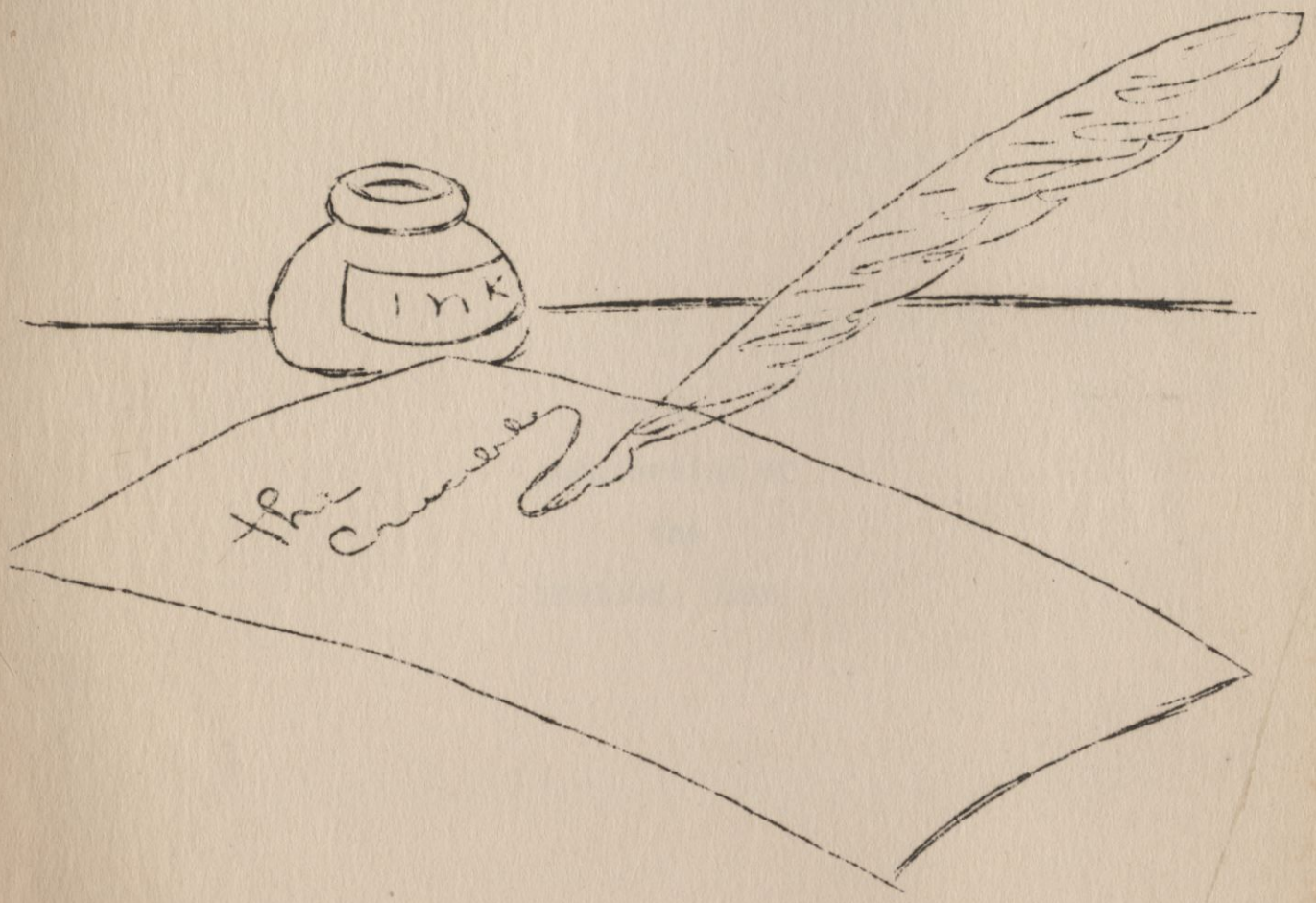
THE CRUCIBLE

[1943]



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To
the boys whose works
should be included in these pages
with the hope
that they will be able to contribute
to the
next issue.

THAT [illegible] HENRY

I recieved a letter from home this morning. No, not only a letter- a picture, too. I haven't quite got over it yet. Here is a picture of a friend, Mother said."I thought perhaps you would like to have it." There wasn't any name on the picture which was really a clipping from a newspaper. All it had was a tiny caption on the top- "Does His Bit". But I couldn't mistake it. Henry! Henry in a uniform.

We had never heard of Henry until one spring day when he stopped at our farm to see if we had any livestock to sell, for Henry was a cow dealer. Even then I didn't meet him until commencement evening when he came into the barn as I cleaned the cows and made broad remarks about my "stepping around to my work". We were to see a lot of him after that. Every other week came to be known as "Henry' week". The short stocky figure with its head of curly black hair and its quizzical forehead was likely to appear at almost any time during that week and somewhere we would hear a penetrating voice call, "Hel-lo." It was a sound peculiar to Henry even as the purposeful footfalls as he crossed the porch always let us know he was near.

He would pull his truck into the barnyard sometime in the morning and then stride to the house to see where Dad was. If Dad weren't around he'd talk to Mother and me untill he came. For Henry loved to talk. He knew something about everything. One Sunday afternoon I was sitting in the next room when he was there and I really believe he didn't avoid discussing one subject from the treatment of the Jews by Hitler to the way he had repaid one of our neighbors for selling him a poor cow as a good one.

On his views on war he was quite expressive. He didn't blame the young fellows one bit for not rushing to enlist to aid the

conscription program. "Dor," he said,"the war is going to be in the Orient and he wants to make love to a Chinese girl? Think of our gir here at home, too, with no one left but old man and boys.

To Mother's questions on his single state he answered patiently. "You see Mrs. Riddle, a woman's a wonderful thing, but if she doesn't hit the right spot it is no go. I'm-- I'm not hard to suit. I just don't know what I want."

