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THE LITTLE-BOY- WHO-NEVER-WAS

A SHORT STORY BY A. MAXON
SPRAGUE.

She lay very still, gazing between half closed lids straight before her. What was that strange glow? It reminded her of a star miles and miles away. Many years ago, when she was a little girl, she had seen a great golden star like that. There was a heavy fragrance of Japanese honeysuckle about her now, just as there had been then.

There was a sudden soft rustling. Between her and the star a woman stepped. She knew now. The star was the shaded night lamp in her dressing room; the woman was her nurse. Slowly she lowered her lashes until they lay upon her white cheeks. She felt the eyes of the nurse upon her, yet remained motionless. She heard the door open, and then a man's voice, curiously muffled.

"Well, Miss Bingham?"
"Still in the stupor, doctor. She has been this way since midnight."
"Ah!"

She felt cool fingers touch her wrist, yet she made no sign. She smiled in her heart. They thought her unconscious, but her mind was as clear as theirs. Clearer, perhaps, for she felt strangely light and airy, as if her body were gone and only her brain remained, comprehending abnormally every sound in the room about her. The man's voice, still muffled, broke in upon her thoughts.

"If she regains consciousness before dawn, I think there is hope. There will probably be no change for an hour. It might be well—" The nurse and doctor passed toward the outer room. For a moment she heard them speaking in low tones, then the faint click of a closing door.

Slowly she raised her lashes. The shaded lamp glowed like a golden star; the nurse sat beside it, her head resting on her hand. Again the woman smiled without moving her lips. They thought her still in that land of shadows where she had groped for so long. So long! It seemed years before she had heard the call and come back. She remembered those long, dark hills with the cold wind on her face and the sound of sobbing in her ears—the sound of her own sobs as she hunted for the way back. Then suddenly the voice in the blackness, and she had opened her eyes to the lamp, and the great white bed.

Now she felt curiously strained and eager, as if she were waiting for something or someone. Yet the heavy fragrance of honeysuckles seemed to weigh her down; the light blurred, and she felt herself climbing the hills again, with the wind in her face. With an effort she struggled back, and lay watching the light and the drooping head of the nurse.

She must wait a little longer. Perhaps not very long; perhaps now—she turned her head until her cheek lay in the warm hollow of the pillow. Then—then she knew why she had come back. How glad she was. A joy that was passionate in its interest leaped up in her heart and glowed on her smiling face. For there in the doorway stood the Little-Boy-Who-Never-Was.

She had never seen him before, but always, always her heart had known him. There could be no mistake. She knew he would have just such curly black hair; just such grave blue eyes. Then as she watched him he smiled and she knew before she saw it that there would be the little three-cornered dimple in his cheek.

As she lay with her eyes upon him all the lonely years which were behind her, the years when he had only lived in her dreams, passed in slow procession before her. Yet she felt

no bitterness that he had come so late, only a great joy that he had come at all. He moved quickly toward her, and she saw with a sudden rush of tenderness, how fine and sturdy he was. If he had only come in time to grow up—She stifled the rising regret, and her eyes were clear and beautiful as he leaned against the bed looking down at her.

"You called me back—why?" She lifted her hand and touched his hair; she wanted to hear his voice.

"You know," he replied, with quaint gravity, drawing her hand down to his cheek and holding it there. He always did that in her dreams. "You were to come with me. The hills were so dark and cold. I wanted to take care of you—always."

"You knew me?" she queried. How she loved the way his hair grew on his temples!

"O, yes," he replied simply. "I saw you from Yonder. I chose you for mine even before you thought of there being a me." He laughed softly, brushing his lips across her hand. "I'm twelve now."

Twelve! So she had dreamed of him that long. He was a big boy now, able to take care of her. It was so good to be taken care of. All those years when she had struggled on alone; when there had only been her lonely dreams; when—

"You mustn't think of that," said the Little-Boy-Who-Never-Was, reading aright the shadow on her eyes. "I'm here now—that is all. You must come—it's almost dawn. Come." He smiled as he slipped his sturdy arm beneath her head.

Suddenly, where she had been weak she was strong. She had been too tired to move for so long; at times it had been an effort hardly worth the trouble to lift her heavy eyelids. Yet now she felt light and airy and full of eagerness, as if her body were gone, leaving her soul burning like a clear flame. She felt as young and strong as that night long ago when as a little girl she had seen the golden star. She was glad, glad that the years had slipped away leaving her a fit companion for the Little Boy-who had come at last.

With his hand in hers she rose. Hand in hand they went to the door. There she stopped and looked back in the outer room the shaded lamp glowed faintly; the nurse still sat with drooping head.

"It is almost dawn," said the Little-Boy-Who-Never-Was again. "We must go."

