

# Angels Unawares

BY GRACE LATHROP COLLIN

THE stream of Miss Sarah Jennings's energy knew no cessation. But it was not a stream which flowed in a smooth current; it moved in jets and spurts, consecutive, yet distinct. Her methods of procedure fell into numerical sequence. Thus on one August morning she might have been seen, first, picking her vigorous way among the dew-wet rows of vegetables leading to the barn door. Second, the head of a horse with whitish coat speckled with maroon, who had been viewing the universe with dispassionate benevolence from the stable window, abruptly withdrew. Third, after premonitory clatter, this horse progressed down the lane, drawing a top-buggy with wheels so clay-spattered that they matched the roadway. Fourth, leaving the horse fastened by a rope to the gnawed hitching-post, Miss Sarah, with accelerated energy, strode back to the house. Thereupon succeeded an exceptionally long pause before she reappeared for her fifth enactment, this time from the front door, and attired in Sunday black silk and bonnet with bunch of jiggling jet. As she guided the steed into the road, she felt anxiously in her pocket for the door-key which she had just deposited therein; and finally, as the horse with many mannerisms fell into his usual amble, she turned to descry, through the little oblong glass in the buggy curtain, whether the house was where she had left it a second before. She found that as yet it was remaining stationary, with the blue-curtained window in the back gable peering like a wistful eye above the great boulders at the turn of the road. Arrived at this point, she considered her preparations accomplished, her departure achieved. "Get up!" said Sarah, reassured, and lifted the reins to slap the horse, whose anatomy from the point of view of the buggy seat ended abruptly at the peak of his collar.

As they drew near the Knapp house, the horse of his own accord turned into the broad grassy hollow which led to the horse-block. The house had been originally red, and as the succeeding coats of white paint had worn thin, pinkish streaks were now left along the edges of the clapboarding. Two rows of white phlox led up to the door, with a porch, and steps of broad granite slabs. As the buggy stopped, Miss Lauretta Knapp, in Sunday silk and bonnet with white lilacs, came lightly down the flower-bordered path.

"You always were prompt, Sarah," said she, stowing away a white paper box under the seat.

"Better be ready and not to go," replied Sarah, and quoted the remainder of that dismal proverb as they started down the road, while Lauretta, in her turn, twisted over the buggy side to give her dwelling a final glance of admonition.

"They have a lovely day for the anniversary," said Lauretta.

"Yes. I guess they couldn't have asked for a better day than this two hundred and fifty years ago, for founding Putnam," responded Sarah, her eyes on the horse, who was ascending a slope which from his manœuvres appeared alpine.

"I suppose," went on Lauretta, tentatively, "that in all these years there have been tremendous strides made." Not that she was concerned in the least whether there had been "strides" or not, but simply because the sensation of idle hands in her lap brought the obligation of formalities—such as an appropriate choice of themes for discussion on the way to the town anniversary.

"No doubt," assented Sarah; "wonderful!"

"Although, for my part, I don't see how any house could be built better than ours, with oak rafters and a big centre chimney." In generalities, everything;

in particulars, nothing—was Laurretta's motto.

"Neither can I," responded Sarah, emphatically. Then, when the horse, after infinite precaution, was safely prepared to descend the hillock, she continued: "And I haven't found anything prettier than the old blue-and-white coverlets, or tasted anything better than cake mixed by the old recipes, or sat in any handsomer or more comfortable chairs, or heard of any abler people, than there were in those days."

Laurretta assented eagerly. There was nothing forced in her acquiescence. The friendship of the two women was founded upon a fine deference for each other's individuality. It was cemented by their similarity of experience; for each had found herself left in her homestead as the sole representative of the family, each was familiar with the loneliness of widely scattered companions, each had adopted the habit of wearing perpetual black in memory of kinsfolk whose names after long years of separation recalled only childish faces. Appended to the tacitly granted agreement that Sarah was the leader was the tacit understanding that Laurretta was quite free to "speak her own mind." Obviously, however, comments upon Progress were no longer incumbent; for when two are perfectly agreed, how can a discussion be maintained?

