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ways than one—that year before we
were married. That was the year so
many flowers grew. There are such
years—more birds and flowers than
other times. Birds! Why, boy, the
woods were speckled with thrushes;
and sing—Lord Harry, of all the
piping, and trilling, and whirring,
and carrying on, and calling sweet
names you you ever heard, morning
and evening, and all like a lot of
fairies playing flutes.

That was the year I first read
Shakespeare's plays, and mouthed
soliloquies. Boys like that sort of
a thing. Dear, dear—once I did Ham-
let for a lot of saplings by a brook,
in the middle of the woods, and not a
leaf stirred! For a solid week I was
all for being an actor—a great actor.
You understand—except that I'd made
up my mind to be something else
long ago. That was what troubled
me—that something else. I didn't
see how I could be a poet and marry
your grandmother.

Sounds strange, but it isn't. I'd
been writing verses for the "Beacon
County Register." I didn't sign
them. They kind of laugh when you
write poetry. Only your grand-
mother knew, and it was she made
me take all my best verses and make
a bundle of them and send them to a
great man. He was a poet himself,
and as long as he lived he was kind to
the young ones. He wrote back a
long letter to me. I've got it still,
put away up stairs, and some day
maybe you'll read what he said about
your grandfather. My, I remember
when that letter came. I didn't walk
for a week afterward. I just winced
my way. I made up my mind right
then and there I would be a poet;
thought it all out while I worked in
the fields and drove home the cows,
and nights before I went to sleep.
I was going to write about common
things. I was going to make up
verses about ordinary men, and how
they felt when they worked and mar-
ried and brought up little children;
and how they came home nights tired
and played with them, and how they
were sad when they lost them, but
went on working and smiling just the

same. And I was going to write how
they grew old and came to sit like
me, here on the sunny side of a gar-
den, talking to their grandsons, or
pottering around the flower-beds.

All those things I was going to
write about because men would know
what I meant, and maybe it would
help them to bear their burdens and
go their ways. And I was going to
put it all down in plain old English
words without much Latin in them—
words people used every day and
would feel at home with, but all set
down so sweetlylike, one after the
other, in even lines, that men would
stop and look about them and wonder
they'd never noticed how beautiful
the simple things were before. Oh,
I got quite foolish over those plans
of mine. I even dreamed people
might cry a little, more or less, over
my verses, and cut them out and read
them to each other, and paste them
in scrapbooks.

Well, I talked it all over with your
grandmother, and she said I was
right; that only now and then some
one like Burns came along and saw
the beauty in common things; and
that when a man did people loved him
and went on loving him, because
what he said was as true to-day as
yesterday, and tomorrow as to-day.
But your grandmother said this:
"Bertram," she said, "you ought
not to marry for a long time. You
ought to just keep your life simple,
and read and think. You ought to
have time to talk to men and watch
them, and then wander around where
everything's quiet, just making out
what it all means. You ought to
have time, Bertram—time to do these
things without worrying about how
you are going to support me and the
children.

"We should be awfully poor, Ber-
tram," said she, "and I shouldn't
mind that, but you would." said she.
"Seeing me pinching and saving, Ber-
tram, would make you suffer—a thou-
sand times more than other men, be-
cause you have a poet's heart. Look
at Burns," said she, "and see how he
struggled all his life long with poetry.



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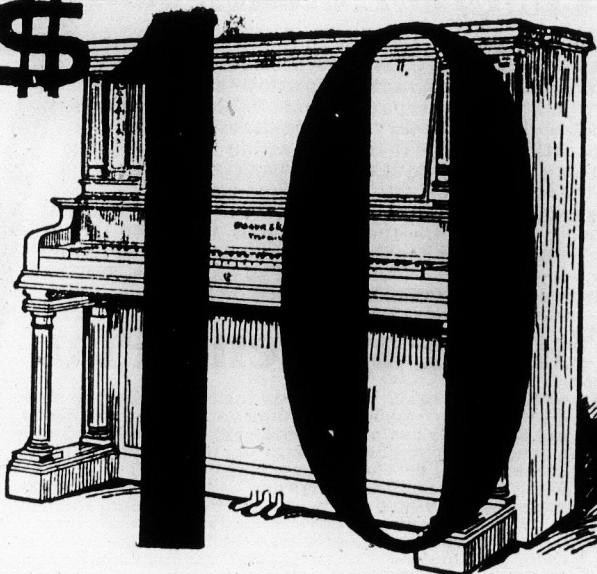
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