Somehow with his harmless flattery he made Mother younger that summer. "I wish I had known you ten years sooner, Ma," he said when I showed him a picture taken when she was nineteen. He made Mother younger but he made me older. I grew from a careless barefoot country kid to a girl who curled her hair and wore clean dresses and discarded worn-out shoes. "You look all right today" from Henry with his brows raised in a question mark and his face thoughtfully serious was enough to last me until his next visit. "Not that I have fallen for the guy," I wrote in my diary,"but he is from the city and he does know what is interesting."

He pitched wheat in his white trousers sweating profusely while we laughed at his efforts. He lay in the shade of the pine tree waiting for us to come from Sunday School so he could eat watermelon and talk business with Dad. He came once when I was sick at home alone, and I learned how kind and sympathetic, yet commanding, he could be, when I tottered down the stairs to tell him where the folks were, and he sent me back to bed. He raced about in his white Chevvy truck and his black Graham car that stopped making that little noise when it was going ninety miles an hour. He became part of our summer as much as the sun, the streams, and the dust, for he brought into our lives a bit of color from that other world that was rare to us.

The fall came and he started back to school. Henry came more seldom. Sometimes as we walked home we would hear a roar and a white object would hurtle past with its horn blaring and a hand waving recklessly from the cab. No one needed to tell us it was Henry. At Christmas time he stopped on a Saturday afternoon with a gift for Eddie who was his favorite, and with faint hope of buying a cow from Dad. "That's Henry for you," Dad said. "He gives the kids pennies and tries to take nickels from their Dads." He inspected our gifts and helped himself to the candy, then sat on his heels and talked. "You know, Lois," he said, I was down to Virginia last week. I wish you could have been there. There was a group of about sixty kids in this one place (I had nickels for them all in my pocket.) and they were standing in muddy boots and overalls singing those Christmas carols or whatever you call them. It was," he paused," well, it was just beautiful." That was a new side of Henry showing. Not the joking, casual flattering one but a bit of him that could be touched by the beautiful.

That winter terminated the longest period of time in which Dad had ever dealt with any cow dealer. The mercenary streak, so imbedded in both men, struck flint when Dad accepted Henry's price for a calf and later repented for selling it so cheaply. He was met by a volley of words when he left me out after giving me a lift home from school. Henry saw it was no use to argue. He climbed into his truck again and drove up to the neighbor's, wondering-"What has happened to Bob Biddle, for he was always such a nice fellow to deal with."

We saw him once after that when my brother and I were back of the barn. Here he stopped. Dad was still feeling the same so he didn't stay. "Drop me a card when that calf is ready to sell," he

and with a gay wave of his hand he was gone. The calf died so we didn not need to write to him. Two years of days, weeks, and months have passed without Henry. All we have left of him are a few memories of his intense aliveness and vitality, of the sun on the dark waves of his hair as he sat outside the summer kitchen door, and that swift recklessness that showed he was a boy who would never grow up- not even in uniform.

------- Lois Liddle

Scent's Sense

Can you close your eyes and smell
The tangy crispiness of last fall,
Or the clean heavy scent of snow
On fine branches?
Days smell differently, an undescribable
Personal difference. I have always wanted
To distill the essence of a day
And bottle it to wear. Some time I'
I'd like to wear again
Morning in May- 1943.

------- Ethel Batley

But Soooo Necessary

The feel
Cold steel
The sounds
Just Sounds
Cold or torrid
Looking horrid
Why write of
The sight of
A radiator.

------- Roseanne Drachbill

Grandfather

Where was that familiar noise again, and where I heard it I was always sure to find Grandfather. It was a sound hard to describe but it always brought to my mind the scratching of the dog's long toenails on a cement walk. I used to call it a snip-snap. I looked about the darkened theater, and as my eyes grew accustomed to the big room I saw that naughty white head held high above all the other peering faces. I silently crept down the aisle and nestled into the vacant seat beside Grandfather. There was no sign of recognition until I touched him with a gentle tap and said, "May I please have a quill?"

He smiled at me as a doting Grandfather would, fumbled with his balck derby for a few seconds and then handed me that priceless little white ivory bone and said, "Help yourself."

I was very careful to take only one of these fascinating treasures as Grandfather had to send to a dental supply house in New York to secure this type of toothpick. It was made from a certain kind of bird's quill, and for me this tool had the magic of a large feathered bird in it. Grandfather was quite proud of his teeth and well he might be as at the age of seventy-two he had them all. "Thanks to my quills," he said.

A double snip-snap, snip-snap then echoed through the theater much to our pleasure but to everyone else's disgust. People started to look in our direction with discouraging glances, but Grandfather nodded to me to go on, and we continued at an increasing tempo. When the feature reached an exciting peak, snip-snap became louder and louder. As the action subsided, then was just a gentle

little snip-snap now and then.

Finally the movie came to an end, and a well- groomed but wrinkled hand reached for mine to help me out of my seat. We strolled up the aisle together. When we reached the lobby Grandfather said with the greatest pride, "We must put our quills away until we get home." Reluctantly I gave him mine, hoping I would be allowed to have it again.

How proud I was walking down the street beside him. He looked aristocratic. Snow white hair on a head held erect and covered with a black derby, black pin stripe suit and an immaculate white shirt adorned with a black bow-tie, and a pair of nose glasses tightly pinched in place. As we passed through the business district everyone stopped to chat with him and remarked how I is Grandaughter was growing to resemble him- an opinion he loved to hear. No one would ever dream that he would pick his teeth in public.

After dinner when Grandfather took the big rocking chair in front of the fireplace, I put my small one at his side. Every other occupant of the room waited in disgusted silence for the snip-snap to start. Like a bad boy he slyly took his quill from his vest pocket, handed me mine, and nodded his assent to start the evil noise. We played out little game with increasing enjoyment until the old mantel clock chimed my bed time.

-------- Roseanne Brachbill

A flame
At first flares forth
A magic spark. It glows...
It burns... Then just as life, becomes
An ash.

----- Doris Huffman

ON SEEING TREES

It is strange the way one becomes aware of things. Just last week sometime, I don't know exactly when, I saw, really saw, the shap of trees. They stand stripped and bare, grotesque or gracefulsprites destined for the cloaked anonymity of summer. The shape of trees is lovely, making patterns of symmetry as their shadows are cast on the ground. I am glad that I have seen a tree.