In social silence they drove on. The effect of the landscape was so pictorial that a frame held up at random could scarcely have avoided enclosing some satisfactory composition of stone wall and roadway, or of tree and field, or of low-lying farm-house and gambrel-roofed hay-barns. There was an impression of vividness of color and solidity of line such as is rendered by a Claude Lorraine glass. The white clouds rose in battlements above the rounded hills, the verdure seemed polished, the trees carved. While the scene lacked the pensive charm of evanescent beauty, it offered ample compensation in its cheering sense of a permanent and compact completeness. The serene sky was a fairly palpable dome, adjusted immediately over Putnam and its surrounding suburbs.

"I hope 'twasn't a great bother for you to put up the lunch for us both," said

Sarah, as they proceeded in leisurely fashion along the narrow road—a buff road, striped lengthwise with two green bands of grass.

"You know I was glad to do it, Sarah. It wasn't the least mite of trouble. The only thing that worried me was that we'd have to go without our good hot cups of tea. I've put some cold tea in a bottle, and we can add spring water. But I always did think that cold tea was poor stuff."

"Do you happen to remember, Laurretta, that in the notices of the Day's Exercises, given out from the pulpit last Sunday, one was, 'Tea will be served at the Ladies' Club during the afternoon'? Now I suppose you wouldn't—"

"Sarah Jennings, you don't mean to say that you'd go, after driving all day and getting all blown about, and in your old gloves anyway—you don't mean to say that you'd *think* of going to a tea party with a lot of strangers?"

"No, no, of course not," said Sarah, hastily, "only I thought that if you'd forgotten the notice and had wanted tea, I'd have had it on my conscience."

Neither of the two ladies had the name of being "a great hand to run on." The Tea topic, like that of Progress, was considered closed.

Miss Jennings and Miss Knapp lived within a region known within the limits of Putnam as "the country." But the two felt no such implication of vagueness about their dwelling-place. To their minds, their local habitations were set cozily in one of the world's centres of distribution, by name—definitely supplied by the cross-roads grocery, with a post-office included among its more modern "notions"—East Weston. Their day's expedition was no offering from outlanders to civic pride, but a recognition of one commonwealth by another. Yet, side by side with this assurance, was an inborn timidity concerning the meeting of strangers on strange ground. To meet on ancestral acres, under the patronage of the homestead roof-tree, was another matter quite. But the authority of their environment gone, they felt stripped as crustaceans without their shells. Indeed, by some strange process of habit, the houses and their occupants had grown to be apparent parts the one of the other.



Half-tone plate engraved by A. Lockhardt

THEN LAURETTA PRODUCED THE WHITE BOX

Sarah's cool blue eyes, her iron-gray hair, her severe, angular form, seemed literally an emanation from the small-paned blue windows, the weather-beaten shingles, the bowlder-fenced door-yard. The withered roses on Lauretta's cheeks, the faded daintiness of her entire person, were no less in accord with her home, suggestive of old-time bloom, approachable between prim white blossoms. From unfamiliar contact each woman felt not only an emotional, but a physical shrinking, concealed by each with incongruously misleading tactics. Lauretta, the mistress of all she surveyed, bore herself as the worm before it has turned; Sarah assumed an aspect of pugnacity toward city-bred humanity never shown before the gentle-eyed farm beasts, who gratefully conceded her local importance.

"Lauretta, as we had such an early breakfast," suggested Sarah, "would you mind having lunch just as soon as the noon whistle blows?"

"I'm as hungry now as I used to be that last half-hour before recess," replied Lauretta.

"Then let's have lunch right now," said Sarah, decisively.

Before them lay a Corot landscape. On the right a feathery ash, with supple fingers of shadow clinging across the grass-roughened road; on the left a rounded, fluffy mass of maples. Thither Sarah directed her steed, who turned willingly enough into the grass by the roadside, and, with more energy than he had yet displayed, buried his nose in a little brown stream that ran out from under a cleft in the stone wall. Lauretta watched her friend admiringly as she arranged the horse's nose-bag, and then washed her hands in a pebbly basin filled with spring water. "I wish I were more like you, Sarah," said she. "If I'd been by myself, I'd never have opened my lunch-box till the whistle blew, no matter if I was starving and there was a sightly place like this ahead of me."

