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The Connecticut College Quarterly

March, 1925

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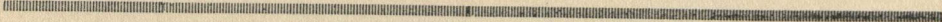
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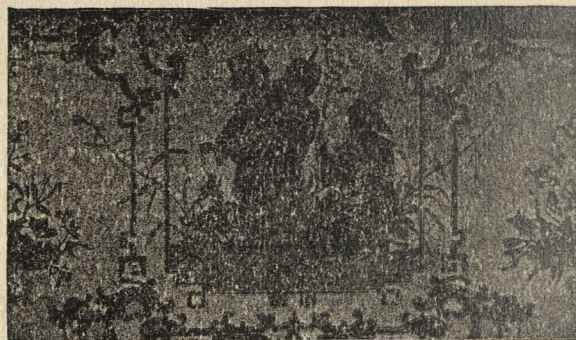
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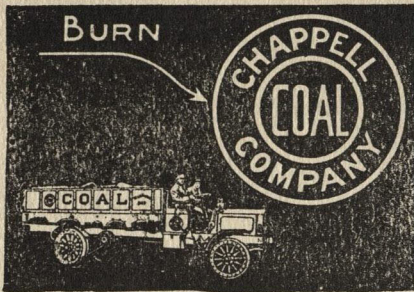
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THE CONNECTICUT COLLEGE QUARTERLY

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PETER'S DREAM

"IF you sold it for a sixpence, you sold it for a song!" said his mother, in a scolding tone.

"But, mother," he scolded back, "she asked me for it—and she only had a sixpence!"

His mother scolded again—"But, Peter, Peter, how do you know she only had a sixpence?"

Peter stopped scolding and just said nicely—in a voice that any little boy that knows that he knows more than his mother uses—"Because she *said* so, mother dear!"

I guess his mother wasn't through scolding, because she scolded louder and louder, "Peter, you can't believe everything that people say—sometimes they say things that are falsehoods."

Peter was almost polite now—for he was afraid of things when his mother was more angry than scolding, "But, mother, fairies never tell falsehoods—and it was a lovely fairy that bought my lovely dream."

"A fairy—a fairy—what's a fairy?" scolded his mother.

"Oh, mother, mother," Peter giggled, "don't you really honest-to-goodness know what a fairy is? I'm surprised—surprised—and more surprised! Why a fairy is a—why a fairy is a—fairy! A fairy has—no they don't—yes—oh mother, you *do* know what a fairy is *now*, don't you?"

"But, Peter, I don't—and you don't either! Tell me—tell me—why did you sell your lovely dream to a—hussy?"

"But, mother, mother, she wasn't a hussy! Not a hussy, mother, no, never a hussy! She was a fairy—the fairy with the cobweb sash. This morning as I went

down the road through the woods—I saw her—and then she bought my lovely dream.”

“But, Peter, Peter, why did you sell it to the—fairy? And now we have only a sixpence instead of your lovely dream!”

“But, mother, now we have a sixpence; we can buy oats and barley—and besides the fairy with the cobweb sash wanted my lovely dream—wanted it for her very own!”

“But Peter, if you had kept your lovely dream for just a day or two longer—until it was a little riper—you could have sold it to a giant for more than a song.”

“A giant, mother, a giant? But I don’t want a giant to have any of my lovely dreams!”

“Oh, Peter, Peter,” scolded his mother, “you’re a foolish—foolish boy—you should want to sell your dreams to a giant!”

“But, mother, a fairy is so much lovelier than a giant—and especially fairies that wear cobweb sashes—and she wanted my lovely dream so badly. She ran after me, mother, through the thistles and over the goldenrod—and hopped a skippity-skip right up on my shoulder and said she to me, ‘Peter, let me have your lovely dream—please? I’ll give you a beautiful sixpence—a wonderful sixpence!’ And so, mother, I gave her my lovely dream—and she gave me a beautiful sixpence.”

“And where is the wonderful sixpence, Peter—where is it?”

Peter fumbled and scrambled in his pocket—and pulled out his hand with nothing in it but a big, green pea. “And that,” said Peter, “is the wonderful sixpence!”

