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The Acton Free Press

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OCTOBER

The golden glow of autumn soft
lingers on the hills,
The leaves are turning scarlet and the
silvery brooks and rills
Are flanked by rusty sedges, stern
sentinels of brown,
Which guard the brooklet's edges,
from stiff heights looking down.

And yonder in the meadow, they're
harvesting the grain,
Last night a ring about the moon
foretold approaching rain,
While over on the hillside gray squirrels frisk about,
In shrill dismay they chatter as the
children gayly shout.

In their search for glossy chestnuts
encased in velvet sheen,
When they prick their rosy fingers on
the burs 'neath grass still green,
The birds are flying southward in
circling flocks o'erhead,
And sunset leaves are interspersed by
sumac's splash of red.

Heigho, for glad October days, the
brightest of the year,
Ere wintry weather closes in; heigho
for nights so clear.
Heigho for glad October when the
harvest moon shines bright,
And sky o'erhead is radiant with its
lustrous mellow light.
—Edith Gates Arnold.

Living up to Brother George

By Aunt Jerusha Potter

The Allens had lived in the next house to me ever since Elinor was a little toddling thing, all chubby and dimpled with the biggest blue eyes you ever saw, and a laugh that could teach any canary a thing or two in music. I suppose one reason I've always been so fond of Elinor is that I knew her when she was a baby. No matter what faults a girl may have, you're tempted to overlook them all for the sake of the dear, innocent little thing she used to be.

There is no denying that the Allen young folks grew up with plenty of faults. Their father died when Elinor was a year old, and George was about four, and their mother was so occupied mourning for him that it wasn't till the children were pretty badly spoiled that she seemed to wake up to the situation. I can't help thinking that she could have shown her love for her dear husband better, by devoting herself to the boy and girl he had left her, than by indulging in her sorrow. Unless grief turns to service, it's likely to be selfish.

Elinor had begun to come to see me while she was cutting her first teeth. She would run away from her nurse, and come and hide behind my rocking-chair on the porch, bubbling over with laughter to think how she had fooled Maria. And then when Maria appeared to take her home, the tune would change and Elinor would scream and stamp her foot. They fell into the way at last, when they missed her, of looking to see if she was at my house, and if she was, letting her alone. I always said I'd send her home if she troubled me, but somehow, whatever she did, it never seemed to be a trouble.

Of course, as Elinor grew older, she no longer thought about going to see "Aunt Jerusha," as she always called me, although I wasn't any relation to her, as the nicest thing that could happen. She had other interests and other friends. Yet habit is strong with all of us. Elinor kept on dropping in to see me when she had a few spare minutes, while she was a little girl in the grades, and after she became a high-school young lady, with an opinion about everything under the sun. It was then that my heart ached for her. For my love for Elinor did not blind me to the fact that she was shallow and selfish and vain and generally pitiful. Sometimes when she was running on, opening up her heart to me the way she did, I could hardly keep back the tears.

I never was so well acquainted with George as I was with his sister, but I'd kept an eye on him, too. Poor Mrs. Allen hadn't made any more of a success with her boy than with her girl. George was as spoiled a young fellow as you'd be likely to meet in a day's journey. All his life he had dodged the hard things, and it had got to the point where he expected everything to be made easy and pleasant for him. He never kept a job more than a month, and when he wasn't working, he usually slept till noon and came home at night at all hours. It looked as if George were in a fair way to be ruined.

Well, when America entered the war, George was drafted. Up till that the Allens had been pretty patriotic, as far as talk went. But somehow it had never occurred to them that George would have to do his part, like any other young fellow of twenty-one. Elinor came running over to see me, wild-eyed.

"George has been drafted, Aunt Jerusha. Did you ever hear of such a thing! It would kill George, one of those camps where they all herd together. George is the most fastidious boy about the people he associates with."

"Maybe he is," I said rather coldly. "But if that's the case, I don't know why I see him with Burton Ridgeley so often."

"Burton Ridgeley!" cried Elinor. "Why, Burton's father is the president of the Third National Bank." Then she caught herself up, looking queer. "Of course, Burton is a little wild," she said, "but he belongs to one of the best families in town."

I did not reply, and in another moment she was back to George. "Of course, he won't pass the physical examination," she said. "George isn't at all strong. And even if he did, mamma has some friends who are very influential—one of them is a senator—and she is sure they can get him off."

You must remember that this was at the beginning of the war. I suppose any girl would know better than to talk that way now. George passed his physical examination, and then his mother started in telegraphing and sending long letters to the "influential friends" Elinor had boasted about. And they all wrote back that they could do nothing for George. At last he was up against something from which there was no backing out, just because he didn't find it pleasant.

