLET DANCER

Billie T. Layman

There you stand motionless,
  Arrayed in a golden dress;
Breathing of perfumes rare
  With sunbeams in your hair.
Never was a thing so lush
  To awaken the artist brush.

Dark clouds gather in the sky,
  Thunder chants a lullaby,
So with pretended violins,
  Your ballet dance begins.
Lithe and gracefully you tread
  While thunder crashes overhead.

Now the storm has had its fun,
  Leaving behind destruction,
Forgetting you in its prance.
  But on goes your ballet dance.
The stage is a grassy shrine;
  You're an actress Dandelion.

SONNET ON A HOUSE

Jean Harrison

They say the house is as it was arranged.
The house redecorated hasn't changed.
Although the walls and woodwork shine and glow,
The colors are the colors that I know.
The furniture stands still, as if it froze
Where it was placed so many years ago.
But oh! the place to me seems very odd.
I wander through the rooms where I have trod,
And try to find the boards which once did squeak.
But nails have silenced these, and so I seek
To understand the sadness of my heart
Before I turn the doorknob to depart.
I gently turn the knob and then bemoan
The greatest change to be that I'm alone.

THE REAL THING

Nina Mayfield

Danny slid from his bed at 5:30 on that Tuesday morning and carefully slipped down the stairs to avoid awakening his parents. It was a bright morning, May 15, and as he cautiously opened the back door and went across the lawn, he shivered just a bit in the early morning air. At the corner of the lawn, he looked up and nodded at another small, freckled boy of about eight years, perhaps a year younger than he. Without a word the second little boy, Tommy, reached under the hedge along the back of the lawn and pulled out two machine guns—at least they were machine guns to the small boys even though they were made of wood. Tucking these under their arms, they hurried down the village street until they came to the court square. The village was sleeping as soundly as a cat after a night of roaming. The sun stood poised on the horizon ready to make its plunge into the sky and start another scorching day on its way. As it pulled itself up over the horizon, it touched an old gray cannon, a relic of Civil War days, sitting in the middle of the square, and gave to it a molten glow.

"There it is, Tommy. I'm glad we thought of this. It will seem more like we are real soldiers. Nobody will bother us down here this early in the morning. Mom won't even know we are down here," lisped Danny through his snaggled teeth.

"Oh. boy!" yelled Tommy. "We'll play like that ol' cannon's a whole big nest of Japs with machine guns. They can't run us off from playing down here this morning, 'cause they don't know we're here!"

Danny drew himself up, threw out his little chest, and proudly said, "I bet my brother Ted kills about a hundred Japs ever' day. He's in the Army, and he's in a big battle somewhere now. My mom and dad said he was, but they don't talk about it much. Ted sent me this bracelet from wherever he is." He proudly displayed a native trinket on his brown arm. "Betcha he is killing a bunch of Japs right now at this very minute!"

"Yeah, I know. You talk about him all the time. Just 'cause I don't have a brother in the Army you have to rub it in," Tommy mumbled.

"Well, come on. Let's fight if we are going to," replied Danny, "and remember, I'm my brother and a bunch of Yanks and it's your time to be a bunch of dirty Japs!"

By seven o'clock the boys left for home thoroughly exhausted and with their clothes wet all over from crawling through the dew-covered grass. Tommy jabbered constantly all the way home, but Danny with a sickly look on his face held his mouth clamped shut and stalked stolidly ahead.

"You're not a good sport, Danny Brice; I had to kill you even if you were playing like you were your brother," Tommy said in defense of himself.

"You shut up and leave me alone," answered Danny through his teeth.

As Tommy turned into his gate, Danny didn't even glance toward him, but marched steadily down the side walk and across his own lawn to the house. Entering the kitchen where his mother was preparing breakfast, Danny rushed to her and sobbed out a string of incoherent phrases.

"They killed him, Mom. Those nasty Japs killed my brother. I was playing I was a bunch of Japs and they killed me—I mean they killed him. I know they did; I can tell. I'll never see him again, Mom. Those dirty Japs killed him like in the show."

"Oh, come now, Danny, you have played war before and you have never acted like this. You were just playing. You know your brother is safe." As she said these words, she realized the irony of them and said, "Well, anyway, you don't know what you are talking about; how could you?"