It seems that all my life has been centered in becoming aware of things. I rarely remember just when it happens, but suddenly it comes to me that here is something I liked very much or that I don't like, I'm always a little surprised that other people know about such things too, and if I'm a trifle disappointed also, am I so very different from other people? When I stop to think of all ther is to know and appreciate and when I realize that down through all the ages other men have known and seen these things, something inside of me rebels and I want to go out through all the world and see for myself. Just what I'll see, I don't know. But what I want to see, I know.

I want to see great men and women, not necessarily the famous ones, and talk to them and talk with them. I want to hold strange exotic flowers in my hands and smell the air of foreign contries. I want to be able to feel the sun warm upon me and the wind blowing through me, making me clean. I want to see my children growing up. I want to teach them, that no matter how bad men may seem they can be happy with the world. I want to show them valleys from t o mountain tops. I want to see their eyes when they look at fish swimming in the water.

I want to listen to birds songs and the sounds of children

playing on a summer day. I want to know the peace that must come when I have found the perfect communion with God. I want to see people smile at me and know they mean it.

Sometimes I think that if I stand perfectly still and reach out with my arms I can encompass the whole world and hold it close to me. This is part of me and I want to know it and to have it always.

The other evening I sat in the darkness and heard the song from a hundred voices floating through a church. Their music fell and rose like the slowly moving branches of the tree outside my window. It was an earthly choir, but coming through the dark of the night it had a touch of the divine. It was living without dying. It was my life the way I want it.

As I look through the window I see the shape of a tree of the top of the most distant mountain. Someday I'll stand beside it and put my arms around it, and nourish it with my tears.

-------- Louise Clark

Perspective

Silver rails
Parallel.
Disappearing into space,
Outlined by dark brown ties.

Telephone poles
Equidistant,
Vanishing in perspective,
Connected by aqua wires.

The river
Ever-changing
Adding contrast to precision.

---------- Doris Huffman

DEATH

It was a strange sensation to be dead. I had no feeling in my body and yet I could think very clearly. The room in which my casket was placed was lit by a dim lamp. I had always liked bright cheerful rooms and the dreariness of this one made me drowsy. I was almost asleep when I heard the front door open. Voices reached my ears, but I laid perfectly still. Had there been any blood in my body it would have rushed to my face, for I felt self- conscious with people there looking at me.

A man and woman whose names I can't remember, came to have their last glance at me. I wondered what they were thinking. We had met only once and I had not cared for them at all. They probably had the same feelings toward me, but had come out of respect to my family.

Old Grandfather Shorner limped in and stood staring vacantly at my prostrate form. He blinked his eyes rapidly to keep the tears from forming. I could guess his thoughts. He was thinking how unfair it was that youth, with all its fun and vitality was taken, while age with its sickness and sorrows was spared. If he could only know my happiness.

Martha came in with little Bonnie, and lifted her up so that she might see me as I "slept". The honest acceptance of this on the child's face made me almost smile. If only we all could think of death as little children do. It was only a second that Bonnie looked at me, and then her attention was drawn to a small china dog on the bookcase.

As i lay there thinking, I heard a familiar voice. Joan/ The best friend I ever had. My lip inwardly quivered as I suddenly realized we would not be having any more good times together. Poor

Jean. She really did look broken-hearted. Our friendship had been a true and lasting one after all. She took her l[illegible] look at me and with tears making little streaks on her cheeks, she turned and walked from the room.

The grim looks of the faces of the people who came to view my body gave me a queer feeling of unhappiness. I felt sad for them. I wanted them to be happy and gay. They still had life and all its fun; I had death. But this death was peaceful and I liked the quieting effect it had upon my soul. If I had only the strength to talk to them and tell them how happy I was, and that now, by dying, I was sure we would all meet in the great beyond.

People came and people went, and still I could not speak to them. A man entered the room and the lid of my coffin was lowered. I had failed. My life on this earth was past and I had told no one how wonderful it was to be dead. The casket was being locked and carried away. I sighed, for a long journey lay ahead of me. I was dead and I liked it.

--------- Doris Greene.

SPRING

The gald and jotous spring is here
And nature smiles from ear to ear.
And gentle sunbeams kiss the earth
And woo the flowers into birth.
The bullfrog trills his chocking lay
And fills with song the long glad day.
The robins from their merry throats
Send forth a volume of sweet notes.
All nature seems to warble tunes
This very air its lovenote croons.

--------- Pathedra Hayes

GREASE PAINT AND RAGS

All the glamor and glitter of the evening's performance was gone. The set was deserted. A chill seemed to descend over the stage as though all life had fled. From the dressing rooms trickeled the bustle of gay voices, the aftermath. A silk gown rustled as it fell to the floor; the clean odor of cold cream drifted through the half opened door.

At last all was silent. A shaft of light threw its beam over the empty stage. The furniture loomed ghostlike in the darkness. A whiff of the roses used in the second act permeated the surroundings.

A lonely figure wended her way down the aisle of the darkened theater. She had slipped in the door as the crowd was leaving and no one noticed the shabby, gray-haired woman shuffling by. She couldn't afford to buy a ticket, not even for the gallery. But tonite, her anniversary, she had had a sudden urge to see her old love, the theater.

"It's just as always," she thought. "When it's lighted and people are on the stage it is a living, breathing thing- a heart, young and gay, pulsing with happiness. But now it's dead - harsh, relentless, uncaring.

As she neared the steps and walked up onto the set her eyes dimmed as she thought of her last night before the footlights. It had been here, in this very theater, exactly ten years ago tonite.

"Martha, you can't do this play. It needs someone younger, more vital."

"I know you're trying to be kind, Max. You don't want me to fail. But I've got to do it. Can't you see that? I realize I'm not

as youn as I used to be but I can still act,you won't be the one to lose. I'm financing the production. Can't you understand? No matter what it costs I've got to show those people out there that I can still make them laugh, cry, or think. And I can. I must.