They sent him down to one of the big camps in a Southern state, along with forty thousand others. But of course to Mrs. Allen and Elinor, it didn't matter about the forty thousand, half as much as it did about George. You'd have thought he was the only boy in the United States service, and that he'd endured more than all the rest together.

Elinor used to bring over his letters to read to me. Those letters showed pretty much what George was like. Most boys, even if they were having a hard time, would try to put a bold face on it so as to spare their mother and sisters at home. But George wanted to make the worst of everything. He complained of his food, grumbled because his coat didn't fit. He grumbled because he had to get up early. His fellow privates all seemed beneath contempt. His sister wept over the letters as she read them, and I couldn't wonder. I should have wanted to cry, myself, if one of my blood had shown himself such a coward.

I think it was about six weeks after, that I began to notice a difference. At first it wasn't so marked. You know how the breeze starts up in the afternoon of a hot day, at first you don't know whether it is really cooler, or whether you're just getting accustomed to the heat. That was the way I felt about the change in George's letters. But after a while it was so plain that nobody could have missed it. Elinor used to puzzle over those letters.

"Don't you think there's something awful queer, Aunt Jerusha, in the way George writes?" she asked me once. "Mamma is worrying for fear he might have had a touch of sunstroke when he had to drill in the sun for hours and hours, you know."

It was after he was sent down to the rifle range that they found out what ailed George. He wrote home a description of the range in a sort of humorous tone, as if he were trying to make them see the point of a joke. But I fancy I was the only one who smiled over the letter.

They did not have things at the range fixed up as they did at the camp. The wonder was that they had anything. They way cities with a population of thirty or forty thousand—for they are cities, even if they call them cantonments—sprang up in a few weeks' time, was more like an Arabian nights' story than a sober fact. Down at the range there was no Y. M. C. A. but where the boys could gather for an evening. There were no beds. They rolled up in their blankets and slept on the ground. He drew a picture of the little cone-shaped stove that was supposed to heat their quarters. Most of the heat went up the pipe, George said, but he said it as if he thought it rather amusing. And he had a good deal to say about target practice, where it seemed he had done pretty well.

If the letter had brought word that George was a prisoner, the Allens could hardly have taken it more to heart. After Elinor had finished the letter, she told me her mother was going to write to headquarters at Washington and tell just what she thought of treating the soldiers that way. In fact, she did write that very day, but luckily she wrote to the senator she knew, asking for a line from him to enclose with her letter, and that gave time for George's letter to reach her.

It seemed George didn't want any appeal made. He said if the boys knew his mother had done such a thing, they would think he had been playing baby and he would be disgraced forever. And he kept insisting that everything was all right, that he didn't mind the cold, that he was really enjoying himself. As soldiers go, it wasn't an unusual sort of letter, but when I tried to make myself believe that George Allen wrote it, I had to pinch myself to be sure that I wasn't dreaming.

"Isn't that the queerest sort of letter?" demanded Elinor, looking at me with her blue eyes very wide open. "And it worries mamma. What do you suppose has happened to George?"

"If you really want to know," I said, "it looks to me as if he might be growing up."

Except that George was away from home, the war made very little difference to the Allens. Elinor went out a great deal that winter, and it seemed to me she had on a new frock or a new hat every time I met her. She did considerable knitting, but always with bright-colored wools. Mrs. Allen bought a few Liberty Bonds and made a small donation to the Red Cross, but she was talking about buying a new car that would cost many times as much as she had contributed toward the war. Elinor came over one day when I was just taking some potato bread out of the oven. I offered her a biscuit, and she tried it rather doubtfully at first.

"Why, it really tastes good," she exclaimed. "I supposed those things would be horrid."

"If your cook has trouble with them, I'd be glad to show her how," I said. "I've used both oatmeal and potato, and I don't know which I like better."

"Oh, mamma doesn't bother," Elinor answered airily. "She says what a little family like ours eats can't make any difference either way."

"I thought I saw the food administration card in your window," I said.

"Oh, we had to have that in self-defense," said Elinor lightly. "But even if we wanted to Hooverize, Julia wouldn't. She is the most obstinate girl, and she thinks all this talk about saving wheat and fats is nonsense."

It was early in February, as I remember, that George had a week's leave. I saw him walking up to his mother's door, and, though he'd lived neighbor to me since he was a little fellow of four, I didn't recognize him till he called out my name. I stood petrified while he came over and shook my hand. He looked so broad-shouldered in his uniform, and was so brown, that it was impossible to believe he was the boy who used to come downstairs yawning at noon. But it was not his tanned skin that made all the difference. When you looked into his eyes he seemed more of a stranger than ever.