Nothing she could do or say would convince him that he was just imagining it all, so his mother finally stopped trying; but she soon found that her troubles were just beginning, for he did nothing for the next week but sit in the house looking out the living room window and brooding. At the end of the sixth day his mood had penetrated the usual attitude of both his father and his mother until the whole house had the atmosphere of church on a rainy Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. Brice tried not to think of the possibility that Danny was right and they knew it was not sensible to let it bother them, but it overshadowed them, nevertheless.

The climax came on Tuesday morning two weeks from the day Danny last played at war. While the family was eating breakfast, the door bell shrilled in the quiet house; all three at the table jumped involuntarily and then suddenly became still, looking at one another. Mr. Brice slowly got to his feet and went to the door. There stood a young boy in the uniform of a Western Union messenger. With-

out opening the yellow envelope, his mind went over the words it would contain, those words so familiar to so many:

THE WAR DEPARTMENT DEEPLY REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON THEODORE BRICE WAS KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY ON TUES. MAY 15, 1944, AT 7:00 a.m. ON THE ISLAND OF SAIPAN.

The face of his wife showed that she too was thinking of those words which had gradually pushed themselves from the back of her consciousness to the front, until they were written in black headlines before her eyes.

She gasped and sobbed, "You were right, Danny. Something told me you were right all the time."

Slowly lowering himself into a chair, Mr. Brice tore open the envelope and started reading the message aloud in a trembling voice; but instead of the expected words these appeared before his eyes:

MAY 28, 1944

AM IN REST CAMP RECOVERING FROM BEING LOST IN JUNGLE FROM TUESDAY MAY 15 TO MAY 20 STOP AM FULLY RECOVERED NOW AND WILL BE BACK IN COMBAT SOON STOP KEEP THOSE JAP MACHINE GUN NESTS CLEANED OUT DANNY AND WILL BE HOME SOONER STOP LOVE TO MOM AND DAD

TED

The blanket of blackness which had gradually wrapped itself around the house and the hearts of its inhabitants suddenly lifted; the eyes of all three reflected the hope the yellow envelope had brought.

On the next morning, Wednesday, Danny slipped from his bed at 5:30 and went through the routine of that Tuesday morning two weeks earlier. When he came to the corner of Tommy's yard, he looked up and nodded importantly. "Come on, men," he commanded, as if speaking to a whole company . "We have to clean up that nest of Japs around the ol' cannon before breakfast. Ted gave me orders, and he's the boss."

With these words the two little boys tucked their guns under their brown arms and marched away to help win the war.

LOST—ONE YOUTH

Herbert Searcy

We regret to inform you, the telegram said,
And the sobs of the lonely mother
Could be heard throughout the house.
But the desk had known all along;
It had known since that day long ago
When its youthful owner, just in his teens,
Had stood there surveying his possessions:
Insignificant objects arranged meticulously on the polished surface,
A lamp—and books upright between two Egyptian bookends,
Bookends with a mummy's death mask standing guard;
Pictures of friends, a bottle of ink—
Blue-black ink that gurgled when it flowed into a pen;
A calendar, a so-called perpetual one
(As if anything were perpetual)
Resting proudly on its marble base
Along with a blotter, and letters
Soiled from too much reading.

No longer does the lamp spread its mellow glow
Over the calendar which still says June
Though more than two decades have passed
Since the boy last bade the room goodbye.

Yellowness covers the much-read letters,
The blue-black ink has dried into dust,
Death masks look hollowly from unused books,
And the pictures stare into space,
Waiting for the one
Who left his busy, cluttered life for the high adventure
Of saving democracy in a holy war—
A war that was to end all wars.

WHAT PRICE PLEASURE !—?—!

Marie E. Smith

It is Sunday afternoon in Richmond and college students weary from the cares of study (?), trudge slowly toward town. The object? A movie!

There is nothing like a good movie to relax a tired mind (or body, if the seats are comfortable), and so, having bought a huge bag of pop corn, we push slowly through "the madding crowd," as Thomas Hardy would call it.

Ah-h, there are three seats together. We make a

wild dash for them; tripping over people's feet, dropping a handkerchief, and knocking the hats off the heads of people sitting in the next row. We arrive at the seats, only to find that someone has just beat us to them. But,—with an attitude of "never say die," we trip (literally, too) our way back to the center aisle where we gaze longingly at the screen where the hero is kissing the heroine. Sigh-sigh!!