"Pshaw! pshaw!" commented Sarah, secretly delighted with the tribute. Then Lauretta produced the white box, and each lady, with a red-bordered napkin in her lap, tasted the nectar and ambrosia known only to picnickers.

"I brought a box," said Lauretta, as she deftly manipulated a hard-boiled egg and

an envelope of salt and pepper, "instead of a basket, because then we can throw it away and not be bothered with it coming home."

"Um, um," responded Sarah, understandingly. Her chicken sandwich lacked cohesiveness, and she had just succeeded in making satisfactory headway.

At dessert-time the horse's nose-bag was removed by his solicitous mistress, that he might gratify his penchant for young maple boughs. In the buggy the two ladies sipped diluted cold tea from tiny cups, and nibbled and commented upon slices of the famous Knapp fruit cake. "But I knew the tea wouldn't be good," sighed Lauretta; "it's better when it's strong, and insipid when it's weak."

"It's very good for cold tea," offered Sarah, shaking out stray crumbs from the lap-robe.

"I don't think much of it," again sighed Lauretta, folding the napkins.

"Well, of course there's nothing like a hot cup," agreed Sarah.

"Of course not." Then, after a pause, "Sarah, do you know, after all, I can't see my way clear to throw this box away. It's as good as new, and some time I'll want one just like it. It seems so wasteful. Would you mind if I put it back under the seat?"

"We'd never know it was there," said Sarah, "and I never could bring myself to throw away a perfectly good box."

Emboldened by this confession of self-indulgence, Lauretta continued her meditations aloud,—“If it weren't for going into a room full of people who don't know and don't care who you are—”

"I shouldn't think of going," broke in her companion, conclusively. "That general notice may suit *some* people, but *I'd* never feel that I'd been properly asked without a special invitation."

"You're quite right, Sarah," concurred Lauretta, "quite right. I wouldn't go, either, where I wasn't expected."

The next corner, important with a sign-post, brought them out from the single-track roadway, the peculiar property of East Weston, upon the main line which led to the Rome—locally known as Putnam—of all that suburban neighborhood. Immediately the top-buggy lost the distinction of being the only vehicle in sight. Each bend of the road revealed

that the two ladies had many companions on their patriotic pilgrimage. It was plain that this expedition, which, viewed from East Weston, had seemed a trifle bold and dashing, was already receiving popular sanction. Obviously the eccentricity would have been to remain at home. Stimulated by the realization that they were part of a popular movement, Sarah reached for the whip and rattled it fiercely in its socket, and Lauretta smoothed the linen lap-robe. Thus they were prepared to salute with due dignity the vehicles which appeared in the bend of the road behind and disappeared in front, even as on the high seas an "ocean greyhound" passes a freight-steamer. Meanwhile from the little window in the buggy curtain Lauretta reconnoitred the roadway behind them, and reported advancing forces to her friend, so that she might greet with exactly the fitting degree of warmth their passing fellow-travellers.

"There come the Whitmans now, all of them," ran Lauretta's monologue, as a "democrat," drawn by a pair of gray dappled horses, approached. They bow. "Well, I think they *would* need to have strong horses. Four on each seat, counting the babies. . . . Here, Sarah, look quick! Ned Bainbridge and his wife." They bow. "She's a pretty woman, isn't she? And did you see the little child, standing between her father's knees? I'm so glad that when she wanted her hat off they happened to hang it on the far side of the buggy from us. She has a face like a flower. . . . You needn't hurry, Sarah, but here come Mr. and Mrs. Bainbridge, the old people. There'll be plenty of time before they get past. *Good-morning, good-morning.* Yes, it is a lovely day, isn't it?" They pass. "I guess they don't know how that buckboard sags under them. And see how much too narrow the back of that seat is! They don't have support for more than one shoulder-blade apiece, do they? . . . Well, Sarah, will you believe it, but they've filled a wagon-box with chairs, to bring *all* the Old Ladies' Home into town. Isn't that nice? Be sure you bow especially to old Miss Wheelock. She's right in front." And the wagon, bulbous with black parasols, passed on its festive way.