Elinor told me afterwards what happened at home. The dinner started with vegetable soup and then the maid brought in a lamb roast.

George looked reproachfully at his mother. "Why, mother," he said, "I thought I saw a food card in the window. And this is meatless day."

Mrs. Allen tried to explain that the food card was not to be taken seriously but George could not see it that way. He made inquiries about the wheatless day and the wheatless meals, and he refused to be helped to any of the lamb. "He was pleasant about it, you know," explained Elinor, when she was telling me the incredible story. "He only said, 'I'll take my share of the lamb to-morrow, if you don't mind.' "

It seemed that George had subscribed to a hundred-dollar bond of the second Liberty Loan, and he was interested to know what Elinor had taken. When he put the question to Elinor, she said, "You mean mamma, don't you?"

"I mean you."

"Why, I haven't taken any, George. I haven't any money."

"You have money enough to go to a show two or three times a week," said George. "And your candy and ice-cream bill would more than pay for a fifty-dollar bond in a year. Mother gives you a good big allowance, and helps you out once a month or so, when you run behind. You ought to have a Liberty Bond. I hate to have my sister a slacker."

I don't want to give the impression that George was finding fault all the time, for that was not the case. It was only that he was so full of his new life and his new duties, and tremendously in earnest. He and Elinor came over to see me one afternoon, and George ate war cake, made without sugar or wheat, and talked about camp life incessantly. Elinor was very silent for her. She sat watching him with an odd expression on her face, as if she wondered if he could really be her brother.

"You talk as if you rather liked it, George," I said to him, at last when he stopped to take breath. "In spite of all the hard, disagreeable things."

"Like it? Of course I like it. The hard things don't bother when you get used to them. And besides," added George, looking up at me, "it's the only thing I have ever done that was worth while. It makes life seem different, Miss Potter."

He was expecting to go across very soon. The boys took it for granted that their leave was given them that they might say good-by to their families. Elinor winced when he spoke of that.

"Oh, I won't believe that George is going across," she exclaimed. "Something will happen. I feel that it will."

"Not if I can help it," said George, and set his jaw. I had always thought he hadn't enough chin, but as I looked at him now I couldn't see any lack.

"You mean you want to go?" Elinor's voice broke before she could finish, and she began to cry. "It isn't kind of you," she sobbed, "to want to get killed."

George went across the room and put his arm about his sister, and, watching him through my tears, I thought him every inch a man.

"It's not that, Elinor, dear," he said. "Of course I want to come back. I want to live. But after all," he went on, standing straight, "there are other things I want more. I want to have a hand in the biggest thing that ever happened in this world. And life isn't—well, it is such a high price to pay."

Of course, we didn't know when George sailed. After a time one of those printed post cards signed with his name arrived telling of the vessel's safe arrival in a foreign port. And that very afternoon Elinor came over to see me, her eyes red at the rims and her lips white.

"Aunt Jerusha," she said. "Please tell me how to go to work."

"To work?" I repeated, and I suppose my voice showed how puzzled I was. "What kind of work?"

"Oh, I don't know. Some kind, any kind! Don't you see I've got to be different? Why George and I don't talk the same language now. There's a gulf wider than the Atlantic Ocean between us."

It sounded like such wild talk that I tried to say something consoling, but Elinor wouldn't listen.

"Don't you see, Aunt Jerusha, I've got to stop thinking of myself and my good times? I've got to work and sacrifice as George is doing. I must begin to be a real American. I've got to live up to George."

"Of course you must, my dear," I said, and took her in my arms and kissed her.

THE FAST TRAIN FOR YOU?

Since the reduction of the number of fast trains on the Italian railroads, as a coal-saving measure, soldiers are ordered to ride on slow and not on express trains when given free transportation to visit their homes. Not long ago, on the Rome-Florence express, a policeman found a big, healthy-looking soldier who had not a paid ticket.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the policeman.

"I'm going home from the hospital," answered the soldier.

"You don't look as if you had ever been the inside of one."

The soldier silently threw back his cape with his left hand. His entire right arm and shoulder blade were missing. The policeman passed on. It would have taken an official with a heart of stone to have thrown that Italian hero off the train. He belonged there if any man did. He carried his credentials with him.

It's the fast train for all of us. Naturally we want the best the world offers. But what have we to offer the world in return? What are your credentials?

A QUESTION OF RIGHT

"Every man has a right to his own opinion," said the argumentative man.

"That's what I say," exclaimed Senator Sorghum, in a tone of slight irritation. "What is the sense of your putting up a discussion in an effort to take my opinion away from me and substitute yours?"—Washington Star.

