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NOVEMBER, 1917

M.E. Grainger

THE
FOCUS



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THE FOCUS

VOL. VII FARMVILLE, VA., NOVEMBER, 1917 No. 7

Aircastles

(A dialogue between a small girl and boy.)

She:

“Sometimes I think I’d like to be
A Fairy, gay and free;
Quite well then could I understand
Secrets they’d share with me!
Why the ivy climbs so high—
Or why it climbs at all—
I think it really useless to go
Creeping up the wall!
And then, next best to secrets,
I’d love to roam around—
Just swooping through the air,
 You know,
Not walking on the ground!
Following busy honey-bees,
On the top of their hive I’d light,
No fear of sting, my fairy wand
Would put them all to flight!
Away, away, to find a brook,
Then perch on lily pad—
To gossip with the froggies green
Who croak with notes so sad!
At last, when tired with wandering,
And excitement of the day,
In birdie’s nest at the tip-top bough
I’d dream all cares away!”

He:

“That’s all quite well for little girls,
But me a fellow bold,
Would fancy more adventure—
Say, with bears—one night so cold
I’d take my trusty shot-gun,
And go creepin’ up, jis’ so,
And shoot that great, big, black bear,
Before he’d really know!
Then, too, I’d be a pirate brave,
To sail upon the sea,
And capture all the vessels—
A dangerous man I’d be!
I’d surely have a pair of boots,
A mile a step they’d rate,
And set all giants a-wondering,
Just what would be their fate!
Great armies, too, I’d conquer
And after all was through,
A magic castle I would build
Jus’ for myself an’ you!”

Flossie Nairne.

Little Sister of Sunshine

KATHERINE BLAND, head nurse at Saint Luke's Hospital in a Southern city, came into her room and wearily took the stiff white cap from her head. She was very young to hold the position that she held and it weighed sometimes rather heavily on her slim, young shoulders. She was twenty-eight years old, but did not look a day over twenty. Her grey eyes were so pretty and the mouth so sweet and fine, that one could safely say that she would never really grow old.

She was slowly and thoughtfully taking down her long, fair hair when someone knocked at the door.

She called "Come in" with a slight sigh, and a maid entered with a letter.

"Special delivery, Miss Bland. Please sign."

"Thank you. And, Susie," she called as the maid was leaving the room, "please tell Mrs. McGowen to send my dinner up tonight."

As soon as the maid left she sat down on her bed and quickly opened the letter. It read:

"Katherine, dearest, you said last night that you would not marry me because you thought that I was a slacker. Although I do not believe in this war and think that it should have been prevented at any cost, I have, nevertheless, joined the army and will leave for France in a few weeks. I have done this for your sake, and for your sake also I am going to try to see the justification of the United States for what seems to me to be a great waste of time, expense, and most of all, human lives. Remember, dear, if anything should happen, that I love you and that you have always meant more to me than any one else. When I have done what you think is my duty, I'll come back. Until then, I am always yours,
"Jack."

"Dear old boy," she whispered sobbing softly as she hugged the letter to her breast. "If you only knew how much I do love you. You are the bravest of them all for you are going out in search of truth and you are risking your life to find it." Her head sank lower and silently she offered up a prayer.

Two months after Jack Carpenter's arrival in France Katherine Bland followed as a Red Cross nurse. Not until she had resigned from the hospital and had made all arrangements for leaving, did she tell her family, for she knew well that they would rebel against it. That, however, was a natural thing for them to do, for they had never approved of anything she had done from the time she was three year old, and had insisted on bringing stray dogs and cats home to nurse, until the time when she had finished a fashionable boarding school and instead of making her debut had insisted on going into hospital training. They could not understand why a girl in her position could want to work for her living. She had gone on with it, however, and had made remarkable success. Her family had never become reconciled to her working and in every way had tried to make her marry Jack Carpenter, whom everybody knew was desperately in love with her. On the day Katherine came to tell them of her plans, her mother and father were sitting in the living room discussing her.

"I don't see how I ever had such a child," murmured Mrs. Bland plaintively. "Now she has lost the chance of her life in not marrying Jack before he left for France. I know he'll never get back alive."

"There, there, Margaret," exclaimed Mr. Bland nervously, scratching his head, "don't be so pessimistic."

Just then the front door opened and closed and in a second Katherine ran in all fresh and glowing from her walk in the cold, frosty air.

"Oh, dear me," she exclaimed, kissing her mother and father, "what are you two talking about?"

Throwing her wraps on the davenport, she drew her chair up near them.

"I have come to tell you all something and you must be as sweet as young lambs, for it's all fixed up now, and can't be undone."

"Oh, Katherine, what have you gone and done, now? Have you decided that it is your Christian duty to marry one of the orderlies at the hospital?" questioned Mrs. Bland with a martyred air.

"No, indeed, mother. It's not as bad as that. I have just decided to do my bit for Uncle Sam. That is all. Dr. Lane is going to have a private hospital unit and he wants me to go to France with him as—"

"You going to France? Oh, Katherine what are you going to do next? Frank, please don't let her go," Mrs. Bland said, turning pleadingly to her husband.

"Now, mother, don't get so excited. There's not any danger and, besides, I can't possibly back out now."

