

SOME COLLEGE STORIES.

RADCLIFFE.—BY SARAH NORCLIFFE CLEGHORN.

I.

The common was enclosed with pinkish-yellow leafage and floored with pleasant green. At one side stood Shepard Church, gorgeously windowed; on the other the ancient halls of Harvard made vistas of red brick and blood-red vine far down the shady yard.

Eliza Spruce was meditating upon these ancient halls and upon historic old Fay House, as she made her way across the common toward it. She was asking Cambridge at large what college spirit was—what nobler essence of living, except that of actual scholarship, these places of learning dealt out to their children than one could get at home in New Hampshire. There were, indeed, those felicitous friendships the upper-classmen and old specials at Radcliffe seemed to have among themselves, such as Mary Mark, the stocky, freckled sophomore who wrote plays, had with Miss Fairfax, the tall senior from Virginia. Eliza wondered if college spirit consisted in these slow-grown friendships. Or it might belong to the hilarity of the freshmen—to their customs of playing tag round the apple tree by the tennis court and of climbing the tree to study and scream at ants, of a late afternoon. She had figured to herself something quite different from both of these, a quick warm feeling that should band together the many into one. Instead, she felt the college to be disintegrate. She had so far gone her ways very much alone, and she thought no one would realize it very much if she went away—or died.

She passed in out of the mellow afternoon to a lecture in her composition course. Fay House was cool and quiet after the sunny streets and common, and Eliza breathed the atmosphere of the broad halls in contented enjoyment of their air of leisure. She wondered, dallying a little on the landing of the wide staircase, if the lecturer would read her theme to-day, the writing of which had cost her a night's sleep, and she recalled from it beautiful rhythmical sentences that rose and fell more smoothly than the melody of a song. After all, this was what she cared about with passion to make notable things out of words. For her, in that hour, writing was all of value in life. College spirit fell to a puny figure beside it. If he would only read and praise her theme to-day! It would sound well to hear him praising it before the roomful of girls in his fastidious and telling adjectives. She made sure he could censure only structural and minor matters, to remember the body of the essay was a joy.

As the lecture began she sat down in her usual corner. She paid little heed to what was going on, though here and there a word reached her, instead, she noted how the Autumnal sunshine glowed down from the west windows through the brim of her old straw hat. It made her glad, much as the hills at home used when they brightened in October frosts. The lecturer was saying something about simplicity and faithful realism, and the world gazed upon Eliza, the bent of her mind was toward ornate and sophisticated writing. Miss Fairfax passed down the hall, and Eliza's eyes followed her as they always did, noting with a curious warmth at heart how her light hair was knotted softly at her neck, and that her shoulders fell away nobly. It was Miss Fairfax who had showed Eliza the cozy places in the library upstairs the day college opened, and Eliza had tried ever since to speak like the tall Southerner with rounded vowels and a mellow drawl. She had never heard the like in New Hampshire.

The lecturer closed the book he had been reading a passage from. Eliza looked up.

"Well, that's the main charm in Stevenson, his disinterested caring for the aspect he's at work on. See how tender and bright and fluent it makes him! How quick-witted, and what a moderation! Now, I am going to read four of your themes—average ones. Watch to see if they're plainly written, or written agape to show off the writer. See if they're literature or cheapest rhetoric." He began reading Eliza's theme. He read without any comment, but she felt him to be denouncing it within. It made her writhe to listen, phrases from his little preface recurred with burning distinctness. "Cheapest rhetoric—agape to show off." She felt her cheeks flaming to think that every one near must know whose theme this was. To

show off the writer." It was terribly true. She recognized that she had written at the gallery.

The thing ended at last, with an oratorical pyramid which shamed her. A girl far in front laughed. Eliza hated her. She hated the lecturer also, as he went on to catalogue the virtues of the theme, to call it "flowery," "feminine," "upholstered." Most of all she hated the theme itself, and she was bitter and homesick.

When the lecture was over she fled up to the library, took down a book for the sake of appearances and curled up on a window-seat. She barricaded herself with pillows, and turned her face to the wall; it was pleasant to be alone. She cried long time, childishly, "flowery, feminine, cheapest rhetoric!" She saw clearly how true the biting words had been.

Presently she became aware that many were leaving the library and going downstairs. She remembered that the last Club met that afternoon, and in the same moment she hungered for company. She sat up, and peering round the bust of Homer that stood back of the cushions, saw that the room was empty. She cast the pillows aside and went down to the Auditorium.

It was full of talk, lights and laughter. She could hardly find a place to sit down, but the group of sophomores on the steps pressed closer and made room for her. It was a relief to be among the chattering throng, and presently she began to listen to the conversation.

"Who's taking the leading part?"

"Anne Oliver. But Mary coached them all herself. I don't see where she got the time."

"I do. She hasn't been at the Gym. for a week, and she cut conference twice in Pol. Econ."

"It's going to be a play," Eliza thought to herself, with some stirring of interest. This was her first idler fortnightly.

The president tapped on a footlight reflector, and all was quiet in the room.

"Most of you know," she began, "that we're going to see a play this afternoon called 'The King's Errand,' by Miss Mark, Class of —." The room rang with cheering, broken only by cries of "Mark! Mark! Ninety—Blank! Ninety—Blank!" Every time the applause sank a wave of great cheering lifted it high again. Eliza clapped, too, but listlessly. Her hands seemed heavy with her own failure.

When finally the room returned to the usual order of things, the play began. Eliza looked on languidly at first, but as the moment quickened and girls all about her leaned forward with looks of keen interest on their faces, she too, began to listen intently. The dialogue was crisp and sane, and the love-scenes had a delicate spicery in them. Anne Oliver was heroine, and in antique dress of beaded stuffs, with pearls strung in her hair. Eliza felt her pulses quicken as she looked, partly for sheer beauty in the grace and *cere* of the play, partly because a current of enthusiasm passed along the row and united her with her neighbors. She leaned forward with the others, murmuring admiration under her breath.

There was only one act. It ended with a bright tableau. Anne Oliver courtesying to the king. Hearty applause broke forth, and it was redoubled. Mary Mark passed down the aisle and one after another shook her hand and expressed her felicitations. When at last she came to Miss Fairfax, the Southerner's warm voice sounded back to Eliza's corner. "Mary, honey, it was good!"

Eliza pushed to the aisle and shook hands earnestly with Mary Mark. She enjoyed seeing the frank pleasure in the sophomore's eyes. Then she went out alone past the bowlicy lemonade in the ante-room and, finding the stair-land empty, sat down there in the dusk. She was deeply thoughtful. This, then, was college spirit—this forgetting your own defeat, the achievement of somebody else—this joy of many in the success of one. The plaudits following the play still rang in her ears and made her strangely and humbly proud. "We have got part and lot in Mary Mark," she thought. "What does it matter if I lose? The best work, let's be glad, has won."

Someone touched her shoulder from behind—"I beg your pardon," said Miss Fairfax, "but—oh, what's the matter, honey?"