After about a half hour of playing hide and seek with empty seats, we finally drop into a nice, comfortable (?) seat—covered with popcorn. Oh, but we don't mind, not us! We're out to enjoy this movie and we're determined to do it,—besides, that coat needed to be sent to the cleaner anyway.

The children in the row in front of us keep jumping up and down and screaming. Bless their hearts! We were young once (I think). Funny how I just happen to hit that little boy over the head with my umbrella, but then accidents will happen. Thankfully, he kept quiet after that.

The huge fat man sitting next to me *looked* like a nice man—he had a kind face. His hat would keep falling on the floor, and of course he never could pick it up himself, without standing all the way up. Each time I pick it up I repeat my girl scout pledge. Oh, why did I ever have to be a girl scout, and have a conscience?

The movie is so-o-o good, but sad. Um-m-m! Van Johnson is wonderful! Too bad he has to die. Psst, do you have a Kleenex I could borrow?

The lights go on in a flash; the movie is over. Everyone is wiping his eyes and sighing—oh-h-h—Van Johnson.

The crowd rushes for the door and exits, and whether we want to leave or not we find ourselves pushed out on to the sidewalk, only to find I've left my umbrella somewhere, heaven knows where, inside. Maybe someone will turn it in to the office (I hope), but we're so completely worn out that we don't have the courage to face that crowd again.

Homeward bound,—good ole campus looks welcome after our afternoon at the movie; at least there's room to breathe on the college campus.

LETTER TO AN ARMY WIFE

Jean Harrison

Dear Mrs. March,

Your box of cookies to Tommy arrived this morning, and I opened it although the fellows said you wouldn't un-

derstand. But I told them they just didn't know you very well. They laughed because they knew I had never met you. But Tommy talked about you so much that I have a very vivid picture of you in mind. Tommy told me about your garden and about the big fence in your back yard—you know how it is covered with morning glories. Then he told me about the little fence in your side yard which tempted all the high jumpers in the neighborhood.

Tommy told me how hot the fire in your living room was. He said the weather was much too warm for an open fire the night before he left, but you made a huge one anyway, because you knew how much he liked fires. Your two book cases must be full, for Tommy has so many favorite books which you have given him.

Do you remember the night Tommy dried dishes for you and he broke your most cherished cup? He told me all about it. You really wanted to cry, but I guess you just couldn't when you saw the regretful look on Tommy's face. The fellows here always told him he could humble the enemy if the enemy could see his face before he shot.

But Tommy was always confident that nothing could happen to him. This thought must have consoled you many times.

We all miss Tommy, for his attitude has helped us through many battles. He was always so sure that our company would return, and was right—all but once.

Some of us didn't have much faith until we had known Tommy. We have talked many nights until it was morning. Tommy was sure of himself and of his religion. Perhaps he had faith because he has had so much happiness in his life. But he told me once that he had never been happy until he met you.

The night before our last attack together we sat waiting for dawn. Our watches ticked loudly, for all else was quiet. When we had endured this for a few minutes, Tommy glanced at me and grinned. I guess you know just how he looked. He looked at me as if we shared a great secret which he had just remembered. We did share a secret. I remembered it, too. We were both thinking about his last night at home. He had told me about it several months before. I know you will remember. The old clock in the hall was ticking so loudly that you jumped up and stopped the clock. And when you came back into the living room he asked you what you had done. You bent your head and said you were stopping time until he could return. You said you'd go on living, but you wouldn't mark time. Each

new day would be so like the previous day that you'd just count them all as one big day.

I hope you didn't mind Tommy's telling me all about you. The things I know about you and Tommy really belong to just you two. But thanks for being so unselfish, for now I feel that I, too, know you and I can easily understand why Tommy loved you so much.

Gee! I miss Tommy, but writing to you has certainly helped. After you've been so generous and unselfish, I can't be selfish and wish him back here.

So Mrs. March, please think about me when you and Tommy wind the clock tonight. Of course, you'll have to wind it, for Tommy's hands are bandaged pretty tightly. But give that husband of yours my best regards, and I hope you don't mind too much about the cookies.

