

BOYS AND GIRLS

The Praise Meeting of the Flowers.

The flowers of many climates,
That bloom all season through,
Met in a stately garden,
Bright with the morning dew.

For praise and loving worship,
The Lord they came to meet;
Her box of precious ointment,
The Rose brake at His feet.

The Passion Flower, His symbols
Wore fondly on her breast;
She spoke of self-denial
As what might please Him best.

The Morning Glories fragile,
Like infants soon to go,
Had dainty, toy-like trumpets,
And praised the Master so.

'Thy Word is like to honey,'
The Clover testified;
'And all who Trust Thy promise
Shall in Thy love abide.'

The Lilies said, 'O, trust Him!
We neither toil nor spin;
And yet His house of beauty,
See how we enter in!'

The King-Cup and her kindred
Said, 'Let us all be glad;
Of His redundant sunshine,
Behold, how we are clad!'

'And let us follow Jesus,'
The Star of Bethlehem said,
And all the band of flowers
Bent down with reverent head.

The glad Sunflower answered,
And little Daisies bright,
And all the cousin Asters,
'We follow toward the light!'

'We praise Him for the mountains,'
The Alpine Roses cried;
'We bless Him for the valleys,'
The Violets replied.

'We praise Him,' said the Air Plants,
For breath we never lack;
'And for the rocks we praise Him,'
The Lichens answered back.

'We praise Him for the waters,'
The salt Sea Moses sighed;
And all the baptized Lilies,
'Amen! Amen!' replied.

'And for the cool, green woodlands,
We praise and thanks return,'
Said Kalmias and Abeleas,
And graceful Feathery Fern.

'And for the wealth of gardens,
And all the gardener thinks,'
Said Roses and Camellias,
And all the sweet-breathed Pinks,

'Hozanna in the highest!'
The baby Bluets sang,
And little trembling Harebells,
With softest music rang.

The winter hath been bitter,
But sunshine follows storm;
Thanks for His loving-kindness,
The earth's great heart is warm.

So sang the Pilgrim's Mayflower,
That cometh after snow,
The humblest and the sweetest
Of all the flowers that grow.

'Thank God for every weather,
The sunshine and the wet,'
Spake out the cheering Pansies,
And darling Mignonette.

The glad, warm sun descended,
The heavens were all aglow;
The little Morning Glories
Had faded long ago.

And now the bright day Lilies,
Their love-watch ceased to keep;
'He giveth,' said the Poppies,
'To His beloved sleep.'

The gray of evening deepened,
The soft wind stirred the corn,
When, sudden, in the garden,
Another flower was born.

It was the Evening Primrose;
Her sisters followed fast;
With perfumed lips they whispered,
'Thank God for night at last.'

—ANON.

Rufeil Haddad: A Story of Syrian Life.

(Alfreda Post Carhart, in the 'American Messenger'.)

(The great peak of Hermon rose grim and solitary over a scene of sunset glory. At its feet lay the whole land of Syria, like a picture in relief, its parallel chains of mountains mere seams upon the landscape.)

Rufeil Haddad, alone upon the black summit, looked down upon the scene as on a world apart from himself, whose pettiness no longer appealed to him. His face was turned to the west, where stretched the great sea, covered now by a still more wondrous ocean of cloud, which rolled billow after billow down to the horizon. The sunset rays streamed over the vast expanse, in burning tints of red and gold. 'A sea of glass mingled with fire,' murmured Rufeil to himself.

The cloud-billows rolled on till they touched the peaks of Lebanon, pouring over them like a cataract; but here a marvellous change took place. The hot dry air of the Bakaa plain, rising, met the overflowing cataract and dissipated it, and the torrent rolled into nothingness.

Rufeil followed the sweep of the horizon, past the faint green patches that marked the sites of Damascus and far distant desert towns, to the great eastern plain, stretching in opal tints, with its extinct volcanic craters outlined against their own black shadows like mountains that one sees upon the surface of the moon. Across the plain stretched a black mysterious shape, strangely clear in its conical form, the shadow of Hermon itself. Rufeil watched it as it lengthened, drawing into its grasp more and more of the plain, till it reached the eastern horizon; then like a living creature, it leaped into the sky, ever rising, dark and ominous against the clouds, till it was absorbed in the surrounding darkness.

