ALBUM PIECES

ELIZABETH CALKINS

There are many scenes in my life which I shall never forget, though I have no tangible reminders. There is one which must have taken place when I was very young, for the chief character is my great-grandma Smith, who died when she was ninety-eight, and that was shortly after my third birthday. I can see her standing, as stern and straight as her unbending words, on the walk that led down to the street in front of the house. In the background there was a corner of the porch with the side street vanishing behind it, for the house was on the corner. The small details of the picture have dimmed, but that only sharpens the figure of my grandma Smith in her long, stiff black dress, a lacy touch of white at the neck, and a very alert, serious, Irish face, the chin of which indicated her unremitting nature. I can see her thin gray hair parted exactly in the middle and pulled tightly back into a knot. She looks at me and does not move. I can remember nothing more.

There is one incident in my life that made a very great impression upon me. It was my first experience in gambling. I was a five-year-old playing on the porch of a friend. Down the street floated the chug-chug of a car which sounded very much like that of a man in the neighborhood who was a particular chum of mine. I pricked up my ears and said knowingly, "Betcha that's Mr. So-and So's car!"

"Aw, it ain't either," my host replied scornfully.

"Aw, I betcha it is," I insisted.

He brightened suddenly as a thought occurred to him. "Betcha a dime it isn't," he said craftily.

"Betcha it is," I repeated, parrot-like.

"Say, 'Betcha a dime it is'," he urged as the car came nearer.

"O.K.," I agreed innocently, "betcha a dime it is." Alas, as the car broke into view I saw that I was mistaken.

"You owe me a dime," my host stated superiorly.

"I do not," I said, still in the dark as to the actual meaning of the word 'betting' and resenting both his tone and his implication.

"Oh yes, you do," he returned.

After a few more words, I left in a huff, still sticking to my story. That afternoon the little boy presented himself at my door with a very polite, but very determined air.

"You owe me a dime," he said as persistently as a broken record.

I would have turned him away empty-handed, but Mother and Daddy had heard the story and delivered their verdict—in favor of the urchin. I was furious. Not only was I losing a precious dime, but I was being humiliated. I saw red, I'm afraid I would have jumped up and down and squealed if I had dared, but I very well knew that it would never have been tolerated. They paid him—paid him out of my very own bank into which I plunked each red cent that came my way, for even then I was something of a miser. Since then, I can rarely be persuaded to bet.

There is a very foolish scene which persists in sticking in my mind. It took place a day or so after my fourth Christmas which we spent in El Paso, Texas. My grandparents had come down from Indianapolis to celebrate with us. Outside, a sandstorm was doing its best to scour the town off the map. I can see my grandpa
sitting placidly in a rocker smoking his pipe. He is the only other person in the scene, although he does nothing but sit and rock and smoke. I can see myself playing with my crayons and a coloring book beneath the Christmas tree, the gay remains of the holiday still surrounding me. I seem to be dissatisfied with the broad, blunt line my crayons leave, so I rise and take them to a pencil sharpener where I give them fine, tapering points. I can see the silty, curly shavings yet! What a rainbow they made as they mingled in a heap beneath the machine! But how they clung to my fingers!

I once had a terrifying experience with water. One bright summer Sunday we were visiting some friends who had a cottage on White River. We were not the only friends who had chosen to visit the Crippins that afternoon, and presently there were a good many strangers sitting in groups politely comparing notes with each other. The sight of the river pleased me very much, as I rarely came to close to such a lot of water. The cottage and grown-ups were on a high bank, I was on the dock. Several children about my age were with me, and as none of us knew each other, we had on our company manners. Some small flowered beads on the neck of one of the girls caught my attention, and I turned my back on the river to admire them. The vain creature was anxious that I see them well, and she pressed closer. I shrink from contact with a complete stranger, and backed demurely away. But she was a determined soul, so she advanced. Again I retreated, but I had used all the available space behind me. Down I went into the dark, murky water! I can't convey the sensation of chlorine that crept over me, mentally and physically, but I'll never forget it. Several men sitting at the top of a long flight of steps sprang into instant action. After I had experienced several of the longest

seconds in my life, a strange hand was held out to me. So near and yet so far it seemed! So far as I knew, the water went down to China. Somehow I got the hand, and somehow it pulled me out. When they were sure I was safe, they tried to tell me that it wasn't even up to my waist. A likely story!