"Yes, Margaret, calm yourself," muttered Mr. Bland, while softly patting his wife's shoulder. "I'll wager it's going to be the best thing for her. Perhaps she and Jack Carpenter will make up over there."

Mrs. Bland brightened up. "Well, I suppose you will have your own way, so I would just as well say nothing more. I can only say as I have said before, I don't see how you ever came to be my child."

"Well, I surely am glad you are reconciled to my going. We don't leave for three weeks, so I'll stay here for the rest of the time and help get Dot ready for her wedding."

"Just to think," she said, looking dreamily into the fire, "my little sister Dot is getting married. I feel so old. Why, I'll be putting on my little lace cap soon. No, I won't either," she said, coming to herself abruptly, "there is too much to be done to do that, and oh! that reminds me. Father, don't you want

me to make you some of my nice corn meal muffins tonight." At the delightful nod of his head she quickly rose and walked as far as the door. Then, turning around she threw them a kiss and then slipped out.

"She's a dear chld," murmured Mr. Bland with a sigh.

Yes, she is, but she's queer. She is giving up everything to go over there. Yes, you'll just have to admit it. She's queer, that is all there is to it."

Katherine had been in the field hospital for three months. Long, strenuous and horrible months, they had been too. She showed the strain of them a great deal. She was perceptibly thinner, and dark rings circled her eyes. Yet in spite of this her face was never more lovely than now. The suffering that she had seen had not hardened her, but instead had awakened a great reverence in her heart for the men who gave all for their country. The soldiers confided to her all their hopes and sorrows. They called her "our Little Sister of Sunshine." An Italian soldier originated the name. The day before he died, he put his hand in hers and whispered in broken English, "My Little Sister of Sunshine,—that is what you have been to me." These were his last words. Softly Katherine pulled the sheet over his face and went away, with tears in her eyes. The man in the next cot had heard the Italian's words, and thus the name had been passed on.

A week afterwards, Katherine went to Dr. Lane very much troubled.

"Dr. Lane, did you know that the suture is just about gone, and the new supply, which should be here now, hasn't come yet?"

"Yes, I know, Miss Bland," replied Dr. Lane gravely. "I am very much worried about it. If there are any more wounded brought in tonight to be operated on, I am afraid we'll have to let most of them go."

No sooner had he said this than they heard the familiar sound of an ambulance. It was ten p. m. and Katherine and Dr. Lane had been up since one that morning, but hesitating only long enough to give each other a worried glance they rushed out. There five muddy and blood-stained men were taken out and rushed quickly into the building and put on cots. Dr. Lane went from one to another, giving each a hurried examination.

"Miss Bland," he called, "I am going to get you to prepare this man here in the end cot for an operation. He's badly shattered up, but I think we'll be able to save him. None of the others need an operation except the first man over yonder. There's not much chance for him, however, and since we have only enough supplies for one, we'll just have to leave him alone. Give all the men a good scrubbing and rubbing down."

Swiftly Katherine and her assistants worked. In a short while every man except one had been attended.

"I'll attend to him," said Katherine to the others. "You go and get the operating room ready."

After getting her materials together, she went over to the man's side. She found his face badly bruised, swollen and caked with mud. Gently Katherine began to wash his face. Suddenly her heart seemed to rise to her throat and she battled fiercely for breath, for in washing the man's forehead a tiny red birth-mark in the shape of an arrow was disclosed. On one person only had she ever seen it before.

"O God," she whispered, "don't let this be Jack. My beautiful, perfect man." Trembling in every limb, she washed the rest of his face and slowly, in spite of the disfiguration, she recognized the dear, familiar features:

"O God! Jack! Jack!" she cried out in an agonized voice, "is this what I did for you by sending you away? Oh, dear boy, will you ever love me again?" Sudden-

ly she started and her face became drawn and white. "Again, again," she murmured dazedly. "Why, if I leave you alone, as Dr. Lane said, there won't be any again. But I won't do it, Jack, dear, I won't do it. I'll give my life, if necessary, to save yours." Quickly she brought her dazed forces together to think of some way out of her dilemma. At last she came to a conclusion. She would change the two men and instead of taking in the man Dr. Lane had said, she would take Jack instead. While she stood thus planning a moan came from the other side of the room. Instinctively she went to the cot, and she saw that there lay the man Dr. Lane had ordered her to bring in. His eyes were wide open, but wild and glowing with fever.

"Mollie," he pleaded, grasping Katherine's hand, "don't let them get our baby. Just hold out a little longer and—Charge, men, charge," he screamed, attempting to rise from his pillow and beating the air fiercely with his hands. Katherine gently pushed him back.

"Don't, don't!" he shrieked. "You shan't keep me away from Mollie and my baby." At last, completely exhausted, he fell back into a stupor.

"Oh, my God," she whispered to herself, clutching each side of her head with her hands, "he's married and has a baby. I can't, oh! I can't take away his chance for life, and yet it lies between him and Jack. O God," she exclaimed again, sobbing convulsively, "it is too much to expect of me. I want him, oh! I want him so." Staggering, she finally got to Jack's side and, throwing her arms around his neck, she kissed the bruised and swollen face again and again.

"Jack, dear, forgive me for not giving you your chance. I know life is so dear to you, but, Jack," she whispered again and a little more quietly and softly, "I know *you* would want me to do what I am going to do—save the little baby's father. But, Jack, oh! remember, dear, I wanted you, I wanted you."