Sincerely,

Joe Smith.

CLOCKS

Nina Mayfield

Clocks,
All ticking with the unhesitating insistency of time,
Not slowing down for war or peace,
For love or hatred,
For laughter or tears,
Ticking out death for the old whose days are numbered;
Bringing ever closer the happiness of the returning lover;
Recording on the battlefields of the world,
Only blood and death as days and years slip by
With men and nations at each other's throats.
Clocks ticking;
Never pausing,
Never resting,
Never tiring,
Never ending.

CORRECTION—TOO LATE!

Eileen R. Lewis

Only fifteen more miles and he would be home. The ride was relaxing today, for cool summer air was a welcome change from the hot office, and Jim Sawyer was

certainly grateful for it. Driving along the road from Millerton to Pleasant Valley wasn't any new thrill for Jim, because it was his daily drive to and from work, but today it seemed different. Oh! it was the same road and drove along it the same time every morning and evening, yet Jim felt certain today was going to be one of great significance for him, and tomorrow even greater, for tomorrow Jim, Jr. would be home on leave.

The flowers along the roadside were starting to close for the day and the trees cast odd shadows across the sunlit road. The trees looked fresh and free as they stood about the countryside. Jim had felt free, too, but that was years ago before Madge had died. Madge was Jim's wife and he had lived only for her and Jim, Jr. When she first died, he thought life was useless, but Jim Jr. with so many of her ways, soon took her place. Jim felt free then, because life was so rich and plentiful, but now he was going to make certain Jim, Jr. had everything he wanted and he would work forever if he could just be certain of that. The doctor at the plant had told him his heart was very weak. He did take spells every few days, but he just had to keep working. He had changed his outside work for a position in the office when the doctor told him his heart was weak, just so he could live to see Jim as happily married as he had once been. His son was now a pilot in the Air Corps, and Jim was certainly proud of him. Life was really good to him at times.

The calm of the summer afternoon seemed to fill the entire world. It was hard to think there was a war going on with nature so beautiful. Jim could smell the fields of sweet grass as he drove along the road. The odor reminded him of the picnics he used to take Madge and his son on every Sunday afternoon. They were glorious days, but they were the past, and life was to be lived in the present. The past was hard to forget though. Jim's hand soon found the radio dial, and the notes of soft music soon mingled with the hum of the motor.

"Stardust! my, how she had liked that song," Jim muttered to himself. "Must live in the present though—must forget the past."

The music suddenly stopped and the silence startled him.

"We interupt this program to bring a short news flash. An army bomber has crashed in the mountainous region of Colorado. None of the crew escaped. The list of dead includes an army official, Colonel Whitehead, who was en-

route to a conference at the White House, his secretary, Lt. Jameson, the pilot, Lt. James Sawyer, and—."

Jim stared straight ahead, the words still pounding in his ears. The throbbing in his chest grew more and more intense. If he could only breathe more deeply!—Suddenly a crimson flash blinded him, his body slumped over the wheel, and an eternal stillness settled over him. The car careened into a ditch and settled on its side. A voice broke the silence.

"We wish to correct our last news announcement. The dead pilot's name was Lt. James Saucer instead of the aforementioned Lt. James Sawyer."

WISHING

Billie T. Layman

A Cinderella I'd like to be
With beautiful flaxen hair.
Then when people glanced at me
They'd turn around and stare.

A glass shoe I'd love to wear
To the Prince's ball
And lose it on the Palace stairs
That lead into the hall!

Then when the Prince discovers me
With clothes all tatters and stain
He'll kiss the cinders from my cheek
And take me to his domain.

A Cinderella I'd like to be
With beautiul flaxen hair.
But she's she—and I'm me—
There's lots of difference there!

LEAVES OF 1941

Pauline B. Amburgey

The night was beautiful, clutched in the strange, merciless grip of winter. The moon hung high in the darkling depths of the sky and shone down upon the lone travelers with scintillating brilliance. The stars were diamonds crowning the ebony silhouette of the mountains.

It was better cold. The speeding, whistling wind sang

in caves and hollows and roared in the snow-drenched forest near by. It blew snow from winter-weary limbs of trees and dusted the surface of the white sheet which lay upon the frozen earth.