Max played with the paper weight on his desk as her eyes were on him, pleading. He dropped the little object with a thump.

"O. K."

_____ _____ _____ starring Joanne Francois! The lights blinked, first nighters found their seats.

"I've got to be a success." It was a prayer.

In the middle of the second act she was suddenly aware of a man and woman walking up the aisle. They were leaving! The audience became restless. Someone dropped a cigarette case.

In her mind she could hear murmurs spreading.

"Too old."

"She's washed up!"

"Let's go." More people walked out.

She knew. Only a few loyal fans were left.

The final act, the last words, the curtain, the end.

Later, as she sat alone in her dressing room, she could hear the muffled sounds of the men tearing down the set. They sounded to her like a minister saying a last prayer over her dying body.

As she stood in the darkness, reliving those moments, she heard in her mind the staccato sound the hammers had made, the shuffling of the feet. She saw again the pitying glances.

She tossed her head as if to shake off these memories. Carefully she threaded her way across the stage, passing rich furniture

and elaborate decorations. Her coat, already ragged, caught on a door and left a large tear. As she moved into the wings she was reminded o of another night.

"You're great!"

"Thanks, Pak." Her taffeta gown rustled and echoed the husky sound of happiness in her voice.

She was waiting impatiently in the wings for her final entrance.

"Damn! Mary Dean is ad libbing again. Will they never finish? Ah!"

She entered with her head high, her eyes sparkling. It was her triumph. The audience held its breath, she lived her lines, the curtain rolled down.

A moment - then <u>en masse</u> they rose to their feet. Thor never had made more noise with his hammer.

"Jeanne Francois!"

"We want Jeanne!"

"Jeanne! Jeanne."

A smile played about her lips as she waited for her curtain call.

"I'm on top now. On top! This is what I've been waiting for,"

She returned to the wings. Her eyes lighted on the young actress who had caused her distress in the last act.

"Congratulations, Miss Francois. You were wonderful!"

A gleam came into Martha's eyes.- cold, claculating, cruel. "You little fool! Do you realize you spoiled my whole last scene? You're thru! Starting tomorrow your understudy will take over. Now go!

Her eyes were hard as the weeping girl stumbled from her.

She turned - flowers, reporters, important men- everything at her feet.

Here in the gloom she shuddered as she remembered her callousness. She approached the door thru which the light was coming. The odors of grease paint and powder came to her. She saw the dressing rooms - one had a star under which was written the name, "Mary Dean". She shuffled by, unseeing, to a secluded corner room with no star. Here she had begun - a young actress struggling to get to the top.

"Miss Kelley! There's a man out here want's ta see ya.Looks like a big shot ta me."

Martha looked at the card which had come with the flowers.on her dressing table. "Max Stern". It was the answer toa prayer, the realization of a dream.

"I want to see you after the show" The words stared up at her.

A low knock sounded on the door. All the importance and assurance of the theatrical world entered with him. He was brusque, wasted no time.

"Martha Kelley! A hell of a name. Is it your real one?"

"Y-yes, Mr. Stern."

"Have to be changed if you're to star in my next production. Do you speak French?"

"Y-yes."

"Good! We need an actress with a French name. Helps build you up. How about Joanne? Yes, Jeanne - Joanne, well?

"Uh,uh - Francois." The name came out without her realizing it What was it he had siad?

"If you are to star--"

"Come on - snap out of it. Report for rehearsal tomorrow at none."

It was the happiest day of her life.

She turned her back to the room, smiling now. As she proceeded into the alley outside the stage door, she noticed the sole of her shoe was flapping loose. But it didn't matter. As she crossed the street a man lit a match with a rasping sound. She went by, half-hearing.

She stood for a moment on the corner, not quiet knowing which way to go. In the distance she could hear the el rushing its way uptown. The theater lights went out and the street was left in darkness. Then, again unnoticed, she feeble shoved her way thru the crowd.

------ Doris Huffman

Dreaming

A dream is but a little thing
A thing both blue and gay.
It helps to break the endless hours
That bridge the night and day.

Subconscious thoughts revealed in it
Recall the dark, the light.
The Dreamer laughs, he screams, he cries,
Throughout the endless night.

He smiles, his lips turned up with glee-
What is he dreaming now?
Of chicken fricassee on toast,
Or granting love his vow.

And now of blood and pain and war
Scourging the world with hate.
His hand flies out to stop the sword-
He wakes - it is too late.

A dread is but a little thing,
A thing both blue and gay.
Youth dreams, age dreams - but all for naught-
Entity is today.

------- Doris Huffman

VIA P.R.R.

The final "all aboard" sounded hoarsly in the air; the lantern gave the all clear signal and steam began to force the reluctant train forward. Steel met steel and the clickety-click of the wheels grew faster and faster until it was all a muffled blur.

Sitting in the green plush seat I decided to read a magazine on this trip rather than to spend my time looking out of the windows until I reached that nauseated state or started counting the passing telephone poles until my eyes could see nothing but them I read the first page of Stewart Chases' ARE YOU ALIVE, then my eyes began wondering around to the other passengers. It was strange. Here we were. Forty people enclosed in one small car yet we knew nothing about each other. To me it seemed as if everyone were looking furtively at someone else possibly wondering if he might be a member of the Gestapo, who had orders to liquidate him. We were the cross section of America. A sleeping America. Our seaports might be under bombing now but here we were, riding along in a delicately air-conditioned train with a what-the-hell-do-we-care-look on our faces.

Across the aisle from we were two gentlemen. Maybe it might be better to say members of the male species. The one was a typical blase train rider. A perfect example of the asleep-with-hat-over-the-head-ticket-in-hand type. Every now and then he would stir himself to peer out from beneath his chapeau, look around, shrug his shoulders and again take refuge under his covering again. His companion was even worse. He must have heard that liquor was going to be rationed and received his quota for years to come. Each time the air-conditioning came my way a strong whiff of spirits accompanied it and it wasn't long until I felt myself becoming a little "pixilated."