As the succeeding bends brought them

nearer to town, it was Sarah who clutched Lauretta's knee; for now, instead of being on the alert for friends approaching from behind, the speckled horse brought them alongside with pedestrians taking their dignified and deliberate way by the foot-path, narrow and hard packed. "There's Mrs. Channing," exclaimed Sarah, recognizing a self-respecting back clad in black and white striped dimity. "Well, she is smart, at her age, to be stepping off to town at this rate. How *do* you do? Yes, indeed, Mrs. Channing, I've been meaning to spend a day with you this long while. No, not this week, the week after. Nicely, thank you. Good-by. . . . And, Lauretta, do look (you mustn't keep squirming round any more; they'll see you), there's Deacon Hollis in his Sunday suit, walking along as calm as if he was passing the plate. Good-morning, Deacon. This *is* a great occasion, isn't it? Yes, we thought that our families ought to be represented." And so on, until they reached the covered wooden bridge, whose clatter and rumble appeared to afford the speckled horse a childish delight. Then an abrupt turn brought them directly upon the "downtown" of Putnam, and behold—they found themselves no longer upon one of the radii, but in the very centre of activity.

"Downtown" in Putnam was a region with as definite geographical boundaries as an island. It extended through exactly three blocks of paved streets, office buildings, and shop fronts. To-day this space, always in itself sufficiently interesting, was rendered still further absorbing by walls awave with bunting and flags; with air resonant with strident-voiced hucksters offering inconsequent red and blue balloons; with a crowd stationed along the sidewalk in such close ranks that their feet covered the curb in an unbroken scallop. The motion, the uproar, the throng, seemed to increase the temperature perceptibly. Sarah raised the reins and slapped the horse, who was inclined to pause and marvel over urban manners and customs; whereupon, with a slight exhibition of nervous resentment and a brisk rattle of wheels, he drew the ladies on to the region of "uptown," immediately adjacent.

Once again on the smooth gravel road, between arching trees, the visitors from

East Weston recovered the equanimity which the sordid din of the market-place had shaken.

Along the side of the road, where the street widened before branching into The Triangle, a line of carriages was already formed. By one brief comprehensive glance Sarah discovered a hiatus in the series of clay-colored wheels, and by a triumph of generalship inserted her equipage between two others. Then, with a happy sense of their part well done, and a release from all terrestrial responsibilities, the two women proceeded to regard the situation from the purely spectacular point of view.

As it happened, they had arrived at one of those fortuitous moments in the course of preparation when the drudgery is accomplished, but the few last effective touches are yet in progress. The audience found themselves catching the spirit of suspense, of anticipation, of heart-warming flattery in that so arduous labors were regarded as but incidental to the final scene. There was an enthusiasm-breeding sense of intimacy; for in the departure from the course of their everyday lives the spectators, no less than the actors, were playing parts.

With fresh acquisitions of interest, Sarah and Lauretta watched the "hacks" which now and again drove up from the station, suit-cases piled high beside autocratic drivers, genial gentlemen representing government securely enclosed behind carriage doors. There were occasional squads of militia hurrying to headquarters, regimental coats over their arms, helmets in hand. There were groups of Academy boys, proudly drawing white cotton gloves over their brown hands. Here and there an "Indian"—for, as a token of respect for the past, "the aborigines" were to figure in the procession—walked along to his appointed wigwam; but not even the spectacle of a respected citizen attired in feather-duster head-dress and gamboge calico could hold attention long. Then came fewer stragglers. Then two o'clock, the appointed hour, boomed out from the Court House clock. From the further side of The Triangle came the first blare of a brass band. "It's started. They're coming!" all the spectators, who have refrained from speaking among them-

selves unless already acquainted, now cry in unison.

Slowly, with a clearer rhythm, the music approaches. Round the curve swings a cordon of the Putnam police. The music seems as visible as they.