The crunch, crunch sound of the horse's hoofs echoed along the cold, desolate country road. A man and his small son sat rigidly but humbly upon the animal's back. The boy sat behind his father and concealed his face in the warmth of his coat. The elderly man rubbed his vein-wrinkled hands against the stinging cold, and his steady, blue eyes were directed straight ahead as one who knows the purpose of his mission. They traveled in silence—a silence that contained a world of love and understanding and can only be associated between a father and a son.

"Johnny, we're here," Jackson Kelt said.

The boy brought his head from under his father's coat, and, blinking with the intense sharpness of the wind, he saw the yellow, lamp-lighted windows of the cottage. He sighed as if the sight of the house was a revelation.

"You wait here, son. I believe I'll git me some 'bacco too. He keeps hit along," Mr. Kelt stated, and drew his horse to a halt beside the yard fence of the house.

He alighted from the horse and went walking with that slow gait of a farmer across the barren yard and onto the porch. He paused at the door and immediately upon knocking was admitted inside.

Johnny heard the rise and fall of voices with the opening and closing of the door. After several minutes had passed, a car came rolling slowly and uneasily along the road, its shaft of lights slipping forward. The automobile rumbled past him and a panorama of carefree voices drifted up to him. He gazed unconsciously after the slowly disappearing car, but for him there was only a deep sadness lingering in his boyish heart.

"Goodnight, Doc," the boy heard his father say and saw Mr. Kelt walking briskly toward him. He jumped quickly upon the horse and turned it in the direction of home.

"I got the medicine," the man said, pleasantly.

"Kin I hold hit, Pa?" Johnny asked, timidly.

Mr. Kelt gave the medicine to his son. Johnny clutched the small package as if it contained life itself.

"Why ain't ye chewin' yer 'bacco, Pa?"

"I didn't git none," he answered and hastened to change the subject by asking, "Who was that that went down in a car?"

"I 'specks hit was Joe Clemen's folks, they allus come over 'bout this time of the year," Johnny answered. "I been hearing firecrackers all evenin'; they're celebratin'."

They ceased talking. What the boy was thinking about his father was possibly thinking about also. Johnny thought: if, if we could only git there in time, if we could just save him. Doc said it would. Gee, God, I won't do anything mean anymore if you will just let him live. He's been bettern' a brother to me. He even saved little Nell's life one time. This here medicine cost a dollar, it was all I had. Pa and Ma give it to me to buy a shirt with, but I'd druther have this for Ned. If we could just—

They had traveled for miles going and coming that night. Their bodies were numb with the cold and stiff with having ridden on the horse in a stooped position. Only when they saw the low-thatched roof of their house, nestling in the nook of a valley surrounded by rambling mountains, did they sit up erect.

The horse instinctly came to a halt upon reaching the yard gate. The unusual silence of the place twitched at Johnny's heart. He jumped quickly from his horse, and his father went leading it toward the barn. Johnny burst in upon the family with the happiness of a ten year old boy who has accomplished something for a justified benefit.

"We got hit, Ma," he said, lowering his voice, and without saying more, tripped anxiously toward Ned.

The room was large and dimly lighted by the yellow bloom of a kerosene lamp. The furniture was crude and scanty. There were two beds standing in back of the room and a table or two sitting in convenient places. It boasted of faded blue-papered walls.

The fireplace was warm and inviting. Grandma Kelt sat near the fireplace, rather secluded in the semi-darkness of the corner. She was smoking her pipe—her most valued possession. She often said that she could do without her pipe as well as she could do without her false teeth, but Grandma could not eat without her false teeth.

Johnny's mother sat near the fire in a rocking chair rocking four year old Nell to sleep. There were to be found the identical qualities of a faith and determination written in the lines of her face that were to be found in the heart of her son, Johnny.

"Where's yer pa?" she asked.

She had hardly asked the question when Mr. Kelt came in at the door, a great whiff of wind following him.

"How's old Ned?" he chuckled, and went to the box near the fireplace.

Johnny was leaning over the box, giving Ned the medicine. He placed the medicine on the floor and lovingly caressed his head with the understanding of one who has been dear to you for many years.

"Ain't much purt." Mr. Kelt said.

