

people laugh. We think of him as alive and quote his opinions which influences us as much as they ever did.

When I came back from France I did not want to go back to college. I wanted to go to work. But to save my life I

couldn't get away from the whimsical countenance of my stepfather. I could see him look me up and down with bristling eyebrows lifted, and hear him say in his dry, droll manner,

"Dave, my son, you have a strong back but a weak mind."

Three Moods From Childhood

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(Honorable Mention, Butler Literary Contest, Poetry Division)

1.

It's like spring freshets laughing at the feet
Which wince at winter's last remaining chill
In streams she used to brave too soon; and still
It's like the pounding of the summer heat
Which is forecast in warm but heavy beat
Through leaves not large enough just yet to fill
The speckled shade. It's like the distant trill
Of birds. It's coaxing, gentle, hushed, and sweet,
But bubbles, wells and surges up inside
Until it can't be stopped. She has to burst
With gaiety, or run up hills, confide
In nature as she always did since first
She can remember. There were times she would
Just look straight up and laugh—she felt so good.

2.

The keen eyes of the mist might have beheld
A young girl sitting tensely on the crest
Of Fern Hill, in the dusk. Her stubborn chest
Thrust stiffly at attention, lips compelled
Into a line and fists tight clenched rebelled
To hear that voice which sought so to divest
Her of her freedom, or to end her quest
Of pleasure when the day's best moments welled
Around her. Wont — Won't — W-O-N-'-T screamed through
Her body as she ran now, hoping that
The whistling wind would hush her mother's voice
That still called in persistent anguish, true
And clear — persistent — forceful — till she sat
Exhausted, angry, scared, — to make her choice.

3.

She lay upon the quilted spread, and poked
the little patterns absently, scarce seeing
what they were because they blurred like kittens

playing in the shade. Her body ached with unshed tears that children never should restrain, and yet she dared not let her mother hear her cry, because she felt her mother would but laugh and call her "foolish child, dear, foolish child who cries at nothing."

She paused to gaze out at the tree beside her narrow roof porch, and she so longed to escape into the fading dusk. In but a moment she had slipped the little sandals on her feet and grabbed her woolly sweater that reminded her of lambs upon a hillside. Tiptoeing across the room, she raised the window, inch by inch, as cautious as a wary doe, for fear she would be heard. She grasped the bare branch firmly as a boy, and deftly dropped from limb to limb till she had reached the ground. A frightened glance assured her of her safety, and in one short instant did she pause to draw her breath before she fled among the shadows like a timid mouse who scampers to its hole.

Across the narrow meadow, now, she ran, scarce noticing that she was keeping pace with Autumn's mischief-making wind which blew her, with the other leaves, across the shining silver stalks of grass that sparkled, half with frost and half with dew.

The sky was fully dark now, and the tiny crystal stars were blinking in surprise upon the girl who scrambled up the meadow in the night.

On toward the hill crest, now, the path led through a wood, —a friendly wood whose arms held back her enemies and dread. And yet she raced against her tears, with thanks that now the stars had understood her hurry and were lighting up the path from in between the half-bare branches.

Out of breath, she dropped upon the grass, still green, that grew within her secret elfin glade, and rubbed her aching eyes with its cold dew. A moment then she cried, not wailed, just simply sobbed until the ache was gone.

Somehow she had not heard the crickets sing before, but she heard now! Wet, muddy-faced, and cold the child arose, but held her head as high as any queen. She did not scamper now, she merely walked and smiled as she picked the path out of the shadows. She was happy now; she could go home!