“But Peter, Peter,” hooted his mother, “that is not a beautiful sixpence—nor a wonderful sixpence—nor any kind of a sixpence at all—that is a big, green pea. That was a bad fairy, Peter—a hussy—and you sold her your lovely dream for nothing!”

Peter cried and cried and cried some more—while his mother went out to hang up the clothes on the line. He cried when his mother came back—and cried louder and louder when he saw what his mother had—for in her two hands she had a dream—his lovely dream—and it was all torn and shorn—until it wasn’t a dream any more.

“And now, Peter,” said his mother, “you must never sell your lovely dreams any more—never, never—especially to fairies with cobweb sashes—for they never give you beautiful sixpences—wonderful sixpences—or any kind of sixpences at all—nothing but big, green peas. You must save your lovely dreams—save them until they are ripe—and then sell them to a giant. Do you understand, Peter?” His mother ended in a scolding tone.

“Yes, mother,” said Peter, in a very nice voice—a voice that any little boy that

knows that he knows less than his mother uses—"yes, mother—I never will sell my lovely dreams to fairies with cobweb sashes—I'll save them all for you!"

And then his mother stopped scolding and gave Peter a lovely hug.

THE STATUE

A plaster face may bear a look serene;
What can it know of mortal stress and storm?
The marble is so still and white and clean;
It has no evil thoughts that would deform.

The statue looks on life with sightless eyes
That seeing nothing, caring nothing, stare
Across this world that's made of joys and sighs,
And see a pathless waste that's broad and bare.

He must be happy, he who nothing fears,
And nothing knows of sorrow, joy, or pain.
His time will pass—he'll not change with the years;
He is untouched by storm or wind or rain.

The statue can know nothing of our life:
He looks down from his pedestal so high,
And hears us groaning 'mid our storm and strife,
And thinks perhaps they're fortunate who die.

A BIT OF DEVON

THERE is, on the rugged north coast of Devonshire, a small, humble fishing village built on the steep side of a hill sloping to the rocky shore and quay. We came upon the village one night at sunset. Leaving the car at what seemed to be the end of a road, we followed a steep cobbled path for several minutes, turning and twisting among rows of hawthorne hedge until a sharp bend in the path brought us a view of Clovelly nestled below on the hillside. The sun was slowly slipping over the horizon, and the whole village was a riot of color, reflected from the water which caught the shafts of light from the sinking sun, and threw streaks of red far up on the roof-tops and quaint white-washed fence.

Clovelly is perhaps one of the most visited villages of England. It was once a haunt of pirates and smugglers, and from that stock have sprung the sturdy fishing folk of this tiny town. Its one steep street is cobbled with small stones, and up and down these smooth, worn cobbles the donkeys ply their burdens of heavy, laden

baskets, and an occasional tourist, too tired to make the ascent. Every day boats from Bristol come bringing their loads of human freight to spend several hours buying souvenirs, sending postal cards, and tramping up and down the narrow street, peering into the quaint, thatched houses. At night the village is again quiet, after the rush of tourists all day, and settles down to a life characteristic of these folk. They gather by their gates, and in their gardens, and life again possesses a story-book aspect. The fisherman returns with the day's catch; the milk woman comes with her cans of milk swung on a yoke, and her jars of clotted cream.

MODERN MOTHER GOOSE

When I was a very little girl,
In the window seat I'd sometimes curl,
And 'gainst the pane put my forehead,
I'd count the people when weather was good
And the puddles when it was horrid.

Down from the sky that is silent and blue
From the tip of the hunter moon's horn
A star has dropped into our big yellow meadow
And frightened the sleeping corn.



REALISM IN LITERATURE

LITERATURE is defined variously in accordance with the wide divergence in individual viewpoint. Psychological rather than standard, it changes its aspect and meaning to suit the particular person. The superficial type of reader is attracted by the physical qualities of the book, and literature consequently connotes for him merely the ingredient of book-cases and library shelves. Lacking the transforming power of imagination, he reads with a gentle placidity, mildly entertained by the story, but never losing sight of the black and white characters on the printed page. True appreciation exists only among book-lovers, those who are possessed of more penetrating vision and greater nicety of discernment, and who therefore recognize the external features of the book as the worthless husks enclosing a wealth of precious treasure. To them each one is a fragment of life, its characters vital and human, its plot a creation of vivid reality. Merging his own personality into the author's portrayal, the reader shares unreservedly in its trial and triumph, joy and heart-ache.