Rufeil leaned forward upon his hand, so intent on the scene that he did not notice until they were close upon him the figures of three armed men approaching him from three directions. In an instant his dreamy look was gone, and his quick glance upon the intruders told that their object was understood. He picked up three stone chips from the disintegrated rock at his feet, and looked meaningfully from one to another of the three men; next he placed the chips upon a rock about fifteen paces away, then stepping back to his first position, lifted his revolver, and without taking appreciable time to aim, blew the chips to pieces in quick succession.

'Mashallah!' exclaimed the head-brigand, admiringly, 'your aim is like the eagle's glance.'

Rufeil could now halloo to his companion, who, hearing the shots, was hastening towards him from the snow-drift below, but before he reached the summit the three robbers had slipped away.

The two young men looked at each other with a sober awe of their own recklessness.

'I suppose you were right,' said Rufeil, 'it was foolish to come alone.'

'Oh, no,' laughed his friend, a little nervously, 'I was the fool; I see now it takes a minister to beat a robber.'

They walked back together to their campfire and passed a peaceful night in the old high place of Baal, the 'Cave of the Winds.' The next day was spent in hunting, as they had planned, and in the afternoon they started down again to their homes. They separated at the valley road, each turning towards his own village.

With the familiar path, Rufeil found himself again resuming the cares and responsibilities of his difficult life. Three years ago, he had met the question that must be answered in these days by every young Syrian of Christian education. Should he leave once for all his old depressing surroundings of fixed custom, throw himself into the wide-awake life of America, with its mental stimulus, its promises and rewards—should not he too, one among the many, have a chance to rise in the world? Or, on the other hand, should he remain where his high ideals might be hardly understood, among a people held down by ignorance and adverse conditions, whose advancement must be gained by infinite patience, yet whom he might help. A question something like this was decided long ago upon the banks of the Nile. The decision with Rufeil had resulted in his coming to an obscure mountain village as a school-master, with a little congregation of rough peasants to preach to on Sundays, and a salary of most humble dimensions.

Rufeil turned the bend that led to his home and was met by the sight of the village in flames! He saw at once what had happened, the unfriendly village across the valley had thus wreaked its spite. He hurried on in wretched self-condemnation for leaving his people even for one holiday. Presently he was met by a group of horsemen.

'Ishlah! Disarm!' they cried.

There was no use resisting, Rufeil gave up his arms and what little money he carried.

'Now walk ahead of us,' ordered one.

Rufeil saw that he must obey and started back on his path. He walked half a mile or more, constantly looking back to see what his captors were about. Suddenly, he saw them aim their guns upon him. There was not a moment to lose; he leaped the precipice and fell heavily upon the ground below.

'He is dead,' said one, 'we need not waste fire upon him.'

They rode on, while Rufeil became conscious of his injuries. There was a sharp pain in his side, another in his leg, he could not move; then he lost himself again.

He woke up to find a rough face bending over him, full of anxiety; he had seen the face before, though he could not remember where.

'A lad who can shoot like you will not be left to die, while Nimr has breath,' said the rough man kindly.

Rufeil recognized him now as the robber chief who had attacked him on Hermon.

'I am going to carry you to your home, said Nimr. 'The pillagers have left the town.'

He lifted Rufeil upon his back. Every motion caused the injured man agony, but he did not show it. The long climb was accomplished with much difficulty and suffering to both, and the smouldering village, now seemingly deserted, was reached.

The enemy had set fire to the booths of leaves which formed the entrance to most of the houses, and these had communicated the fire to the roofs; the stone and mud walls remained, blackened and bare.

With almost despairing hope, Rufeil directed his bearer to his own house, only to find it in ruins like the rest. But the church which adjoined it, with its tiled roof, stood uninjured. Its door was locked as usual.

'Would you hunt under the embers of my house for the keys?' asked Rufeil.

'Shame on my beard if I cannot do that!' answered the robber, laying him down.

Rufeil directed him where to look and, without shrinking, the man stepped among the burning ruins. He returned soon with the three great keys. He threw them down quickly, rubbing his hands on the earth. Rufeil could see, even in the faint light, that both hands and feet were severely burned.

'The Lord reward you,' he murmured.

When the keys were cool enough to handle, Nimr tried the lock with one after another, without success; the heat had warped them out of shape.

'You will have to break down the door,' said Rufeil, wearily.

'And leave the way open for your enemies? Never, by my girdle!'

He again took up the first key that he had tried. Raising it solemnly before him, he re-