

- A STORY -

Two Voices

Emily Guiwits.

The late afternoon sunlight rested lovingly on the campus at Ann Arbor. A scarcely perceptible chill in the air and the early lengthening shadows were sole reminders that autumn had succeeded summer, and that winter was close at hand. Seemingly conscious of their impending doom the scarlet geraniums glowed with more than their usual splendor, while here and there in the tree-tops were glints of the same brilliant color. Summer was bidding a reluctant farewell to her favorite Michigan haunts, but verily her reign was over; for already along the boulevard and river were the symbols of September—the purple astor and goldenrod.

A crowded street car stopped at the corner to take on still another passenger, then went on its way up State street. A group of football players with the inevitable following of small boys trotted down the dusty road, then for a moment all was still. The insistent tapping of a woodpecker digging an early supper from a telegraph pole became almost startling in its distinctness.

Madge McGregor was silent and unresponsive alike to the appeals of nature and of human nature. The sunlight which drew such a wealth of color from the scarlet geraniums emphasized the shabbiness of the girl's attire—the cotton lining in her little jacket and her tired-looking, badly-worn shoes. No poverty, however, was reflected in the crown of auburn hair upon which her Tam O'Shanter cap rested so jauntily.

"Willst du immer weiter schweifen?" The girl's troubled eyes turned reluctantly to the open book in her lap.

"Willst du immer weiter schweifen? Zees, das gute liegt zu na."

Forcing her mind to a concentration on the text before her she slowly worked out the translation: "Why will you always roam? See, the good lies near."

The book closed suddenly with a bang. Could it be possible that here between the covers of a little German reader was the solution of her problem? Slowly unfolding the single sheet of a hastily scrawled letter, she read again, for the hundredth time:

"Dear daughter: Mother is sick in bed. There ain't nothing particular the matter with her only she seems plumb tired out. I reckon the extra work of getting you started was a little too much for her. Then she misses you dreadfully. Seems like she's lost all her ambition and don't care whether she gets well or not. I tell her to chirk up and that Christmas ain't far off and then you'll be home for vacation but she says that vacations was all she'd ever see of you any more, as soon as you get through school you'll teach or get married, and one's as bad as the other to her. We both know that you've got your own life to live and we don't want to do nothing that would go against your best interests, but it does seem kind of hard to have our one little girl swallowed up in that big university where she don't count no more than one feather in mother's bed while there's an old house out here that ain't got nothing left in it since she's gone away. Mother made me promise not to say nothing about your coming home—said she wasn't going to be selfish if she died for it. And I ain't asked you to come home, neither, and I ain't a-going to ask you. I don't know what is for the best. None of us knows. We all have to make our guess, and no one of

us is much good guessing for another. If mother wasn't taking it so hard—but mebbe she'll get over it after a while. I'll write again in a day or two, from your loving FATHER."

"Why will you always roam? See, the good lies near." Yes, literally the good did lie near—and it was very good! The regular class work, the magnificent library, the inspiration of contact with four thousand other students day after day—O, how earnestly she had longed for these privileges! She remembered the sacrifices she had made to secure the money for this college course—the long winter days in the little country schoolhouse—the monotonous calling and dismissing of classes—the sickening odor of drying mittens and boots—all these came before her with a vividness that made her actually faint. With what fierce joy she had turned the key in the schoolhouse door for the last time! Then the long, hot days of summer when between intervals of cooking and cleaning she had spent such happy hours with her sewing out under the old apple tree! What planning and contriving to make old dresses look like new—what patching and darning and remodeling to avoid spending any of the precious dollars for mere clothes!

Her eyes wandered restlessly across the scarlet flowers to the grim old college buildings. What a passionate devotion she felt to each one! Even the massive law building into which she had never ventured, and the hospital-like dental building were objects of a deep and personal affection. Could she go home and leave them all? Was it necessary for her to make this sacrifice which would change the course of her whole future life? It would be only three years at the longest—then she was almost certain of a position in the schools at Clinton, when she could go home every Friday night. Surely her mother could spare her those three years!

The solemn measures of Handel's "Largo" came stealing down from the big Columbia organ. It was the hour of vesper service, and students were straggling across the campus from the various buildings. Wearily climbing the stairs with the rest, Madge for a moment forgot her trouble as the words of the opening chorus greeted her ears. Then one of the contraltos stepped forward and sang that glorious aria, "O Rest in the Lord." Mechanically Madge read the responses and as in a dream listened to the words of Dr. Angell and the closing strains of the "March Militaire." Like spectres the students vanished from their seats; the singers also disappeared, and Professor Stanley alone remained at the organ, playing softly to himself in the fading light. "O rest in the Lord—wait patiently for Him, and He will give thee thy heart's desire," repeated Madge, as she slowly walked down the stairs. "My part, then, is to rest in the Lord, and to wait patiently for Him. If it is best for me to go home now, I believe it will be shown me in an unmistakable manner. If it is best for me to continue my work here, I believe I will know that too. And in either case I will try to appropriate whatever 'good lies near.'"

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