Literature is indeed composed of miniature mirrors of life, and is therefore particularly valuable in recording the peculiar tendencies of the different periods. Evolution in the style of authorship has kept pace with the evolution of society, and time has achieved as many drastic changes. For instance, nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the works of Jane Austen and the radical modernist. While the characters of the former are always thoroughly life-like and human, they are nevertheless surrounded by a subtle fragrance of romance and charm which softens their sterner and harsher outlines. The author writes of the life characteristic of a certain period, maidens fascinatingly demure and decorous, young men the epitome of gallantry. Turning from "Emma" to a very recent production is a crossing into another planet, in which realism is esteemed higher than beauty, and no attempt is made to conceal any discordances in the general harmony. Edna Ferber's "So Big" is a popular illustration of this type of realism, a vivid picturization of an indomitable soul triumphing over a degrading environment. It is a ruthless dissection of life, written with keen insight and throbbing sincerity. As far as treatment and depth of character are concerned, Selina and her gentle predecessors have little resemblance beyond the common mission of mirroring the distinctive tendencies of different epochs of history.

The style of writing has also undergone a significant development. That of the older authors is quiet and leisurely, abounding in intricacy of plot and detail of incident. The insertion of frequent interludes of description, quiet pools in the turbulence of action, is one of their chief sources of charm. In such characteristics

one sees reflected the prevailing influence of the era, reminiscent of old lace and crinoline, decorum and chivalry. Beside its dignified serenity modern expression seems a thorough rebel, defying all usages of custom and tradition, yet its astonishing deviation from the well-worn literary paths should not be considered a decline in artistic skill. Rather is it indicative of the present age, and its dominating inclination toward freedom and unrestraint. Every literary performance must inevitably absorb to greater or less degree the popular trend toward feverish excitement and worldly sophistication.

The progress of time has undoubtedly brought with it a striking change in artistic method. Where formerly the old masters wrought their themes with infinite patience and variety of detail, modern authors now depict with broad splashes of vivid color, more crude than subtle, perhaps, and more realistic than charming. The austerity of Mrs. Wharton's "Old Maid" stands out in grim and memorable relief against the more subdued qualities of its classic predecessors. The ages have evolved for us a unique literary heritage, a fruition of the power of vivid delineation, economy of expression, and graphic suggestion. And what there has been lost of sheer romance and beauty has been amply atoned for in a newfound courage to face life squarely, and to present its less attractive aspects without attempting to veil its tawdriness by empty illusion.

POEM

What care I for storm and snow
And wintry winds that blow and blow,
That chill my nose and make it red,
And freeze imagination—dead?
Forsooth I'll laugh in fiendish glee—
They cannot freeze the heart of me.



KREISLERIANA

Author's Note:—Impressions jotted down after a Kreisler concert in Vienna, 1921.

THE Shadow of the Unfortunate City dimmed the light of the hall, and a cloud seemed to hover over the platform on which a tall man played the violin. He played as if he wished to persuade the cloud to leave; he pleaded with it; he entreated. The voice of the heavenly strings rose and fell, sang and wept, now beseeching, now telling a simple tale; then, taking heart under the touch of the virile bow, resounding in full swaying, deep registers—almost commanding.

At length under the spell of the music the cloud dispersed, dissolved into a fine, grey mist—and a strange thing happened. The somber streets of Vienna opened in perspective. One of the suburbs

There is a large house. It looks like an institution. Here is a Catholic chapel with placid nuns in flowing garments kneeling beside a flock of girls of all ages, orphans all. And what is the fervent prayer of intercession that fills the walls of the chapel with the echo of a hundred voices? What danger threatens since war has ceased? Hunger and want are about to chase these children from their chapel, to close the doors of the hospitable house to them. They are praying that the key of their home should not be wrested from them.

The man on the platform knows how it came to be laid back safely into their hands. He knows more. He knows also other faces.