Finally she became quiet. When she arose, her face was deadly white, but a strange and wonderful light shone in her grey eyes. Her pure soul seemed to penetrate her body and to shine on her face. No one ever knew what she had gone through and it was she who assisted Dr. Lane in the operation. When they had finished Katherine went to Jack's side and she and Dr. Lane worked frantically to restore him.

"It is useless to try any more," said Dr. Lane, "If we could perform that operation, there might be some hope, but as it is he'll never live."

Catching sight of Katherine's white face at that moment, he turned to her authoritatively, "Miss Bland, you must go and get some rest."

"Oh, Doctor, please don't send me away. I want, I want, oh! I want to—" But she could not finish, for suddenly everything became black and she fell to the floor in a faint.

When she awoke the sun was shining brightly in her room. She looked around dizzily for a few seconds, then she remembered everything. Weakly she arose and, struggling into her clothes, she walked out the door. Catching sight of Dr. Lane she called to him,

"What! Miss Bland, are you up? Why I gave emphatic orders for—"

"Oh, Doctor, please don't. Tell me quick. Is Jack, oh! I mean the man we couldn't operate on, still living?"

"Why, yes," he said, taking her arm. "Haven't you heard about it? A short while after you left supplies arrived and we operated at once. I think he has a fair chance."

"Oh, Doctor, I am so happy. I am going to him now," but again for the second time in her life she fainted. She was very ill this time for over three weeks. In the meanwhile Jack was rapidly recovering and the day Katherine was allowed out of her

room, he was sitting up. When she came to the door of the ward, the nurses left her and she entered alone. He looked up and with one glad, swift cry she was in his arms.

"My brave little woman," he exclaimed. "My Little Sister of Sunshine! Are you ready for me, now? I have seen the light. Oh, my God!" he muttered passionately, looking off into the distance and almost forgetting the little figure near by, "how plain it has become to me that America must do her part in bringing Germany to her senses! I look forward only to being strong enough to help do that. But," he said coming to himself abruptly and looking deep into Katherine's eyes, "I want you, little woman, first. Am I a selfish beast to ask you, when everything is so upset?"

"No, no, Jack, I couldn't face the days that are to come without the knowledge that you are my very own. Together we will help win this battle for democracy. Together," she exclaimed fervently, "together we'll do everything."

"Yes, together," he repeated softly, "until death us do part."

—*Mary A. Addington.*

Even Erasmus Knew

WAY DOWN the road, in front of the big, white house, the figure of a very black little negro ran as fast as he could. All day he had been looking for his chance to do this and now that he had the chance he would run and perform his task, before it grew dark.

Now and then he turned his head to see if any one was on his track, but being satisfied that there was not he began to slow up somewhat.

The lane was a very long one; it had no turn until it reached the twin trees, so Erasmus, the traveler, did not feel safe to rest until he reached them. He bravely kept his pace. Suddenly he became aware of a very queer knocking in his chest. This scared him so that he ran much faster than ever, to see if he could not get away from it, but the more he ran the more the knock continued to hammer on his sides and chest. When he could see the twin trees, he quickened his pace even more to gain his first milestone.

Sinking at the foot of the tree, he gasped for breath. The knocking was still there but it was a great comfort to Erasmus—commonly called “Rastus”—to know that he was out of the hearing of Mammy Lou’s call to come and mind “dese childrun.”

Poor little boy! He was so tired that he could hardly sit up, so he lay very still on the ground.

It was Thanksgiving Day and the weather was very cool and all the leaves were off the trees and in great piles on the ground. Rastus was very warm, though; in fact, he was so warm that perspiration streamed down his shiny face. However, he did not notice it, because the bumping and knocking seemed to grow worse after he had lain down. He could feel it in his throat, and as he reached to loosen

his collar he felt the decided thumping at his neck. This nearly frightened the little negro to death.

A thought came to him to pray, as Miss Frances had told him to do when he was in trouble, so he scrambled to his knees and, digging his head in the leaves, he began in the only way he knew. This was as the Deacon had prayed and as Miss Frances had tried to teach him.

"Old Marster in heben, cain't you hep dis sick nigger whar got a jumpin' in his inside? I know I'se wicked, but jes' hep me dis time, and I'se gwine ter always be a good nigger from now till evermore. Lordy, hep me fer to git to Mr. Bobby's house, to 'liver him what I got in my hand and I won't ax you nummo' favor. Please, this time, Lordy, I know you can stop dis knockin' in me and git me dar, 'cause Miss Frances done tole me you made the rock fling out water to de multitudes to eat wid the loaves and fishes, whar de crows brung um. Now, can't you jes' do dis favor for me? Amen."

After the prayer the little negro lay still in the leaves and the sun was so warm that he fell asleep from exhaustion.

As the sun was shooting its last crimson arrows in the blue sky, the men in harvest fields turned homeward joyously, for they knew what awaited them there. Only one man did not feel the delightful sensation produced by thoughts of stuffed turkey and pumpkin pies. He was very sad and lonely, and could not keep back the bright memories of his last Thanksgiving Day. Cutting his horse in his sleek flanks he started down the road.