BUY CONTINUED PROSPERITY

Before our last Victory Loan financial experts were dubious as to the outlook for Canada. She could not borrow abroad. It was necessary that she have a large available capital to finance credits for British and foreign war orders. Canada was thrown on her own resources and appealed to her citizens.

The remarkable over-subscription of the 1917 Victory Loan completely changed the uncertain outlook which prevailed. It gave a new impetus to agriculture, commerce and prosperity. It invigorated our efforts in the war. It allowed our provincial Governments, municipal and other borrowers to finance their requirements at home. In short, it gave another lease of life to the activities of the Dominion.

The Victory Loan of 1918 will accomplish the same purpose. Upon the ready response of the large and small investor, depends the immediate economic future of Canada. Everyone's prosperity is involved.

Prepare to buy continued Prosperity in Victory Bonds.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

From the Issue of the Free Press of Thursday, October 20, 1898

Shoppers, do your Saturday buying during daylight as far as possible. Give the merchants a chance to get home before midnight.

A convict says he was sent to prison for being dishonest, and yet he is compelled every day to cut out pieces of cardboard, which are put between the soles of cheap shoes made there and palmed off on the innocent public as leather.

A number of the friends of Dr. A. S. Elliott entertained him at a complimentary supper at Agnew's Hotel on Monday evening.

A Parlor Social will be held at the home of Councillor Francis Friday evening.

The citizens of Acton and vicinity need not weary for lack of entertainment for the next two weeks. The following formidable list is already announced: Thursday, Oct. 27th Lecture at Churchill; Friday, 28th, Parlor Social at Councillor Francis' and Entertainment at Lorne School; Oct. 31st Song and Story Recitation, the Methodist Church; Nov. 3rd, Lecture at Churchill; Nov. 4th, Acton Cornet Band Concert; Nov. 18th, Lecture at Churchill; Thanksgiving Night, Fire Brigade Concert; Nov. 24th, Lecture at Churchill. Then comes the Christmas entertainments in connection with the Sunday Schools.

Cold and rainy weather.

Rockwood, Erin and Campbellville Fall Fairs complete the list in this section. Rockwood's opening day was very wet, but the second day was bright and thousands turned out to enjoy the fall day outing. Erin had two wet days, and those who went to Campbellville were soaked.

MARRIED
McKEE-McMASTERS—In Guelph, on Wednesday, 19th October, John D. McKee, to Kate McMaster.

"JUST A MAN DRIVING A DRAY"

That is probably what you would say of him. Nevertheless, that gray-haired middle-aged man, driving his dray, is a hero. He does not think so. He thinks he has merely done his duty.

Years ago he was one of twelve children—a happy, busy family living in the mountains several miles from the village. Then suddenly the scourge of tuberculosis fell upon them. That was before the proper treatment of the disease was understood. Nine brothers and sisters died one after another. There were no trained nurses in the country districts then; the other members of the family had to do all the nursing. Through all that agonizing period the man who drives the dray was a veritable rock of defense. He saw one brother and sister after another sicken and fade away. He nursed them all. He gave what physical relief he could, and with his prayers he comforted and sustained the trembling souls setting forth for the unknown. All his youth was so spent.

At last only his father and mother, two brothers and himself were left. One of the brothers married and moved away. The other was killed by a train. The poor old mother died. Then came the last fierce trial. The father fell ill with cancer. His devoted son set himself to face the long terrible months of nursing, although he himself was now stricken with tuberculosis. His one prayer was that his strength would not fail while his father needed him. The son's prayer was granted; his strength held out until his father's death. After that he cared little what happened to himself. He went, nevertheless, to a hospital, and there, under modern treatment, his disease was arrested.

Almost his whole life has been passed in caring for the sick. He has never been free to follow his own desires, to find congential work, to make money, to see the world, or to marry. But he is never bitter; he thinks he has done only his duty as a son, a brother, and a Christian. Perhaps he is right, but how many of us who call ourselves Christians are doing ours as simply, as nobly, as devotedly?

HIS CHRISTIAN NAME

The primary teacher had taken great pains to explain the distinction between surnames and Christian names, after which she called on the children to give examples of each kind from their own names and those of other members of their families.

When Jennie was asked to tell in one statement the surname and also the Christian name of her father, she responded, after a little hesitation, "My father's surname is Johnson, and his Christian name is a Methodist."

Freedom Buy Bonds.
Slaves Wear Them!

JENKINS AND JACKSON

Bill Jenkins owned a little printing office,
And Jenkins would, at times, feel very blue;
Tho' he'd spent a pretty penny,
Still of sorts he hadn't many,
And he often had to lose a job or two.