Girls of a darker type, again clothed all alike, eighty of them, working up and down the spacious halls, the open corridors, the study rooms, the kitchen of a large and splendid building in a different section of the city. Over the door there are words in big letters: "Orphanage for Jewish Girls." Enter through a little gate bearing the inscription: "Vienna Milk Relief," and the American flag. And, were it not sacrilegious, you might almost assert having seen another name, written dimly underneath that flag, which must be well known to the man on the platform. But you only rub your eyes, for it is a strange evening.

The same sign leads further through the autumn mist, until all of a sudden, pouring out of low white war barracks on the outskirts of the city is seen an endless stream of children—big children, little children, pale, lean, deformed children, some already with a faint red hue in their cheeks. While they assemble on the two playgrounds which are oddly marked off as if soldiers had formerly exercised there, look through the windows of those low houses. What do you see? Long rows of beds on a clean polished floor—twelve, twenty-five, fifty in one hall, even more; and as your eye follows the white rows and the little chairs between, see at the foot of the hall ever so many white basins on the wall, and ever so many tooth-brushes and many wash-cloths, hung in sweet concord and cleanliness on ever so many "individual" nails—three hundred of them at least. The little owners of

those tooth-brushes and wash-cloths do not call much their own, for they share in common the heritage of this war—the terrible heritage of sickness born of hatred and cruelty. They are here to forget their troubles and to get well. Loving hands minister to them, nurse them in the same place where their fathers may have been nursed back to health, back to war. . . .

Outside of the gate, there is a throng of children trying to get in; and it seems that nobody but the tall man on the platform notices these hungry eyes in the pale faces as the children cast envious looks at their more fortunate comrades just coming out to the playground. With his eyes fixed on the group he tries to explain. What excellent messengers these strings are! They pretend to talk of Mozart, but Mozart more than knew Vienna, then the Smiling City. He also was one of her truest sons, gay, lovable, genial, a wizard in the heartstrings of human nature. Who summoned these children? It must have been Mozart's music. They tumble over each other, a rollicking, frolicking crowd! They find it so funny, this elbow, going up-and-down, up-and-down, with unflinching precision. It would be fun to catch it—and this man certainly does not look forbidding! There is a kindly light in his eyes as he smiles down upon them—but the teachers appear in time to rescue him from the irreverent babies, and the din dies down as the door of the "Montessori Home" shuts after the last pair of tripping little feet.

Watch now this elbow and the nervous wrist! It is as if a sudden determination had come over it to do the impossible, and to do it all alone. Even the piano is silent, and thousands hold their breath as the rippling cascades of Tartini's "Trillo del Diavolo" is announced with its first long, low note, the resting place to which the bow will return over and over again while achieving the incredible. The hall is one man, and he is listening, listening with all his soul, to the possibilities of the infinite before him, to fill the empty space with the wonder and the magic of a masterpiece written two hundred years ago. The present claims its right in frantic applause, finds its expression in generous response to the appeal from the platform to support the work of the artist with greater enthusiasm than the people of Vienna had ever given it before. "The Kreisler Home for Children" and its permanent foundation is assured.

. . . . Another street of Vienna opens up. An old man with a white beard and the same kindly eyes used to walk down Starhemberggasse. You could not have missed him were you ever frequenting that place, for he never was alone as long as there was a child out of school. The children had a way of sensing the coming of old Dr. Kreisler, their friend and protector. "Papa Kreisler! Papa Kreisler! Wait!" And they would run towards him, pursuing him down the road, pressing him from all sides, telling a particularly important bit of news from their

own big-little world. "Let a man's religion be doing good to those around him, and let this world be his church. It is the only religion, the only church we need."

He is dead now, and Starhembergasse has lost him forever—but the orphaned children of Vienna will find his spirit in their new home, "The Kreisler Home for Children."

Fritz Kreisler is playing on the platform, and the music of his soul is building the memorial to his father. Children from all over the world, children of all races and creeds, are his silent guests while he plays.

FRAGMENTS

I searched for the fragments of joy,
I knew life held much joy in store.
I eagerly gathered each bit
And hungrily still yearned for more!