Suddenly the horse sprang to one side and reared in the air, coming down to the ground again, with one of its hoofs in the flesh of Rastus, who lay asleep in the leaves. Jerking the frightened animal back, the man sprang to the ground and picked up the unconscious form. As he took the limp body in his arms, a shiny glass something fell in the leaves and, glancing down at his feet the man saw the picture of

the girl he had loved smiling up at him. He picked it up and put it in his pocket. Mounting his horse, he rode swiftly down the lane to the plantation where Rastus belonged.

The little negro was made as comfortable as possible in Mammy Lou's feather bed, but the figure was restless and sleep came only in fitful intervals.

As it grew late the many friends of the child left to go to their Thanksgiving dinner, but Miss Frances and the man did not leave; they stood silently by the bed waiting for the doctor.

The unconscious figure of Rastus stirred under the patchwork quilt and he began to talk in a clear, painful voice, "Limme git to Mr. Bobby's house, Lordy, and give him what I got so Miss Frances won't got to de garden and cry to kill herself no mo, Mammy, mammy! I ain't gwine to run away no mo, if dis here knocking ever stop skeering your Rastus to death."

The negro woman heard nothing he said except the cry and she gently rubbed the little black hands. The woman dared not look up and the man clinched his hands in his pockets and bit his lips. The child continued, 'Miss Frances don' tole me dat if he hadn't sint her picture, she would not cry in the garden under the grape vine. Lordy, Marster, he'p me fer to git it to Mr. Bobby and—stop—my—oh, I'se scerred about dis knocking. I is one mo' sick nigger, but lemme—oh!—'

The raving stopped. The room was silent, and slowly the glances of the man and woman met.

The silence was interrupted by the doctor, who after viewing the patient carefully and examining the bruised and broken limb turned to the anxious group.

"You may go," he said to the girl, who looked so pale, and to the man at the foot of the bed. Only a high fever and delirium caused by the sudden shock of the accident. Nothing more," he added.

"The limb is bruised and a small bone is broken, but it will soon be well," he told the negro woman.

The man and woman went out and started to the house. They walked in silence until Frances said nervously to her silent partner, "Where on earth was Rastus going, and what was he doing? He is such a queer little negro. I can't understand."

The man had started to mount his horse, but he turned and handed her the picture which had fallen from Rastus' hands as he picked him up.

"Maybe that will help you to understand," he said.

"Oh! Bobby," she screamed, "he heard what I said. He knew."

"Knew what," the man said slowly. "If he didn't I do now. Frances, can you ever forgive—"

But he did not have time to finish his sentence.

"The same Thanksgiving—just as happy as ever, eh Frances and Bob?" the father of the girl asked the couple as they came in.

"Yes, father," she smiled, "only more so."

The little child opened his eyes, and the negro mother raised her thanks to Him above who giveth His blessings to all alike.

—Clara Eaton Neblett.

The Result of a Joke

OF COURSE we knew about the wonderful Gray before Jane had been at Camp Racket thirty minutes. Jane always could talk and she never failed to do it—especially when there was anything so interesting to tell.

Camp Racket consisted of eight girls, a cook, and a chaperon, and we easily lived up to our name. Things grew more lively when Jane came though. Something was always certain to happen when she arrived anywhere. We feared for what she might let happen! You never could tell about Jane.

Sure enough, something happened! We had just gone down to the pavilion for a dance when Jane, who wasn't ready when we left the house, came running down the road, madly waving a handful of letters and a yellow telegram.

"Girls, girls, Gray's coming tomorrow," was the news she yelled to us. Of course we ran to hear all the news and at last heard it.

Gray was one of the "khaki clad" lieutenants stationed on the Mexican border, and had unexpectedly got a leave of absence. On the way home he was going to stop by to see Jane. She was excitement itself, but who could blame her? It had been three years since she had seen him, and then it had been only for two weeks. Lots had been said during those two weeks, however, and letters had been written all during the three years. "All was well." We went to bed that night making great plans for the next day. Just about the time we were half asleep Jane suddenly sat up on her cot.

"Oh! surely you'll do it—why it'll be worlds of fun and think how funny he will look," she said.

"What on earth has happened, Jane, and what are you talking about," said the disgusted Helen, who had just gotten asleep when Jane's idea struck her.

"Listen, all of you and I'll explain," said Jane. "It's a joke."

We were all awake in a minute and eager to have a hand in it—whatever it might be.

"You see, girls," began Jane, "it's been so long since Gray's seen me that he may not even know me. Let's make Helen meet him and play that she is I. He'll never know, for you know how everybody thinks she and I look alike. He'll have a hard time at first, and it will be worlds of fun to watch him."

We decided to do it, and the fact that poor Gray was a perfect stranger made no difference. Didn't Jane, the only one who did know him, plan it?

The next morning we calmly (?) waited until eleven o'clock, the time we expected Gray. At last a car came right up to our door. Very naturally, Helen met Gray and introduced him to all of us. Amid the confusion of one man meeting eight girls, nobody seemed to notice that when Jane was introduced Gray looked just a little bit longer and seemed to wonder. Jane acted her part well, and not until she watched the good-looking lieutenant and Helen leave together for the pavilion did she admit that the part was too much. She knew the mischievous Helen too well and she hadn't meant to carry it that far. Since she had planned it all, however, she wouldn't tell until Helen did.