Ahead of me sat a very distinguished priest who ironically was reading the German Bible, "Mein Kampf". "I wouldn't read that book on a bet," I said to myself. I was so scared now that when insomnia comes upon me at night and I try to count sheep they even have a slight resemblance of Adolph.

Something had been zooming up and down the aisle ever since we left our last stop. A small boy under the illusion that he was a "B 19" was making hurried trips between his seat and the water cooler, never failing to dump half the H20 in the aisle until it was becoming quite damp. His sister a girl about three years, had acquired a color-book and the where-with-all to beautify it. Every other click of the rails was interrupted by, "Mummy, what color shall I make his pants? or her hair, or the shadow." She colored the book so vigorously that I heard a "rip" followed by, "Oh, Mummy, I've torn my book." At this state it would have pleased me no end to have turned and said, "It would satisfy me if you'd rip the whole damn book," but I restrained myself with difficulty.

With all this confusion I was becoming quite uncomfortable. As the train was puffing into a rather deserted looking place I thought how nice and peaceful it would be if, well, even if just part of these annoying characters should leave this car. I knew my luck couldn't last much longer, and in a very few minutes the train chugged from the station.

With all this melee continuing I was disturbed by the sound of sobs. Turning and looking in the seat behind me, I saw a child. A little girl, probably about the age of eleven, with light hair and her face buried in a large red handkerchief which trembled and shook with the grief of its small owner. I did not think it possible for any child to look so sad. I decided to talk to her. I coughed.

The sobs stopped. I coughed louder again, and a pair of wide blue, tear-marked eyes gazed at me. "What are you crying about?" I asked.

"Cause I'm an orphan and have to go to the city to live," the girl responded, with jerks between each word.

"Who is sending you?"

"The woman I lived with after my mother died. She says it's all right to keep me for a little while, but I mustn't expect to live with her all the time, so I have to go to the orphanage. I wish-- I wish I could run away." Here she broke into tears again. I looked at her curiously, wondering how it would feel to have no father or mother, and by this time I was beginning to feel very sorry for the little waif.

"It must be lonesome to be an orphan, but you are going to the city and you must like that?"

"I don't; I'd rather stay here in the country. I hate the city."

"Why?" I asked.

"I'm afraid. Afraid of people...and cars. I'm afraid to cross big streets 'cause I might get run over.

I looked and felt slightly relieved as I was afraid I might hear something that would spoil her idea of the splendor of city life.

"How long have you been an orphan?" I asked, hoping to become a better friend to the child.

"I guess a long time. I began to be one when Daddy died about two years ago, and then Mother and I went to the country to live. Mother did sewing and we had a big house, and then she got sick and worked too much and I was too little to do anything and Mother died. We had a pretty house...it...it had a big yard and lots...lots

of trees and bushes in it. My teacher kept me for a while. She was nice to me, but now she has to go away, so there isn't any place for me to go so I...I have to go to the city."

During this experience I had been turning plans around in my head. How might I help this child? I was without words, but I knew at this moment the most important thing was to build up the city to this little girl who seemed to be so much afraid of life.

I uttered a few words, "You know when I was a little girl," and from there I knew not where to go, but I knew I must continue. Well, when I was about your age I lived in the city. I have always lived in the city. I was very proud of this but I never cried because I was going to the country. I liked to see how other people lived and what they did all day. I can remember when I was afraid of the cows and horses that we used to see in the country. I thought it was great to get a way from the city for a while, but I was always ready to go back. How I liked those bright lights! They gave you a feeling of impertance and made you feel as though you were really somebody, and oh, yes, the nice ruffly dresses I had. All the girls had them, and every time we saw another new dress, we all had to have one. And the circus that came once a year. All the boys and girls in the neighborhood went. We always went in a group. Just think, it won't be long until you'll be with a lot of other girls and boys. They'll soon seem like your brothers and sisters. Think of the fun you can have! It won't be nearly as bad as you think."

By this time the round face with the swollen eyes and tear stained cheeks, was no longer dropped, but listening to everything I was saying intently. I have often wondered what might have been running through her head about this time, but the grin on her face gave me the feeling that I had at least changed her feeling toward the city

...maybe not much, but that smile meant something.

"Don't you think you might like the city a little?" I asked.

"No, I couldn't," was the reply, but the snappy answer showed that she did not want to give in.

"You could if you tried. All you would have to do is say you're going to like it."

Someone was to meet the child at the station, and since I was going to the same city, I had given my promise to wait and see that everything was taken care of.

At that moment the wheels rumbled more loudly on the track, the bell sounded, and the conductor called harshly, "RUSTON!"

Gathering my baggage, and with the small girl tugging at my arm we departed from the caravan.

Knowing that I would be seeing more of the child since we were both in the same city, and we had become the best of friends during that short train ride, we stood on one side of the station, and as I felt her small hand reaching up through my arm, we heard the last gong of the bell, and with a backward jerk, the train moved on.

-------Pathedra Mayes

WHY?

We wonder, why does she him prefer?
Or what does he ever see in her?
But, never do we stop and cry--
What in the world do I see in I?

-------Ethel Batley

Pine boughs
Sway and shed cones
Along the path I walk;
They whisper, as I pass their way,
A song.

-------Marjorie Rathbun

RIDING TO DEATH

This life is like a railroad train,
    Death is its destination,
And some get off and some get on
    At every little station.
We fly through space indefinite,
    And think--how fast we're spinning!
No starting point, no terminus
    No end and no beginning.

The Earth's a "Cannon Ball Express"
    Propelled by gravitation,
It carries passengers to death
    With fierce acceleration.
We travel, all of us
    On intuitions merit
For distance, whether short or long
    Our tickets we inherit.

Old Time, is the grim conductor;
    He checks you off with wrinkles
And so that you may not forget,
    Your hair he also sprinkles.
And thus we ride this whirling globe
    With death our destination
And some get off and some get on
    At every little station.

--------Pathedra Mayes

The woods
Stir in the Spring;
Buds break their bonds, and creeks,
Choking with great joy, overflow
Their beds.