I garnered the fragments of love,
All scattered and strewn far apart,
And hugging them tight to my breast
I gathered them into my heart!

I gathered the fragments of life,
Endowing each one with a soul,
I pieced them together and made
A glorious and unified whole.

WHERE WOULD I CHOOSE TO LIVE MY LIFE?

YOU ask me, could I choose the tenor of my life, what it would be? I'll tell you. Opening from the anteroom of childhood, I see three doors. One bears the word, content; the second, happiness; and the third of them, joy. First will I take you for a little time through each of these, then will I tell you where I most would wish to dwell.

Across the doorsill of content, we find a dreaming meadow, sweet with the sounds and scents of summer. Here at the bubbling spring we quench our thirst with a draught that is cold and sweet; we dabble our fingers in the clear, swift ripples and

watch the water-cresses swaying softly in their little bays. The noontide sun is golden, warm, and drowsy; we may lie back among the flowers, and pillow our cheeks among the sweet, green fern leaves.

Above, the sky is blue as gentian flowers, and drifted over with soft, lazy clouds. The soothing hum of honey-gathering bees lulls us almost to dreams, but all our dreams are here, scattered like dewdrops on the flowers. Birdsongs weave themselves among the sunbeams, making a tapestry of sound and colored fragrance and through it all the tinkling stream winds out a pattern.

This is content. Would I wish to spend my life in this golden sunlight, by the laughing stream? Nay, I would not, and we must journey on.

We pass through the door of happiness. The smell of seaweed and the sound of lapping waves; sand, soft and warm beneath our feet. The waters are purpling in the shadows save where the sunset's trailing garments have swept a pathway of rich red-gold cross the bay. There in the west, great darting flames of color leap up almost to the zenith of the sky. Crimson rose is the heart of it, softly fading to a trembling fringe of lavender that loses itself in blue. Shot through it all are flickering glints and streaks of gold, and there along the sea line runs a band of clear, soft green.

We lean against the sand dunes, and with half-closed eyes we watch the colors blend and separate again, but never do they fade or die. We listen and far out beyond the dim blue headlands we hear the booming of the open sea.

But would we linger always beside these gentle curling waves, to gaze upon the unfading glories of the sunset? No, we have not yet reached our journey's end.

The third door opens upon a ragged cliff wet with the spume of the sea. Jutting rocks ascending toward the star-jewelled sky, these must we climb if we would choose to live with joy. We cling to the rough pinnacles and watch the crested, curling waves dashing with an insistent fury at our feet. Sometimes the spray rises to blind and drench and chill us, but we would not wish to escape its thrilling cold. Above us the stars glitter, brilliant, inaccessible, and strange. Out of the east come great rolling clouds, rushing, billowing toward us in their awful beauty. They envelop us and blot out the stars. The lightning plays about our feet. We cling to the jagged rocks with a fearful agony, and feel the whole world shake with the strength of the limitless sea. And this is joy? Ah, yes, for joy is one-half pain.

Here it is that I would choose to live my life. Here by the boundless, raging sea, here on the rough and strangely shapen peaks that are buffeted and lashed by lightning and by wind. Here beneath the glittering stars and the deep, mysterious blue of the midnight sky.

And what, you ask, are these the symbols of? The gentle tinkling stream, the tranquil land-locked bay, the chill and sometimes cruel waves of the open sea, all these are portions of the illimitable and uncharted vastness of knowledge and of truth.

The meadow, the beach, and the towering cliff are the planes of our daily lives. The skies of clear, pure, golden sunlight, of flaming sunset glories, or of star gemmed velvet blueness are the sympathies, the loves, the pleasures, pains, and sadnesses that surround us through our lives.

And if one choose the door which he would pass through, does that mean that he will there find the life he is searching for, does it mean that the names of content and happiness and joy will never tarnish or grow dim? Ah, that I cannot tell, I do not know.

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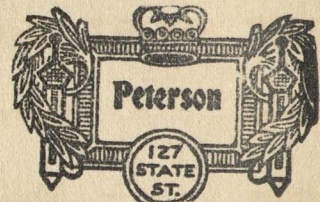
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