After dinner, Gray wanted to go to town on a little business, but Helen pleaded the "old stand-by," a headache, and we decided that Jane should go instead. Gray still apparently hadn't seen the joke, and our real Jane looked quite pleased, and it seemed to us that she had "another idea."

At half-past six they came back, bringing a crowd of boys with them. Jane was out before the car stopped and came running up the steps at double time. We noticed the corsage she had on and decided that Gray at last knew the joke.

"Oh! girls, Gray knew all the time and he kept it a secret just to worry me!" said Jane in one breath. "The boys have come so you must run and dress—something is going to happen!"

That warning of Jane's!

We did as we were told and went to our rooms to dress. Something happened all right! At eight o'clock we had an adorable wedding right there at our own Camp Racket and the real true Jane came back to her own true name and to her real self again!

—A. A., '18.

A Toast

HERE'S to the successful "Failures,"
Who have diligently tugged away,
But have met with much misfortune,
Which followed them day by day.

They have conquered difficulties
That would make the strongest quail,
Having adopted as their motto,
"There's no such word as fail."

Hope and cheer have been their friends,
When the goal seemed far away;
But perseverance always wins,
Hence, their success today.

Then here's to them once more,
'Midst honor and great fame,
Who've pushed the lion from the path,
And won themselves a name!

—Ethel Early.

Billy's First Love Affair

BILLY wriggled restlessly in his seat and looked at the people around him. He thought that he had never heard such a long sermon before. Billy tried to listen but the words held no meaning for him, so once more he turned his attention to the people about him. The little boy behind him was sleeping soundly. Billy wished that his Aunt Alice would allow him to pass the time that way. His eyes wandered from face to face until presently he noticed for the first time a girl sitting just opposite him. There his gaze rested. She had big, blue eyes and dark, wavy hair; Billy thought she was the most beautiful lady he had ever seen. Billy stared at her so steadily that presently she turned her head and looked at him. Then she smiled. Billy was only five years old but he promptly fell in love.

After preaching was over Billy saw his Aunt Alice go around and speak to the lady. From their rapturous greeting, Billy decided that they were more than mere acquaintances. Later Billy saw his father join them and he, too, seemed very delighted to meet this lady. Mr. Leigh beckoned to Billy and he ran over to his father's side. Taking Billy by the hand, Mr. Leigh said, "Catherine, this is William, Jr., the young man you have asked me so many questions about. Son, this is Miss Catherine Blair."

"Why, he is the boy who tried to flirt with me in church! You must come to see me often, Billy, I'm visiting right across the street from you. We are going to be the best of friends, I know."

Billy smiled up at her. "An' you'll help me sail my new boat on the lake, won't you? Aunt Alice won't let me go by myself an' she's always busy."

"I'd be delighted to help you sail your boat, Billy," Miss Catherine replied.

And so the friendship began.

A marvelous change came over Billy, a change that his Aunt Alice viewed with satisfaction. He no longer refused to go through the ordeal of having his neck and ears washed, but he even went so far as to brush his hair without being told. Aunt Alice did not understand little boys. She had been keeping house for Billy and his father for five years, ever since Billy's mother had died, leaving him a tiny, helpless baby. Aunt Alice had looked at the tiny bundle left in her care, with dismay on her face. She was very young then and the responsibility frightened her; in fact, it still frightened her. Aunt Alice never knew what Billy would do next. But now that Catherine had come it was different. Whenever Billy was missing, he was sure to be found with her, and Catherine understood little boys. Often Mr. Leigh would come and find them romping together, or he would find Miss Catherine silently listening while Billy gave glowing descriptions of what he meant to accomplish in the future.

One day while Billy was in his father's room, he saw a tiny box on the dresser. Boy-like, he opened it and there he saw, nestled down in a bed of cotton, a beautiful ring, set with pearls. Billy's heart jumped. He wanted that ring to give to Miss Catherine. What could his father want with it anyway! It was much too small for him. Billy was just in the act of slipping it into his pocket, when Mr. Leigh entered the room, so he left it there and decided to return for it later.

That evening Mr. Leigh was going to call on Miss Catherine. Billy came racing down the stairs.

"Wait, father, let me go!"

"Son, it isn't customary to call on a lady more than once a day, especially if you spend the day that time. Run along to bed."

Billy stood at the gate and jealously watched his father disappear, then he turned and walked disconsolately back to the house.

That night while Aunt Alice was putting him to bed Billy confided to her. "Aunt Alice, as soon as I get a little taller, me an' Miss Catherine are going to get married an' she is comin' here to stay. Then when you go away we'll have somebody here to keep house for us. You can't get married without a ring though, can you Aunt Alice?" Aunt Alice smiled and tucked him in snugly.

After she was gone Billy slipped noiselessly out of bed and ran into his father's room. He made a thorough search for the ring but it could not be found.

The next afternoon Billy found Miss Catherine strangely distracted. She did not seem at all inclined to talk, but kept looking at him with troubled, questioning eyes. Billy soon grew tired of the one-sided conversation so he started to asking questions.

"Miss Catherine, what makes the clouds go around so, why don't they stay still?"

"I don't know, Billy," she replied absent-mindedly.