--------Marjorie Rathbun

Lovely
Lavender and
Quaint old lace, pompadour
Fluffed high with curls, tortoise shell combs
Aunt Beth.

--------Roseanne Brachbill

GRAMP AND ME

Gramp Morrison was leaning back against the straw, almost lying down but not quite. He didn't look at me very often sitting beside him. He just looked ahead of him or up at the ceiling maybe, and every once on a while he'd put the cigarette he was holding into his mout and blow out big mouthful of smoke. I was eating peppermints and wintergreens--candy,you know--a whole nickel's worht that Gramp got over at Sump's Emporium when he got his wings.Gramp said they'd do, because he just needed them while he was talking... He was telling me about the fire in Chicago, and how he rescued soje livestock and a whole lot of people. It was very exciting, I bet... Sometimes he'd tell me about his other adventures, like when he'd been in China once, and Alaska, and Ireland, and way down in Africa (where the cannibals almost ate him!), and in California, and all over. Gramp had a shiny little piece of gold that he told me was all he had left from all the gold he got when he was in the gold rush. He must have had lots of money then because even their everyday knives and forks were gold, he said, And their plates, too.

Gramp Morrison and me are pals. We're better pals even than me an' Skip. Skip's my cousin-two-years-older-than-me who lives next door. I play with him sometimes, but he always wants to play rough boys' games and never be quiet, and never read or tell stories. I'd much rather be with Gramp because we just sit and talk. He knows everything, I bet.

We don't stay around Gramps house or my house very much because somebody always bothers us. At his house Mrs. Morrison is always coming out on the steps where we are with a broom. And then she says,"Quit stuffin' that child with such foolishness, Joe. Besides bein' the laziest man in town, you needn't be the lyinist." Gramp

isn't lazy, though. He was hurt in a war once, and that's the reason he can't work very hard, he says.

At my house, my Mother always comes out and says, "Dolphine!" (Mother always calls me that, but my name is Dolly. She said it's Dolphine because I wasn't born a boy and couldn't be called Randolph, after somebody she knew once.) Then she says it's time for me to practice my music (and sometimes I have already) or wouldn't you like to go marketing with Mother now? Or something.

So Gramp and I take walks. We used to like to go through Uncle Jim's pasture and up the hill to Old Man Schwartz's barn. It was a very nice barn because it was especially for all his cows; and it was all white inside, and cool, and fresh-looking. We were careful when we went there, though, because we didn't want Old Man Schwartz to see us. He might not have liked it. He's an old skinflint, Gramp says.

Well, this one afternoon when we were there Gramp was telling me about the Chicago fire and I said was he a real fireman? And he said sure he was, and then he told me how he drove the biggest fire-truck in New York City, too.

I was getting warm talking about fires. Gee whiz. It was so interesting to watch Gramp when he was talking. He isn't very big like my Daddy, just sort of thin, but with moving hands that talk, too, when he's talking. And when he gets excited, his neck sticks out and shows veins on it, blue. He doesn't look at anybody much, though, but closes his eyes part way sometimes, and little crinkles show all around. Gramp was getting warm, too, because little drops were all over his forehead; his teeny bit of hair was sticking fast on it. I said that it certainly was getting warm out and he said it sure was. It

must be all those fires I was talking about, hmm, Doll? So I got up from the hay I was sitting on and some of it stuck fast to me. I turned away from Gramp Morrison and pocked it off. Then I said, "I'll have to tell my cousin, Skip about those fires, Gramp." And he siad, "Aw, Doll..." Then he threw out his cigarette. He pulled his big hankie out of his pocket and wiped his forehead. I went over by the door. Outside was just like a big quiet... Everything was still, and when I breathed the air into me it prickled warm all over my arms and legs. I said, "Hadn't we better be going, Gramp? Because here comes the ole skinflint." I'd heard the screen bang into the quiet; it was milking time, I guess.

Gramp sain, "Sure, Doll. Where'll we go?"

I said, "O-oh. Let's hide over by the current bushes."

By the current bushes it was shady. Gramp and me sat down, and Gramp took another _ing out of his pocket. So I knew he was going to tell me another story. I didn't want to stay very much longer, though. There weren't anymore wintergreens and peppermints left, and the ants on the grass kept running up my legs. Besides I was afraid I might get in late for supper and Mother might say, "Dolphine, I will not tell you again; I will forbid you going to Mr. Morrison's house if you are late once more to supper. Furthermore, you do hang around that old man too much. It isn't natural. You'll be getting queer as he is." That's what she always said.

We were a pretty long time, though. But once, when Gramp squinted his eyes and took a deep breath on his cigarette, I got up real quick, and said, "Gramp, I've just gotta go." And then I looked over where the barn was to see if old skinflint was watching. And coming out of top, in one corner where the hay was, there was a little

puff of smoke. It curled right up under the roof; and then more smoke came out, and then it was just as if smoke was coming out all over the whole top of the barn. I jumped up and down and screamed at Gramp to look. Gramp got up and looked. I pounded him hard on the arm so he'd look at me. "Gramp!" I yelled. "It's a big fire. And all those cows are in there. And old skinflint Schwartz! This is like the Chicago fire, Gramp! Come on, Let's save 'em!"

I grabbed hold of Gramp's arm and started to run. But Gramp didn't run. He just looked at me. Then he pulled out his hankie and wiped his head again. "Come onk Gramp, " I said. He put his hankie in his pocket and stood up real straight, not stooped over the way he usually is. "You stay right here, Doll," He said. He pushed me back, hard, into the current bushes. I was surprised at Gramp--treating me so rough.

.....

Gee Whiz. Afterward, at our house, it was swell. Everybody was there. And Gramp looking so mussed up with black smidges all over his face, and where the crinkles were around his eyes, every time somebody came up and slapped him on the back, he just smiled a big smile, and said, "Aw, if it hadn't been for Doll there..."

And Mr. Skinflint Schwartz was there and he talked to Gramp, too, about all the cows and what a nice barn it was. And Gramp said, yes, it was. And my mother said, "Dolphine, wouldn't you like to get Mr. Morrison another cup of coffee?" So I did. And Gramp said "Much obliged, Doll. This is better coffe 'n I had during the Chicago fire. I'll wager I drank a couple gallons or so that time., just to keep me goin. But this little blaze wasn't nothin' compared to that."