Bill Jackson owned a little printing office,
From Jenkins he was just across the way,
And the jobs that Jenkins missed
Went to Jackson's mill-as grist,
So that Jackson prospered more and more each day.

Said Jenkins, "Jackson prospers on my losses,
Each job that I pass up he seems to swipe,
Yet his plant is no whit bigger
And I'm darned if I can figure
How the dickens Jackson gets the needful type."

So Jenkins made a little call on Jackson
And asked him if the secret he'd confess;
And as Jackson lit his pipe,
He replied, "The Linotype
In the system, not the secret, of success."—Squirt.

THE BATON IN THE KNAPSACK

A young woman who had been chosen president of a church sewing society found that one of her duties was to appoint the chairmen of the various committees of the society. She went first to one of the experienced, capable workers who had been in the society for years.

"You'll serve as chairman of the Work Committee, won't you, Mrs. Braymer?" she asked confidently. "You worked on the committee, and you would make an ideal chairman."

The other raised her hands in protest. "No, indeed!" she answered emphatically. "I'm willing to serve on the committee as I've done before, but I simply will not take any responsibility."

Argument and persuasion were useless. In spite of the fact that she had the ability to direct the work, she would not give the full measure of service that was asked of her, would not make herself responsible for even a single department of the society's work. And as so often happens, the chairmanship of the committee was finally accepted by another worker who was already burdened with many both at home and in the society.

The chairman of a Red Cross auxiliary had the same experience when she tried to find somebody to take charge of the work for French and Belgian refugees. The young woman whom she asked was an experienced cutter and sewer, and had worked with the chairman who was giving up the work.

"I'll help," she said, "but I won't take charge. I'm not going to be responsible."

Why is it that so many are unwilling to take any responsibility? It is only when we make ourselves responsible for something that we really begin to develop. The girl whose brother is an officer in the new and wonderful American army is immensely proud of his rank. In imagination she sees him gaining in distinction, advancing in rank until he comes home major or colonel, instead of second lieutenant as he went away. But her brother holds his present rank only because he was willing to accept responsibility, and he will win the coveted higher ranks only when he proves that he is competent to shoulder greater and more important responsibilities. The soldier who shirks all responsibility can hardly fail to remain a private to the end of his days. There is no discredit in leaving the army a private, as one entered it, but most privates are ambitious to advance, to be put in a position of command, to gain the rank of officer, and to realize this ambition they must assume responsibility. A familiar saying has come down to us from the times of the Napoleonic Wars: "Every soldier of France carries a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack." The way was open for any soldier of the empire to rise to the position of supreme command, but he found that baton in his knapsack only when he had progressed from one position of responsibility to others of greater responsibility, and in each had shown himself capable of handling the problems that faced him.

In these days when women are handling big undertakings and assuming heavy responsibilities, many women and girls, reading about the work of Mrs. A. or Mrs. B., who is at the head of some department of the Red Cross or some other splendid organization for relief, wish that they too might serve their country in big and important ways. They do not stop to consider that Mrs. A. and Mrs. B., and others who are making names for themselves, have been unconsciously getting ready for this sort of work in other positions of less responsibility which they have held from time to time.

Every responsibility that comes to us is something far more than a mere burden to be carried; it is an opportunity to strengthen ourselves, to fit ourselves to fill bigger and better positions, so that we shall be ready and equipped when the biggest and best of all calls for our service.

NOBLE SAYINGS

In the difference of wits I have observed there are many notes; . . . Some are fit to make divines, some poets, some lawyers, some physicians, some to be sent to the plough, and trades.—Ben Jonson.

Talents are bestowed by nature impartially, regardless of the receiver's pedigree.—Frederick the Great.

Instead of deploring that roses have thorns, I am glad the thorny stem is capped with roses and that the tree bears bloom.—Joubert.

Thanksgiving for a former, doth invite God to bestow a second benefit.
—Herrick

A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up.—Milton.

SHE WAS SHOPPING

A lady had been sitting in a furniture shop for nearly two hours inspecting the stock of linoleums, says the Chicago Journal. Roll after roll the perspiring assistant brought out but still she seemed dissatisfied. From her dress he judged her to be a person of wealth, and thought it likely that she would have a good order to give. When at last he had shown her the last roll, he paused in despair.

"I'm very sorry, madam," he said apologetically, "but if you could wait I could get more pieces from the factory. Can you call again?"

The prospective customer gathered her belongings together and rose from the chair.

"Yes, do," she said, with a gracious smile, "and ask them to send you some with very small designs, suitable for putting in the bottom of a canary's cage."