He tried several other questions, but still he failed to arouse her interest. Finally he tried the subject to which, in his mind, no one could remain irresponsible.

"Miss Catherine, how long is it before Christmas?"

It was quite evident that she did not hear him.

"Billy," she said slowly, "how would you like for me to come to your house to live?"

Billy brightened. "That's jus' what I was goin' to ask you 'bout next," he replied. "Aunt Alice is goin' away an' if me and you get married—"

"But Billy—"

Billy had been holding Miss Catherine's hand during his proposal, and suddenly he noticed that she was wearing a new ring, and on closer observation he recognized it. Then Billy understood! Quick as a flash he dropped her hand and fled down the street.

Oh, how he hated his father! Another minute and he was sobbing in Aunt Alice's arms.

Miss Catherine refused to marry Billy's father unless Billy was willing. Mr. Leigh was very stern and poor little Billy's only comforter was Aunt Alice. He could not be prevailed on to visit Miss Catherine again. He felt that she was a traitor.

"But, Catherine," Mr. Leigh urged, "can't you see that you would be doing the right thing for both Billy and me? Alice won't be there, and I certainly can't allow him to run wild. It rests with you whether he shall have a mother or a governess. You know perfectly well that Billy worships you and it won't take you a day to bring him to his senses. Don't let that little rascal spoil our lives and his, too."

"He is adorable. But, Tom, you know how some children feel about such things," Miss Catherine replied.

At last, however, Mr. Leigh did persuade Miss Catherine to marry him. He easily overcame all of her arguments, and then, too, she felt that she could soon win Billy over.

They were married quietly and Billy was not present at the ceremony. The afternoon they were expected home, the household was in a high state of excitement. Miss Alice was all sympathy for the pathetic little figure, who worked so hard to choke back the tears.

When Mr. and Mrs. Leigh arrived Billy could not be found.

"No, Catherine, let him alone; he will come after awhile; sorry for the way he has behaved," Mr. Leigh explained, when Miss Catherine started to look for him. But dark came and still there was no trace of Billy. Knowing his son's fear of the dark, Mr. Leigh became alarmed and started in search of him.

It was Miss Catherine who found him, away up in the garret asleep on the floor. Billy had been crying. Miss Catherine knelt down and gathered him into her arms.

"Billy, don't you love me any more? Do you want me to go away and not come back, or shall I stay here and play with you?"

The tears in Miss Catherine's eyes and the appeal in her voice melted Billy's heart. He nestled up close to her and slipped a forgiving arm about her neck. Half an hour later Mr. Leigh, coming up the steps still in search of his truant son, heard Miss Catherine's soft voice saying, "And Brer Rabbit jumped into the briar patch and ran away."

Then Billy's sleepy little voice drawled, "Them animals have to stay wide awake to keep up with Brer Rabbit, don't they, mother?"

—*Kathleen Gilliam.*



✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ **Sketches** ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

A SOLDIER'S DISOBEDIENCE

Thinking! yes, thinking of the awfulness of this great war! But while I am thinking my mind wanders back to the beautiful Alleghany Mountains of Virginia, over the roads and across the ridges to a typical old mountain home. On the porch, in an easy chair, sits a dear old, white-bearded, white-haired veteran.

He is now eighty-one years old. I picture him at his favorite pastime—telling stories of the Civil War to children.

One day while sitting there he began: "Mary, do you see that barn down in the field? It reminds me of the most horrible period of my life."

"Every one of us was doing his best when the cry, 'Captured,' thrilled our ears. Heartbroken, we were marched into the prison house in Pennsylvania. The prison was a long building, planked up and down and stripped. Leading from the door there was a long aisle about three feet wide, through the middle of the building. One stove was allowed to fifty men. Above our bunk, as we called our blankets or beds, was a square hole cut in the wall, through which we got fresh air during the day. But we were not allowed to throw our wash water through it. Two sentinels guarded the prison on the outside. One morning one of the boys thoughtlessly picked up his pan, pitched his water through the window. With a shudder he fell to the floor—dead. Shot by the sentinel for disobeying such a simple order!"

The tears began trickling down the old soldier's cheeks. He could say no more for several seconds.

—*Mary Reynolds, '19.*

AN EVENING WALK

It was a cold, windy evening in November; the sun was behind the clouds and the sky was gray and dreary-looking. We had taken the road that led through the woods, and had gathered some red and yellow leaves that were very beautiful. We had gone for a great distance and were tired, so we walked along silently now. Although we did not speak, the woods were filled with voices. The dry twigs crackled under our feet; brilliantly colored leaves floated down from above and nestled softly among those that had already fallen; the wind sighed mournfully through the branches overhead, and a frightened rabbit ran across our path. Two little gray squirrels scampered up a tree just in front of us and chased each other from limb to limb; and a pair of robins hopped among the branches.

We came suddenly to a clearing and found ourselves in a large cornfield. The fodder had been gathered and piled into stacks and at the foot of one heap was a pile of golden and yellow pumpkins. To our left, the field stretched away in the distance and a single giant pine stood out against the sky. Its limbs were bare, and on the topmost branch was seated a lone crow. Suddenly, the clouds moved and the sun appeared very near the horizon; then it dipped out of sight, leaving a red streak which grew fainter and fainter, and finally disappeared altogether. With a cry the crow spread its wings and disappeared into the dark woods, and twilight settled over the earth.