So hand in hand they passed down the broad staircase. The hall door stood ajar, allowing a heavy fragrance of Japanese honeysuckle to come stealing in. Without in the garden, where a faint light was beginning to glow, there was a rustling and stirring as of myriads of tiny wings fluttering. The dawn was coming fast, yet the two lingered a moment before an open door. Standing on the threshold they gazed silently. At a long table sat a man with his head sunk upon his breast; the fingers of his outstretched hand clasped a half empty glass. The woman shivered. The long, lonely years—Then sturdy fingers closed on hers and she met the gravely tender eyes of the Little-Boy-Who-Never-Been. It was very good to be taken care of. Together they turned and passed down the hall.

The nurse rose and entered the inner room. For a moment she paused beside the great white bed. "How beautiful she is," she murmured. "To think that she can smile so!" Then something in the attitude of the beautiful figure struck her. She bent forward. The joy in the white face held her spellbound and silenced the cry on her lips.

Out in the fragrant garden the Little-Boy-Who-Never-Was said softly, as they turned their faces to the dawn, "I shall take care of you always—Little Dream Mother."

* With this issue "The Daily *
* Nebraskan" presents its first *
* Literary Number under the su- *
* pervision of the English Club. *
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MACEL WAVES

A FEW TIPS ON VERIFICATION—
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

When a fellow is out of college, he runs across a bunch of things the professors do not teach him in school. There's tragedy and comedy and romance—lots of romance! And you know they don't teach those things here at school. He also bumps up against barriers of facts—solid, re-enforced concrete facts!

For instance: In the effeminate art of verification, he learns that, in addition to the proverbial 57 varieties of rhyme schemes and meters, he must "produce goods" that will suit the occasion, regardless what the occasion may be. Like the girl from Nuckolls county, who had been proposed to, engaged and disengaged from her twelfth to her twenty-fifth birthday, he must be prepared for any emergency—when it comes to furnishing the "lines."

To illustrate: An amateur actor, aspiring for vaudeville notoriety, places an order with you for the lyric of a song to be sung in a merry little sketch, entitled, "My Wife; or the Hunch of the Hen-Pecked Husband." He will call for it tomorrow. Now, you are the poet in the case. You smoke three dozen cigarettes—(all poets smoke cigarettes!)—throw yourself into an hypnotic state of inspiration—(some poets substitute Peruna!)—then, half facing your stenographer—(no poet is without one!)—you impose upon the unsuspecting public something like this:

When a fellow's working hard, working hard all day,
Trying to pay the landlord and keep the wolf away;

What's the use of nagging him, nagging him, I say—
Just because he happens to be a husband.

Refrain.

Why should a fellow linger? Why should a fellow stay?

Why should a fellow tarry when it's peck! peck! peck! all day?
I don't believe in single life, but I think you'll all agree

That when a wife begins to peck it should be
Strike 1, 2, 3.

That when dear wifey starts to peck—
Strike 1 Strike 2! Strike 3!
(Note: You supply verses by the yard.)

Had the customer been an embryonic Mary-Chatman Catt, you would have talked thusly to your stenographer, "lines" to be chanted to soft music:

The Wife-Worshipper.

A sere little mink of a man
Has a meek modest maid of a wife;
And their days are as dreams, at least
So it seems.

To those who know not their home life.

But ah; 'tis not thus, for we know
How they fuss, spat and quarrel
every day;

For, tho' charming to meet at church,
on the street,
At home husband is not quite that way.

In the morning he finds fault with the pancakes:
Why can't we have waffles instead?

At luncheon he makes war on the beefsteak:

"You knew that I wanted sweet bread."
In the evening he besieges the omelet:

"The stuff's here—but gad! how it's made!"

When she displays a new gown, he observes with a frown:
"Whew!—Cost enough! But—Say, won't it fade?"

In the winter he rails at the gas bill:
"Great heavens, woman, that's high!"

Eastertide, it's the hat bills:
"You might break me up if you try!"
When summer comes then the ice-man:

"I am no millionaire, do you hear?"
But his wife is yet sane, and as there is naught to explain,
She smiles: "I know; and I am sorry, my dear."

Sometimes, we suspect, he will sue her
For divorce on the grounds of abuse,
Then to him friends will say, "Well, it's always that way
When you worship your wife, you goose!"

Your Cuddlin' Babe.

Saspharilla Johnson was a bashful man; Saspharilla Johnson was in love;

Saspharilla Johnson was a bashful man; Punie Lietus was his turtle dove.

Now Sasphri being very wise, went courting by degrees;
Read to Punie much poetry of kings and golden seas:

But Punie tho' a patient girl, was anxious to be wooed,
So she cuddled close to Saph one night and cuddling cooed:

Refrain.