There was no answer from his son, but the father saw a determination of faith burning inside the boy's soul. He did not pretend that he was doubtful of Ned's recovery from old age, for Ned, the shaggy, brown dog lay limply in the box, appearing to be dead. Only the slightest breath escaped his body.

Firecrackers and torpedoes were heard booming in the distance. It was Christmas Eve, but along the Pacific coast real shots were being fired and lives and property destroyed.

"I wush Bill was here. I don't see why they have war and take our Bill away. I bet he's hit some of them Japs and Germans by now," Grandma said heartily but rather sadly, leisurely smoking her pipe.

Grandma's words caused a momentary shadow of a sense of loss to pass across the faces of Mr. and Mrs. Kelt like the flitting of a bird's wings when it starts to fly. Mrs. Kelt lifted her eyes from the page of the 1941 *Almanac* she held in her hands, and let them rest upon the form of the younger son bending over the dog. There were tears in her soft, blue eyes. Johnny is so much like Bill, she thought.

"Guess we'd better git to bed," Mr. Kelt said, removing his brogan shoes.

Grandma arose, knocked the tobacco out of her pipe, and walked feebly into an adjoining room. Mr. and Mrs. Kelt with Nell retired to one of the beds in back of the room. Baby Nell whimpered once or twice in her sleep.

Johnny fondly patted Ned on the head. He slipped from his clothes and, blowing out the lamp, climbed into the coziness of his bed. His brown tousled head sunk deep into the pillow, making a bowl out of it. I wish Bill were here, he thought.

The strange sounds of the night became audible as

sleep descended upon the members of the household. The flames of the fire greedily licked the soot-coated walls of the chimney and grate and cast dark shadows about the room. The family clock sitting on the mantle broke the silence of the night and reigned supremely.

Ned became restless and climbed slowly from his box. He crawled weakly across the floor whining, but there was no response from his little master. He attempted to awaken Johnny by putting his trembling paw upon the bed, but in doing so he fell down onto the floor with a thud.

Johnny awoke with the noise, and turning, he looked down to the floor and saw his dog.

"Ned," he cried softly with happiness, and jumping from his bed put the old dog's head on his arm. Ned recognized Johnny and endeavored to wag his tail, but it only swished across the uneven floor.

"Are you better, old boy?" the lad asked hopefully.

The dog attempted to wiggle his tail again but all in vain. The warmth that Johnny had found in the dog's limp form and eyes several hours ago had disappeared and coldness had taken its place. With the last breath leaving his body, Ned's life ebbed away—the greatest and most loved companion of Johnny Kelt.

Tears began to well in the blue depths of the boy's eyes and rolled slowly down his face and onto the shaggy coat of the lifeless dog. He remained in that position for several minutes, crying silently. Finally he carried the dog to his box and wrapped him warmly in the rags. He returned to his bed and endeavored to suppress the sound of his sniffled-cry under the coverlet.

Morning dawned. It was cold and the mist hung like a grey blanket over the universe. Johnny awoke with the scent of crisp, frying bacon in his nostrils. Hearing his father and mother bustling about in the kitchen, he arose from his bed and slipped into his clothes. There was something on a table next to his bed. He moved close to it and saw, to his childish dismay, ten large sticks of peppermint candy, a package of firecrackers, a package of chewing gum, and a toy pistol.

"Gee!" he exclaimed, "I didn't ask Santa fer nothin'."

Mr. and Mrs. Kelt slipped into the room, smiling. Johnny noticed that his father was not chewing tobacco but chewing gum. He also noted the absence of the scent of tobacco in the room. He looked toward Grandma sitting

in her usual place and asked as if frightened, "Granny, where is your pipe-"

"I'd druther chew chewin' gum," she said and resumed her chewing but with little conception of manners.

Father, mother, and son laughed together.

SWIMMING POOL TRAGEDY

Dottie Kendall

Tragedy strikes many homes in this world daily, and when we are least expecting it. I thought I was fortunate in that this dreadful event had never entered into my life. I was, of course, counting my chickens before they were hatched.

It all began in April, 1944, when I decided to take a Red Cross instructor's course in life-saving and water safety at the University of Cincinnati. I have always been interested in this type of work and therefore immediately enrolled when it was offered. It was by no means easy, as I was the youngest person in class and most of the others were men and women who were just renewing the course. We went for thirty hours, and at the close we received certificates entitling us to teach swimming and life-saving.