— *Nancy Louise Bush.*

THE FOCUS

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Sworn to and subscribed before me this 2nd day of October, 1912.

J. L. BUGG, Notary Public.

Entered as second-class matter at the postoffice at Farmville, Virginia

VOL. VII FARMVILLE, VA., NOVEMBER, 1917 NO. 7

Editorial

OUR PART IN THE S. F. W. F.

Once again old S. N. S. has come to the front in helping to raise the million for War Relief. Never has there been better spirit shown than in this movement by the Faculty and Home Department as well as by the student body.

Probably it is no more than we could expect after hearing Miss Hawes and Miss Conde, but nevertheless S. N. S. has met the problem squarely, and we are proud of her.

Practically all of the pledges represent personal sacrifices and many represent sacrifices that really hurt. After all, that is the only way to give. The Promotion Committee met with hearty co-operation from the organizations as well as from individuals. Parties, banquets, and all such pleasures were foregone to help raise S. N. S.'s share of the million.

At first we set no definite goal. Yet we tried for the thousand mark. Now we are glad to say that we have more than doubled our expectations, which goes to prove that S. N. S. can do things if she wants to.

*
* * *

MAKE THE FOCUS YOUR FRIEND

One thing necessary to the success of *The Focus* is that the school girls keep it filled with literary contributions. As yet, few of the new girls have contributed to their school magazine. It is mostly the work of the old friends of *The Focus* that has filled its pages. We wish the old girls to continue, but we want and need the support of the new girls. This is one way to show your school spirit; by contributing to make our magazine one of the best, and raise it to a higher place than it even now occupies.

You need *The Focus* as well as it needs you. The expression of thought is one mode of self-development. The more you think and express those thoughts the bigger and better your thoughts become. Every one at this period needs all the self-development he can attain. This is a time when people are thinking and writing, more due to the war furnishing them with new subjects and ideas never thought of before. Put your ideas into writing that your personality may become better known.

Perhaps all of you do not know of the prizes given at the end of the year to those who write for *The Focus*. The first prize is *The Focus* cup presented to the one who has contributed the best all-round work during the year. All things are graded, including quantity as well as quality, five points being added to the average grade for each contribution. The winner's name is engraved on the cup and if won by her for three years in succession, she becomes the owner of it. The other prizes are pennants. The pennants are blue with the date of the year and the word

Focus on them. Any one can compete for these prizes from the first year on up through the college course.

Begin now in the first of the race and win. Start the good work and make this the most progressive year for *The Focus*.

—F. W.

* * * Here and There * * *

The following Dramatic Club officers have been elected:

President.....	Della Wicker
Secretary.....	Jessie Brett
Treasurer.....	Mary Lancaster
Reporter.....	Ernestine McClung
Costume Mistresses....	M. Lancaster and G. Williams
Property Manager.....	Gladys Tuck

"The Land of the Heart's Desire," a one act play, was given at the open meeting of the Argus Literary Society, October 27, in the auditorium. Mary Noel briefly outlined the course of study—Celtic Literature. This course was decided upon on account of the recent Irish Renaissance. A very interesting sketch of Celtic folk lore and a brief summary of the play was given by Edna Putney.

The characters were well interpreted by the following cast:

Maurteen Bruin, a peasant.....	Irma James
Shawn Bruin, his son.....	Huldah Daniel
Father Hart, the Priest.....	Elizabeth Lewis
Bridget Bruin, Maurteen's wife....	Ernestine McClung
Maire Bruin, their daughter-in-law ...	Katherine Field
A child.....	Josephine Rollins

Quite a unique entertainment was given by the Dramatic Club, Friday evening, October 11, in which they presented a "real live" magazine. The program consisted of an illustrated reading, a song, a poem, and tableaux of well known advertisements.

* * * * **Hit or Miss** * * * *

THOSE HELPLESS HUSBANDS

The ladies were talking, in the humorously indulgent way in which they usually tackle the topic about their husbands and other women's husbands.

"John is perfectly helpless without me," said Mrs. A.

"Henry's that way too," said Mrs. B. "I don't know what would become of him if I'd leave him for a week."

"Isn't it the truth?" sighed Mrs. C. "You'd think my husband was a child, the way I have to take care of him. Why, whenever he is mending his clothes, or sewing on buttons, or even darning his socks, I always have to thread the needle for him."

—*Exchange.*

We like the beautiful brunette,
We don't despise the winsome blonde,
But best of all the girls we've met
Is little Miss Iona Bond.

—*Exchange.*

CHRISTENING THE BABY

Brown has a lovely baby girl,
The stork left her with a flutter;
Brown named her "Oleomargarine,"
For he hadn't any but her.

—*Exchange.*

Without lifting your pencil from the paper write the number 130013.—*Exchange.*

Old girl—You certainly do pronounce that funny—you must be Irish.

New girl—I'm not! Oh, yes, the Presbyterians were Scotch-Irish and I'm Presbyterian so I guess I am Irish.

HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?

Miss Murphy—By your knowledge of Hawthorne, Miss G., you should be able to tell us why he left Brook Farm Colony and all about Brook Farm.