Call me your Cuddlin' Babe, dear—
Call me your Cuddlin' Babe.

Call me your Cuddlin' Babe, dear—
Call me your Cuddlin' Babe.
There are times I will admit
When it looks like a sort of an epileptic fit,

But—Call me your Cuddlin' Babe, dear!

Call me your Cuddlin' Babe.
If you are asked to write the rag time hit of the musical year, you will probably digest three volumes of George Ade—or something like that—take a severe Turkish bath, then pen:

Your Cuddlin' Babe.

When you go in for the first prize offered by some musical comedy producer for a college refrain that will get the boys "whistling it in the galleries," you muster up the courage to mail him lines that run somewhat like these:

When Friends Must Part.

Boys—
Days have come and days have gone;
the years have fluttered by:
At last the hour, dear friends, is here
when we must say goodbye.

Altho' the years will roll along until
this life is o'er,
The memory of these dear old days
we shall cherish for evermore.

Girls—
It's sad to leave our dear old school—
the parting of the ways:
It's sad to leave our dear old friends,
friends of our college days.

But there are times when friends must part, the best of friends they be,
And all that is left of the olden times
is fond sweet memory.

Refrain.

Olden times—Olden times—
In future years like silver chimes,
Echo softly from afar—Echo! Echo!
from afar!

Whispering tales of those we knew—
Tales of friendship, Ah! so true—
Bringing visions of those we loved
in the dear old golden days.

But there are times you forget to smoke your cigarettes and half-face your stenographer. For example, you see some poor damned nigger getting it rubbed into him from all sides simply and solely because he is black. You seem to hear him say:

Must the Dark Clouds Hang?

Dark clouds hang over the mountains,
Dark clouds hang over the sea;
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THE NATURE OF OUR ENJOYMENT OF TRAGEDY

SOME CONCLUSIONS DRAWN
FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Miss Ethel Puffer, in "The Psychology of Beauty," summarizes her explanation of "the phenomenon of our aesthetic reaction on the drama" in part as follows:

"There is an undoubted emotional experience of great intensity; and yet that emotion turns out to be not the emotion in the drama, but rather the emotion from the drama—a unique independent emotion of tension." "There must be a very vivid emotional effect, but it is the spectator's own, and not a copy of the hero's emotion, because it is a product of the essential form of the drama itself, the confrontation of forces." "The tragic situation 'must be inevitable, and it must have movement, because only so is the confrontation reinforced."

Miss Puffer's theory rather appealed to me as I first grasped it. I can distinctly recall that feeling of tension, and of detachment at the same time, that flows underneath the more or less ecstatic sadness I have experienced in the reading or hearing of tragedy. I can agree equally with the statement that the more inevitable the tragedy—the more evenly matched and well justified the contending forces—the greater the emotional effect produced. But as I thought it over I rebelled at the notion that we do not feel with the hero or even for him,—we simply feel with him. A weak and watery sentiment that, to break down the cultured reserve of educated play-goers and fiction-readers! I cannot speak for others, of course, but I want to go into a somewhat lengthy analysis of one particular "aesthetic experience" that stands by itself, a single complete and vivid picture, in my memory. It never occurred to me before to try to explain the experience; it was enough just to have felt it.

Two years ago I was a member of a class in elementary German, which was studying Wilhelm Meyer-Forster's tale of German student life, "Karl Heinrich." It is a story told in an essentially direct, dramatic style, and has been staged with eminent success in several European countries. Richard Mansfield made a distinct success of it in the eastern part of our own country. The critics do not call it a great book, but they do ascribe its popularity, not to any shallowness, but, on the contrary, to the genuine sincerity of subject and style. Well, we of the class stumbled along mechanically through the first pages of the book, paying little attention to the story while we tussled with the unfamiliar medium that conveyed it. But one night, as I sat in the home library dutifully toiling through my next day's assignment, I reached the place where the lonely, shy young prince, attending his first banquet of the "Corps" at old Heidelberg, discovers for the first time in his life what it means to have free, equal, human relations with his kind. The youthful, reckless joy of the festivities goes to his head, and he is intoxicated, beside himself, carried up into a seventh heaven of bliss.

Here was something I understood. I had passed through a faintly similar experience myself, and the remembrance was fresh in my mind. Eagerly I followed the adventures of the enraptured boy. His love-affair with charming little waiting-maid Kathie at first made me frown disapprovingly. But what could you expect? The prince, during his twenty years or so in his grandfather's gloomy old castle, had seldom even seen a woman. Soon the childish naturalness of their love won my heart completely. I rejoiced in their sanguine, ingenious plans for

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