Oh, Columbia, the gem of the ocean!

plays the band; and the tune seems to bring into being the tanned crews from the ship anchored down the harbor; it seems to draw in its train, as if the days of the Pied Piper were again come, the crisp militia, the firemen dragging their hydrangea-decked hook-and-ladder, the civilians uniformed by badges on coat lapels, the Indians, the children, the notabilities in their carriages. Then, as the first grows thin, comes fresh music. Ah, it is "Auld Lang Syne" they play, and the Veterans follow, with rigidity restored to drooping shoulders, or a soldierly bearing to pompous strides, all personalities again merged by the compelling strains into comradeship. Now the men who a few minutes since, covered with self-consciousness as with garments, slunk shamefaced through the streets to the appointed gathering-places, are passing with the glorified dignity of those who have forgotten themselves in the spirit of the hour. They are no longer Si this and Hi that; they are remote, impersonal symbols of the stern heroism of their forefathers, of civic pride, of patriotism. And in answer to the thrill of this old-time music, this inspiration of concerted action, this dramatic expression of their town's intimate history, the spectators' habitual restraint bursts its bounds. The townsfolk are uplifted in a fury of sentiment. They wave handkerchiefs, they shout, the tears run down their cheeks. They scarcely knew it then; they deny it afterward. But white-faced, wet-eyed they are left, bending forward that the last moments before the sluice-gates are again swung to upon their emotions may be their own. The breeze brings back the strains; they are "Good-by, Sweet-heart," now. But save for that sound, already reminiscent, and the scurry of small boys who follow close at the heels of the "p'rade" as a cloud of dust pursues an express train, the street is bare.

A sigh ran through the crowd. Then, their hesitancy broken, each group be-

gan to bestir itself, some aimlessly, some purposefully, but all moved by an unconscious impulse toward activity.

The wheels of the neighboring wagons scraped the sides of Sarah's buggy, their horses were swung round against her speckled steed. But as yet she sat, indifferent to such trivialities, her quivering hands indecisive, her blue-gray eyes dim. With a fine delicacy she refrained from looking at her companion, not lest her own agitation should be betrayed, but lest she should intrude upon the other's shrines of sentiment, perforce unveiled. Looming large in the immediate background of her life was the memory of that cohort marching to the common impulse of pride in the fair name of their venerable town. In the immediate foreground lay the prospect of the placid drive behind the speckled horse back over the hills to the untroubled, undeviating routine of her daily life. Ah, well, doubtless—

The trivial round, the common task,  
Would furnish all we ought to ask;

but as an outlet for this surging emotion, suddenly roused from apathy, their tame acceptance was intolerably inadequate. The momentum of energy demanded expression.

"Lauretta," cried Sarah, in thrilling tones—"Lauretta, we're going to the Ladies' Club to be entertained!"

"Oh, oh!" quavered Lauretta, dismayed. But then, "Do you think it would hurt the horse if you whipped him?" she added. Miss Sarah seized the whip from its socket and laid it dexterously along the angular speckled flank.

Meanwhile the crowd was slowly ebbing from the street where stood the Ladies' Club House. Soon the house—a grayish-purple cottage, with appliquéd garlands in white, in effect a singularly happy representation of an old Wedgwood sugar-bowl—stood deserted in an apparently uninhabited neighborhood. In the parlor sat two dispirited little figures, each clad in a reckless expanse of immaculate piqué. It was a dismal prospect. Set round the room were the cases used by the Woman's Exchange; behind their glass doors hung a profusion of the over-dainty articles which women love to present to each other, and then in

time of need, under the deplorable delusion that what is acceptable as a gift is tempting as a purchase, are wont to invest their tiny capitals of time and money in the manufacture of these laborious trifles. In a corner stood a wicker tea table, with elaborate paraphernalia for refreshing a thirsty and exhausted multitude. But the two little ladies had the feast all to themselves.

"I hate to think what Fred will say to me when I have to tell him at supper that no one came," said the one.

"It isn't what Harold says; it's what he looks. But when I put it to him—'After watching a procession in New York, wouldn't you be glad and thankful to escape from the noise and crowd into a quiet and hospitable room?'—he couldn't deny it. All he could say was: 'But Putnam isn't New York, you know. I'm not sure but Putnamites may be as fond of racket for one day in every fifty years as New-Yorkers would be of silence and solitude.' And then he said something about one's education in Putnam character beginning with one's grandfather. Why, I feel that I know the people very well, and I've lived here barely a year."

