

THE HOME CIRCLE

A Freedom Trip.

Written for Farm and Home by Lillian Loring Trott.

When all the world is young, lad,
And all the trees are green,
And every goose a swan, lad,
And every lass a queen,—
Then hey! to boot and horse, lad,
And round the world away!
Young blood must have its course, lad,
And every dog his day.

"When I was one-and-twenty my father gave me a freedom suit," Mr. Francis told his son and heir, with a proud glance across at his wife.

Mrs. Francis poised the coffee cup, coloring as prettily as though the years had rolled back a score or more. "It was homespun, mixed gray," she mused.

"And I went right up to Grandpa Town's in it that evening," Caroli was blushing rosier than his mother now, and his father added, heartily, "Wright's back field is for sale, he tells me, a hundred down, and if you want it, your note with my name on it for the rest on time. I think he'll be reasonable with the balance if we talk business."

Caroli didn't speak, and his father continued, teasingly, "And you can run up to Hester's this evening." Caroli's eyes were glued to his plate, while his father pulled out the first pocketbook he ever owned, still talking, not heeding the boy's embarrassment. "We can get silks and the other big sticks off our own wood lot, and have them sawed out at the mill. We can dig and stone up the cellar ourselves, and I'll board you while you help the carpenters. They work twice as well if the owner works with them."

He hunted in another pocket for a pencil and began re-kening the cost: "Lumber's so high now I'm glad we can get so much without buying; and there's one thing I learned when I was young that I'll never regret; I can build a chimney!"

He passed Caroli a slip of paper. "There's my check for the hundred dollars, your birthday present. I fancied that place, so handy to us, where we could change works. But if you don't want to put it in there you can drop it in the 'ank and I'll give you a hired man's ber. I'll be sure what you do want."

He stopped for lack of encouragement, and Caroli felt called upon to say something. The older people looked into each other's faces, frightened, pale enough now, as he gasped and choked and managed to stammer, "I don't know I want to farm—now."

There were girls in the family, but this was their only boy. "What—do you want to go away to school?" faltered his father, with prickling conscience. There had been thoughts of college for Caroli when he was sixteen and Hilliard Western went to preparatory school; but money was scarcer then than now, and then there was that fear that the higher education might alienate the only son from farm and home.

"No, not now," his voice clearer as they were talking away from the subject of marriage. "I would have liked it once, but West is half way through now, 'n' I'd have to get ready. No, I'm too old; but I want to see the world before I settle down." Scared by his own boldness, for he well knew the wish nearest their hearts, to have his door opposite theirs, he started from the table and the room.

"He hasn't been around much," Mrs. Francis murmured, when she could speak. "I wish we'd sent him to the summer school in Houlton two weeks last summer."

"He might've taken the agricultural course six weeks at Orono in the winter, just as well as not. But if I'd hired the wood chopped while he was gone and paid his way I couldn't've given him this money."

"Money isn't everything," and his wife played with her spoon nervously. "I've noticed his dissatisfaction a long time. He's brightened up wonderfully the nearer his birthday came."

Mr. Francis's face lengthened. "I was sure he wanted to get married soon—he was out of his time. I didn't let any grass grow under my feet."

Her anxiety for Caroli prevented the rising blushes. "I think Caroli has no doubts in that way, only—he wants to

look around first. You know, Wade, it's a born drudge that takes up the work he was born to with— a glance about him. Our Caroli isn't an ordinary boy, and I think it's no sign of a commonplace mind to want to 'rush shoulders with other people and—yes, places and occupations—before we know what his life work is to be."

"It's all the trade he has," of no-mouthed.

It's the work we've marked out for him. He's had no voice in it."

"Spose I might've sent him to Gratton in the spring, to look at those sheep, 'stead of going myself. But I was afraid of his judgment."

"Better have let him make his blunders at your expense than try experiments now, without experience, and come to nobody knows what," rose to her lips, but she only said, "A trip now and then would have taught him a great deal and brightened a hum-drum existence."

Over the line between the Colfax farm and his father's garden at that moment hung Caroli. Hester was picking late peas, and Caroli wondered why all girls didn't wear sunbonnets, if 'twould make them look as sweet as Hester in hers. "I'm out of my time today," he was telling her.