Gramp Morriso is a real hero, I bet, Just like you read about in stories.

------- Phylis Wolfe

DISCOVERY

A piercing whistle fills the air
With vibrant, brilliant melody;
I quickly glance about the woods
In hurried search to find the one
Whose clear, sweet call has brought me back
From dreams of him long gone away.
The silvery tones are nearer now
And I look up at yonder tree-
There on the highest bough is perched
A plain brown bird; his color blends
Too well among the still brown trees-
His cannot be the sing I heard.
I sadly cast my eyes away
In disbelief, but some quick move
Recalled my glance, and as I turned
I saw against the dark'ning hill
A flash of red- a flaming bird
Perched on the limb in that same place;
A brilliant bit of melody
Burst forth from out his pulsing throat;
Entranced I watched from where I sat,
And listened to this bird of song
And beauty rare, and knew that now-
If not before- a fleeting glance,
A single glance could tell me not
Where God would be; the old doubt fled:
That this brown bird whose back faced me
Could turn and show a flaming breast
Was true proof that simplicity
Hides greatest art; new truth was born
And I had learned that God was All.

------ Marjorie Rathbun

I love
The wind at night,
The sound of rain on eaves,
The last glimpse of the dying sun
At dusk.

------- Pathedra Hayes

THE WAR AT LAUREL HILL

I know a man who lives alone on a hill. He is the caretaker of a hunting camp, not because chance would have it so but because he would have it so. But then who can say what chance is or how it works, for was it not by chance that I found Jefferson?

The sun's rays fell with a meaningful glare upon the dusty sandy road. A little wind casually lifted tiny swirls of the tan dirt and sifted it through the air. It murmured softly in the pine trees that stretched back long distances on one side of the road. Across the way it grazed the tips of the tall grass stalks in the meadow. It rested cooly on my sweaty face, pausing briefly, then running on, leaving only a trace of dirt. Somewhere in the valley a horn sounded, pleasantly because it was so far away.

Farther along the road where the trees fall back in a protecting circle, a farmhouse rested tiredly on cropped green grass. Slow waves of smoke from its chimney dirtied the clear blue sky.

Beyond the house the pines and the meadow gave way to tall old oak trees and red-leafed maples. In their shade grew succulent, smoothe stems of grass and layers of feathery green moss. The sun glanced furitively but kindly between the slowly moving branches. A chipmunk twittered mirthlessly and mockingly, camoflaged by the dry dead leaves.

It was getting late. The sun was dropping swiftly now into the cup of the hills. I turned and walked toward the farmhouse. The soft grass felt good under my tired feet. My heavy shoes clattered over the boards on the porch and I winced because here all was silence I knocked quickly on the door. As I waited I heard a door slam. A man

walked around the corner of the house. Over his stooped shoulders he wore a denim shirt. His hair was thin and slightly white at the temples. Wise, worried eyes gave a harressed look to his deeply tanned face.

I asked, then, "May I rest here awhile? I've been walking all afternoon and I'm tired."

He looked at je thoughtfully for a minute, and then sadd briefly, "Come on in."

I considered protesting that I could sit on the porch, but I didn't really want to. The man interested me. So I followed him around and in the side door to his kitchen. From that moment on it was as if I had always known him. As he had been fixing his supper, he awked me to eat with him. Again I hesitated, but the temptation was too great and I accepted gratefully.

The tick-tock, click-click, of seven clocks mingled with the crackle of the range fire in the darkening kitchen. The fellow told me that his name was Jefferson, and that he stayed here at the camp (for the farmhouse turned out to be a hunting camp), taking care of things. As I was curious about the many clocks strewn around on shelves I asked him about them.

"Oh," he laughed." When anyone has a click that goes bad on them they bring it up here. I like to fool around with them and it's something to do in the winter. They sorta keep me company with all their noise."

The butter spit back as he dropped the eggs in the pan. A clock struck the hour quietly, ping-ping-ping-ping-ping-ping. Glancing at the clock he shuffled restlessly toward the radio and clicked it on A commentator's brisk voice broke in on the room's peace and the man

sighed. Impatiently he made the knife and fork and spoon clatter against the plate as he put them on the oil-cloth covered table. He glanced at me sideways; his whole body tense as he remarked:

"The world's in a hell of a mess ain't it though? But it doesn't have much to do with me. I like it here most of the time, but once every bit I get to wishing that I had someone to talk to. I get to thinking too hard. Like tonight, I'm glad you came. You can't expect to talk to the men at the sawmill back in the woods, they have their work to do. But they are the only ones around much anymore. There used to be people in and out of here all the time. They don't come anymore, now that tires are scarce and gasoline rationed."

"Don't you ever leave here?" I asked curiously.

"Oh, sure. I have to go out to get my food. When my mother was living I used to go home for a spell every winter. But there ain't much use now. All my has moved out. If I want to see any of my brothers or sisters I gotta go too bowed far. I've had enough traveling in my life." He paused. "But I guess a body doesn't have a right to settle down and live thew way he wants to."

He flicked the light on and the radio boomed to life, He walked over and turned the dial around. This time some swing filled the room and he toned it down. He scooped up the dripping eggs and grunted as he plopped them on the plate. Silently we sat down to eat. We were both hungry. A sudden brassy clash brought the music to an end. He looked up at me and grinned.

"I sorta like that stuff." His smile faded as he fontinued. "But you know I'll never forget that band back in 1918. I was in a hospital over in France then, it was pretty bad. It's funny I can remember that music, though, because nithing seemed to stick after ...

that. I was gassed and it made things blurry. They got me back to the States all right, though. I was in a hospital awhile and then they sent me home. That was a good feeling, coming home."

His bread slid silently over the plate as he wiped up the last bite of egg. He forced the stuff down with a swallow of tea and rose from the table. I began to stack the dishes while he poured hot water in the pan, and went to the pantry and got some beer from the refrigerator.