One day after I had received my certificate I received a call from the Cincinnati Recreation Commission, asking if I would be interested in a job and if so to come in their offices for an interview. I went over that afternoon and talked with Mr. Walker, head of the Commission. He gave me all the details, and when he was finished I found I had myself a job for the summer. Everything worked right in with my plans. I had two weeks before starting to work and the pool would close three weeks before I entered college.

The job was more like play to me. My duties were to teach swimming to children in the tenement district of Cincinnati. The pool was indoors at one of the junior high schools. It was small but the children enjoyed it. In the evening the adults came and swam from seven o'clock until nine. One night a week I held life-saving classes for those interested.

Everything was running smoothly, with the exception of a few minor cuts and bruises. It was the last week the pool was going to be open, and I was in a small office provided for me to fill out reports. Bill, a young boy who helped guard the pool, was inspecting the boys before they

went in the water, and I'd do the same when the girls went in. We gave the children fifteen minutes to dress, take a shower, be inspected, and go into the pool before I started my classes. Just as I had started on my report, I heard a commotion, and a small boy came running back to the office. I knew without having him tell what had happened. Immediately I ran to the pool just in time to see Bill coming up from the bottom of the pool with the lifeless little body in his arms.

I took the child from him and began to administer artificial respiration. I worked on him and at the same time told Bill to call the life-saving squad. They came in twenty minutes and put the boy under a pulmotor. A doctor came with them and gave him a shot of adrenalin. But their attempts were futile, also. Naturally I was upset about this because I was responsible for the children. The doctor gave me something to quiet my nerves but it never took effect.

Everything seemed to happen so fast; reporters from the papers came for the story, the police tried to calm the crowd that had gathered outside, and the commission sent an investigator out for the details. Between all this I was trying to comfort the drowned child's brother who was crying on my shoulder.

After it was all over I went home, and this kept preying on my mind. I did everything not to think about the accident, but it was there and couldn't be erased. It was hard going back to the pool those last few days, but I had made up my mnid to do it. I had put so much in my work, and I knew that if I didn't go back then my career as a swimming instructor and life-guard would be ended. Such a thing I didn't want to happen because this work is my life. The tragedy will always be on my mind, and I hope I never have such an experience again.

MOONLIGHT ON THE CUMBERLAND

Dorothy Curtis

A moon, rising above the dim and distant rim of a mountain and shining on the waters of a quiet river, is one of the most beautiful sights in the world.

Darkness is moving up the river, and the shape of the trees against the mountain becomes indistinct and faint. Before the moon comes into view above the hills, its light may be seen, casting an eerie glow on the tops of the trees, turning them silvery—then ghostly white.

As the moon slowly climbs into the darkness, it is not yellow like ordinary moons—not on the river. It is orange,

a beautiful, large, and brilliant orange. Its radiance seems to float over the whole countryside, making the tree outlines clear and vivid. It covers everything with light, and the path it cuts across the river looks like a white ribbon, moving slowly with the lazy ripples of the river.

It is not hidden now by the hills. It stands high and proud in the heavens looking down on the sleeping earth and the still river. Still, except for the rhythmic ripples shown only where the moon is mirrored in the water.

Its color is yellow now, almost white, and as it climbs higher and higher in the sky, everything is calm, and quiet, and peaceful.

TO FORSYTHIA

Neil Roberts

O Forsythia! first flower of spring
  Your golden flowers are seen
Long before another kind of vegetation
  Dares to show its green.

Your flower, voluminous, precedes your leaf:
  It warms our heart to know
That though the winter gales are blowing yet,
  Spring smiles through the snow.

Summer flowers are far more beautiful
  —Their dainty hues inspiring art,
But you, Forsythia, coming ere the rest
  Warm the saddest heart.

REVERIE

Janet West

The you that trod in winter snows
And laughed with me neath April skies,
Built a world of golden dreams,
And whispered words through silent eyes:

The you that strolled on moonlit paths
And led me when the dark loomed near,
Laughed amid the summer rains
And brought eternity to one year:

The you that laughed and dreamed and hoped,
Then said goodbye to me,
Lives yet in the communion of our souls
And breathes in my reverie.