"Oh," said Hester, and her sun-kissed cheek was a redder brown than ever. After all of what good was a bonnet on the back of the neck? Hester knew his age as well as he knew hers, but 'twouldn't be quite the thing to tell him so. She knew all about Wright's back field, too.

"Father gave me a hundred dollars," Hester's "Oh!" was a little less forced, a little more natural. That was a good deal of money.

"I suppose you'll be going off now to seek your fortune?" she said, after a pause, simply because Caroli didn't say anything.

"Yes," thickly, "that's just what I want to do."

Suddenly the sun grew too fervid for Hester's complexion, and she felt the need of her sunbonnet, and her head bent lower over the vines.

"Will you care?" he asked, so shortly that she wondered if he wished he hadn't said it, and she answered lightly:

"Care if you make a fortune? There. I didn't think to wish you many prosperous returns of the day?"

"Much obliged," he retorted stiffly, thinking she needn't have been so formal. Why wouldn't she ask what he was going to do with the fortune when he got it? And there his father had taken the whole thing for granted! "Shan't I lug it in for you?" he offered, for the basket was full now.

"Tien't heavy."

When she was gone Caroli celebrated his independence day by sauntering down to the station.

"Sandy Fletcher's going to Belknap to work in the shoe factory," he announced at the tea table. "Guess I'll go with him."

Mr. Francis looked at his wife. "Has he got a job?"

"Not yet, but he's got a cousin there that'll get him a chance if he can."

"And you?"

"Well, perhaps he'd speak a word for me, or I could look around and maybe strike a job. Or I could clerk. I understand bookkeeping."

"The shoe factories all shut down last winter. I saw by the papers, but work may be brighter now," the bunch in his throat preventing his saying more.

But Mrs. Francis cried herself to sleep that night, and when Caroli set out his father squeezed another bill into his hand, saying, "When you've looked around a bit come back and I'll give you a better site than I ever have."

The factory was full. No green hands need apply. But Caroli's pride was up and he would not return empty-handed. He applied to every store in the place for a clerkship, then asked for a hostler's position at the stables. Fitzly he said to Sandy, "Let's try Boston. There must be work of some kind somewhere in the world for us."

"But I ain't got no money," complained Sandy. "I had only enough to bring me here."

"I've got enough for both," feeling that he could not discard his fellow mid-journey.

Boston proved somewhat larger than Belknap, and they were obliged to borrow information of the police when they lost their way. They were afraid to ask for work at the great department stores, but at Market square they felt more at home. Finally one fat

market man who had been reared in the country and fancied the fresh boy faces, directed them to an employment bureau. "They'll give you places on farms a few miles out," he told them, "that's the cue for you. You'd dooped up in town all summer. Besides it's hard to get work here. There's ten men for every vacancy."

They followed his direction to the nearest agency and Sandy was engaged at once as chore boy on a gentleman's estate. "You, I like your looks, and you've good health. I can get you ten dollars a month on a milk farm, southern part of the state, if you can give good references," and the agent turned to Caroli. Three other young men were in waiting eyeing Caroli enviously as he gave his father's name and those of the town officers.

"I will write to them," the agent said, "and in a week give you my decision. Come here this day week."

On the stairs one of the others overtook Caroli. He was half a dozen years older than our hero and apparently his steps had not followed the straightest of paths. "Ain't been in town long?" he began. "Want someone to show you 'round, if you're going to be here a week. Let's go sight-see in."

Caroli rather resented the easy freedom of the man's manner, but Sandy must take the first train and he would be lonesome. "Twas no use to be stiff when the other fellow had the advantage. So before evening they were as intimate as old chums.

"I'll be hanged if I'd go bury myself on a farm if I was as smart as you 'pear," Tracy, as he called himself, burst forth. "Dyer know what you'll do on a milk farm? You'll be the one hired man of any account on a place of two or three hundred acres."

Caroli knew the significance of figures and acres, when combined in that manner, better than did the glib speaker and he shuddered inwardly.

"You'll rise at three, milk your share of cows—a dozen or so—cool and bottle the milk, take care of the horses, drive the cows to pasture, breakfast, harness, drive five miles to market, deliver the milk, take care of the horse, wash the bottles, clean the cart and grease it for next day and eat your dinner double quick. Sometimes they make butter of the cream from extra milk on these farms; when they do you have the churning on your hands. You work in the hay field in the afternoon or at whatever labor the farm affords and directly after supper milk

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