"Have you been here very long?" I asked.

"'Bout fifteen years now. I learned the mechanics trade from an old fellow back home, and I did pretty well. Then about fifteen years ago I came up here. Bought a share in the place and I've lived here ever since." He was silent then, staring out the window absent-mindedly. I had the feeling that he had forgotten me completely.

He didn't talk much as he put our few dishes away and emptied the water over the porch railing at the side of the house. He had dug a hole and filled it with stones so he could so this without washing the grass away.

We both walked out on the porch and sat on the steps. Greenins yellow and pink streamers floated where the sun had been in the west. Deer came out into the fields standing up on their seemingly fragil legs to paw apples from the stooped remnants of what had been a flourishing applcorchard many years ago. In comparison with the restlessness of the man the quietness of this hill amazed and intriged me. Reluctlently I broke the silence. I wanted to know what this man thought of things, about the world in general.

"You were in the last war. What do you think of this one?"

"There ain't nothing to think about. It's a hell of a mess. I

said it before and I'll say it again."

He spoke these words softly but quickly, as if he were talking to himself. I looked up, startled at the emotion in his words. He sat looking down at the steps, his elbows propped on his legs, his hands dangling limp between them.

"You aren't having anything to with this war, then."I said it as if it were a fact. He stood up and looked out across the fields. "I don't know."

He sat down again, pursing his lips. I thought, incongruously, He's going to whistle.

He spoke again then, slowly at first. "Do you see this grass here? It used to be a muddy mire. But back was all weeds. It was hard work but I kept the animals out and cars off, and she grew. I cleaned out them pines back there and cut out about a mile of paths through them/ Used up two good axes doing it. Down at the spring I dug out three, four ponds, hauling stone, building dams, running pipes through Got a nice little place for trout down there now." He stopped and sucked on his breath with a choked sound. Looking at me , he made an attempt to smile. "I'm sorry, I guess you don't know what I'm talking about."

I had been a little surprised at this sudden outburst, and I confessed I wasn't sure what he was getting at.

"You see, "he said,"it's an old story. I went to the last war feeling pretty good about the whole thing. I guess I didn't know much about anything then, but when I came out I knew war was rotten. Then people forgot what we fought for and went around shouting and slapping each other on the back. Everything was swell . We won the war It made me sick clean through when it come to me what was going on. All they wanted was the money and the power they could get out of it.

"Yes, we made a lot of mistakes."

"So I come up here. They could have their world and I'd have mine. At least that's what I thought." There was a pause. "My brother's kis is in it this tije; so's my sisters. " His face took a faraqay look again and his eyes narrowed a little. "I've thought it over. I want to stay here where I belong. I know it ain't right, and talking abouth things tonight sorta cleared things up. If I don't want them kids to go through the same things we went through the last time, I've got to do something about it. It's funny hoc things come to you all of a sudden. You keep fighting things off and then there's an explosion-like in your brain and you know you can't be happy doing anything unless you take care of that thing."

We were silent then, each busy with his own thoughts. I was wondering why it was the world couldn't let men alone. Why did it need each of us to fill out the patterns drawn up by men who didn't know just what they were going to do with us.? Why couldn't this man living alone on this hill, doing more good than thousands of others, be left alone to live his life that way he pleased ? It was strange way things worked out, because I knew and he knew that he would have to leave this hilltop and all that it stood for. It was an unescapable as the heat on a sultry day.

A truck drove by leaving a cloud of dust in its wake. It was full of logs, so it must have been from the sawmill that he gad mentioned. Jefferson sighed and stretched his legs out before crossing them on the grass.

"I don't want to leave, but I can't stay either."

"Are you really going then?"

"Yeah, I have to."

"Where do you expect to go ?"

"I don't know yet for sure. Over to the Ordinance works, I guess."

"When will you leave?"

"In a week of two. As soon as I get things settled."

"I'm glad you're going."

He looked at me curiously,"Are you? I wish I was."

"It'll be better when you get there."

"Yeahh I guess so. I hope, anyway."

The faded blue of the sky was deepening into dark. I had a long walk ahead of me, so I rose and extended my hand. He stood, too. His hand was warm and strong in my clasp, and I thought, "He'll be all right."

"Well, good luck, and goodbye."

My words were trite and I felt their lack. I wanted to tell him that what he was doing was fine and good, and that I admired him for it. He seemed to sense my feelings, however, and he replied, "Thanks, Good-bye, and good luck to you. Maybe I'll be seeing you down there."

I left him there, standing on the grass in front of his house, and walked on down the road. Down past the pines, that had known his careful axe, my way led into the valley-- the valley where people scheme and live for today; where Jefferson would soon be winding his way, brought there by the wiles of men. Or would it be by Chance?

-------- Louise Clark.

BLIND DATES

Blind dates are like poison- both are contageous. A girl is falling down the social ladder if she even so much as thinks of going on a blind date. This is the ppinion of my friends and was the opinion- yes, of myself.

A friend of a friend of mine was a newcomer to town. Since he was a college graduate, he wished to meet a c ollége girl. Our mutual friend arranged the meeting.

He was to come to the house at 8:00 on Saturday evening. About 6:00 I started to get ready. About 6:30 I started to get worried. About 7:30 my heart had wunk and was playing hide and seek with my stomach. My mouth went dry. My rayon stockings slid down. My shoes hurt my feet. My hands looked cold and dirty. I glanced at my watch - 7:35. Surely it must have stopped. But no- and it slowly, slowly ticked off the minutes: 7:40 - 7:50 - 7:55 ; 7:56 - &:5 - A quick step on the porch, a rap, and my heart went down with my toes. Mc Arthur has courage; Mc Closky has too. I walked quickly to the door, smiled, and invited him in.

Then came the appraisal. What a man! He measured well o over six feet from the top of his coal black hair to the bottom of his size twelve shoes. His pleasant smile reassured me. My heart jumped back to place, and I was ready to have an enjoyable evening. I did.

Never again will I shun blind dates- but, then, all men might not be like Homer.

---------- Lois Mcloskey