I remember one Easter morning when I was participating in the services at the Monument. I stood in a group of little girls, all of us quietly waiting our turn to sing. Next to us a group of young men was giving forth vigorously with the Halleluia Chorus. As I looked down the line which shared the step with me, I saw a row of earnest masculine faces which seemed to bite the air as they chanted, "Hallelu-YA! Hallelu-YA!"

There's one amusing memory from a day I spent with a friend of mine in a small town. There were five children in Bethy's family, to say nothing of pets. They always had three or four. There was the inevitable canary, and litters of puppies and kittens were the usual thing. This particular afternoon Bethy and I were alone at her house, in the kitchen preparing a tea-party. The canary was in its cage in the center of the dining room table, and little kittens were everywhere underfoot. All of a sudden I heard a flutter of wings and all kinds of frantic canary utterances. I looked in at the dining room table. There was one small black kitten flattened against the bars of the cage, clinging with the claws of all four feet as he watched with greedy eyes the terrified canary beating itself against the opposite side of the cage in a vain attempt to be somewhere else — anywhere that the kitten was not. Bethy pushed by me as I stood paralyzed in the doorway, and with speed born of life in a large family, she swooped upon the kitten, tore it from the cage with an ungenteel hand, patted it sharply on its little rear, and
shoved it out the screen door with an admonishing, "Shame, shame on you!" Then we proceeded with the teaparty — she as calm as before, and I with suppressed excitement. For her, this was the only one small incident in the lively harum-scarum day that she and her family spent, while I was an only child and spent a comparatively quiet life.

I think that from the vantage point of the present I can look at the past with a detached perspective. Seeing myself as I was enables me to judge myself as I am. Aside from this, even unpleasantnesses of the past have faded into laughable insignificance and become very pleasant to remember.

AMERICANA

DORIS DALEY

I ride over the hills and I see the sun rise on America. I see a vast continent through the purple haze. I see the deserts and the jungles — the summer sun and the winter snow. I see the people who live in this country — as they came, different as the corners of the earth they left, and as they are today, one and indivisible — the lifeblood of the land. I see their farms and their great cities. I see them alone and in milling crowds, and I hear the tramp of their marching feet.

For Americans are young and they love life, and they will stay free. Years ago, our founding fathers acted upon the impulse of independence and it is still our dream today.

The American is free, and bold, and strong. He is like the stinging wind in his forests and the shining steel in his factories. He is a jack-of-all-trades, and master of most. He loves new ideas, new inventions, new styles. He is never satisfied with the present.

The American will get what he is after, but he will not follow blindly to get it. He must know "why." He has pried many secrets from his vast country — earth and sea and sky — and the search is never-ending.

He is quick and sharp, calculating. He loves to take a chance. He is a past master at the great American game of Bluff. He always plays the game fairly and to the best of his ability. The "good old college try" is an American institution.

The American is full of spirit and friendliness. The whole town are his neighbors, and the whole country his friends. He makes vast quantities of money, and spends it on the shining, useless baubles that delight his children—and himself.

The American makes his own laws, and he sometimes makes mistakes. He has learned much from both. He is wise, and he trains his children to be wise and strong. He is tolerant and capable. He has the faith of a child in his ideals, and while often over-zealous in carrying them to others, he fortunately cannot be crushed by the scorn of the older and wiser nations.

The American loves a baseball game and he loves a good fight. His sympathy goes out to the underdog if the latter is worthy of it; for while the American worships big things and powerful things, he will not bow down to intolerance and oppression. He will get in his two cents' worth, rather than be swallowed in the flood, standing still.

That is why his feet are marching today, and he will see to it that they march toward a different goal tomorrow.