Marjorie—Miss Murphy, I didn't get that far.

GENDERS MIXED

Laura—I'm going to cut out Venus and hang him on the wall.

SPEAKING OF SENSATIONS

Mr. Duke (in Psychology Class)—For instance, when I look at you, class, I have a sensation of green.

TURN OVER A NEW LEAF, PLEASE

N—This is a sweet-gum leaf.

K—Gum family? Are there any more leaves in that family?

N—I don't know of any right now.

K—How about chewing gum and By Gum?

A QUESTION OF S-C-E-E-N-N-C-T-E-S

F. Lipscomb—Isn't it awful we have to put a three cent stamp on a two-cent letter?

A HEALTHY TOWN

The water carts of Lowell used to be decorated with patent medicine advertisements. An innocent Irishman from the rural districts looked at one the other day, and remarked: "Faith, it's no wonder Lowell is healthy, whin they wather the streets with Sarsaparilla!"—*Ex.*

One of the latest and most elevated clubs organized in the school is the Anti-Fat Club. The members of this club are the most ambitious girls in school, have the highest principles and the most wonderful self-denial powers. Their motto is "Yield not to temptation." Their color is mostly "indigo subjectivity," especially at meal times. The president is Marjorie Goodwyn and vice-president, Emma Hunt.

NO GRAPE IN GRAPEFRUIT—NO BREAD IN BREADFRUIT

The use of the trade-mark "Limestone Brand" was recently denied the manufacturer of a cathartic medicine by the United States examiner of trade-marks on the general grounds that the application of the word "limestone" to something that contained limestone was undescriptive and deceptive.

The applicant took an appeal, the case hung on whether a word with well defined meaning of its own can be divorced from the meaning of a phrase in some other connection. The decision of the examiner was sustained, in spite of the cleverness of appellant's attorneys, a part whose musing brief is quoted from the *Scientific American*:

"Apple butter is not butter. All the butter is taken out of buttermilk, and there is none in butter nuts, or in buttercups, and the flies in the dairy are not butterflies."

"Peanuts are not peas, and it is doubtful if they are nuts. Sailors wear pea jackets—peas do not, they have pea-cods, which, by the way, are not fish.

"Monkey wrenches are not made for nor by monkeys.

"Angel food is eaten by everybody. There are no sponges in sponge cake, and the eating of lady fingers does not impart cannibalism.

"Chickenpox has nothing to do with chickens, neither has an egg plant nor a cocktail.

"A horse chestnut is as far removed from horses as a saw horse, clothes horse, or a horse radish. Wiffle-trees, boot-trees, hall-trees, and family trees are as out of place in the woods as a railway frog, a fish plate, a fish story, a mackerel sky, or a crabapple in the water.

"Perhaps all of you may remember the country Summer Pastoral, which was written by a learned but city-bred scholar from knowledge derived from etymological deductions, rather than from actual experience. He was an advocate of the back-to-the-land movement and sang:

"I would fly from the city's rule and law,
 From its fashion and form cut loose,
 And go where the strawberry grows on its
 straw,
 And the gooseberry on the goose;
 Where the catnip tree is climbed by the cat,
 As she crouches for her prey,
 The guileless and unsuspecting rat
 On the rattan bush at play."

HE TOOK NO CHANCES

Mr. McGuire (to hospital attendant)—"Phwat did did ye say the doctor's name was?"

Attendant—"Doctor Kilpatrick."

Mr. McGuire—"That settles it. No doctor wid that cognomen can get a chance to operate on me—not if I know it."

Attendant—"Why not?"

Mr. McGuire—"Well, you see my name is Patrick."

A—What does ridicule mean?

S—A ridicule is something you put sewing in.

AT THE BALL GAME

"Dearie, what is that man running for?"

"He just hit the ball."

"I know, but is he required to chase it too?"—*Ex.*

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ Exchanges ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

"Two's a heap, and three's a pile," as the old saying goes, so we have a "heap" of exchanges this month. But merely a "heap" doesn't satisfy us. We hope to have even more than a "pile" next time.

The editorials of both the *Richmond College* and *Westhampton Departments* of the *Richmond College Messenger* display quite an amount of school spirit, and the *Richmond College Department*, especially, sounds forth the patriotic note, that note to which all hearts and hands are responding so readily and so nobly to-day. The magazine, as a whole, is enjoyable, but the essays rather overbalance the short stories in both number and content. Fortunately the poems tend to lighten the effect.

The State Normal Magazine is rather a slender volume, though perhaps it is too early in the session to criticise it along this line. However, we would suggest more short stories interwoven with the sketches and essays. The sketches are good. We enjoy reading them because they are "sketchy" and to the point, yet unified and complete. It is of the editorials, however, that we would especially speak. They are unusually good and might well be read and observed by other student bodies as well as by the students of the Greensboro State Normal.

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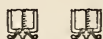
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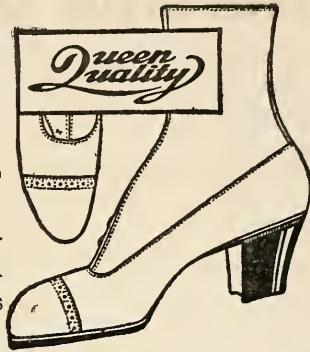
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