"Yes, indeed. I'm sure that the town-folk and I have been very intimate. They were so punctilious about calling, and so cordial about inviting us out. Then you remember that I asked ever so many people's advice about serving tea here this afternoon; for, of course, being new-comers from the city, we wanted to make sure that an innovation would be acceptable. And everybody said that while she herself might be detained, she was sure that there were any number of people who'd love to come. Several said that they thought it was a very sweet idea that the president and vice-president should be at the club-rooms, if we were quite sure that it was no sacrifice on our parts. Fancy, when we could see the procession perfectly from the windows, being jostled about on the sidewalk,—for pleasure!"

"Fancy! But do you know what Fred said just as he went off this morning? 'You'll be lucky if you corral one!'"

"I can't understand why they don't come. Maybe they think it's too early. But it's growing late. Suppose, Alice, I

do take away a few of the cups, and bring them on gradually as they come to be needed."

Again they waited. "I believe I'll put a few more cups into the cupboard," said Harold's wife. She was returning dejectedly, when Fred's wife, from her post behind the tea table, suddenly clutched her and pointed out of the window. Up the broad road there approached a top-buggy, its canopy swaying with the excited trot of a speckled horse, his head held aloft by tense-drawn reins. It drew up at the horse-block. Two ladies in black silk alighted.

"They don't seem quite decided about coming in," said Harold's wife. "I'm going out to stop them and make sure."

"You must bring them in," called Fred's wife above the crackle of flying skirts. "Don't let them go away, please, no matter—"

While she bustled about with the alcohol and the tea-ball, she kept one anxious eye upon her co-mate and comrade in exile, who was shaking hands effusively with the two ladies yet standing on the horse-block, and then by the very force of her cordiality was drawing them up the walk.

At the door Fred's wife met them, with the manner of a hostess greeting her most cherished guests. "We're so glad to see you," she chimed. "You must be so tired. Come right in and sit down. This chair is considered the most comfortable, and let me take your wrap."

"Wasn't the parade nice?" the representatives of the club went on in alternating strains. "Yes, we're very proud. Did you see my husband? Why, he was in the militia, the second from the end in the seventh row. Cream or lemon? Yes, we have them both right here. How nice that you came just now! We can all have a cup together."

"Are you sure," asked Lauretta, still a little tremulous, "that we aren't putting you to any trouble?"

"It is a pleasure," replied the hostesses, and there was the ring of sincerity in their voices.

"We felt a little hesitation about coming," went on Sarah, "because the notice was given out so generally."

"But you know it was meant to be personal," beamed Harold's wife, "and al-

though I wish that there were some other people here to meet you, we are very fortunate in having you all to ourselves."

"I'm glad there aren't any others here," responded Sarah, composedly. "I always did dislike a crowd."

"But are you sure," appealed Lauretta, as she accepted her cup, "that you aren't all tired out attending to all the other people who've been here?"

"Not at all, not at all."

All four ladies glowed with satisfaction. All four sipped tea. All, considering the few minutes of their acquaintance, felt strangely intimate. All exchanged items about their ancestors, regardless of whether they had figured or not in the occasion of Putnam's foundation. And finally each couple promised to "be sure and stop in," the next time that either passed the other's way. It was an eminently successful occasion.

The two officials of the Ladies' Club saw their guests to the carriage, and again, over the linen lap-robe, shook hands.

"We're so very much pleased that we had the chance for a nice quiet talk," said the president.

"I think that we happened upon a very fortunate interval," said Lauretta.

"I only regret that you have not made the acquaintance of other club members," said the vice-president.

"We are quite content to have met the two chief officers," said Sarah.

"Some time you must come to one of our meetings. The rooms are full then."

"How very nice!"

"Yes; I'm sure you'd enjoy it."

"Doubtless. But it was very pleasant this afternoon."

"Good-by, good-by," called the representatives of the club. "We're so glad you came."

"Good-by," called the representatives of East Weston. "We're glad too."

The president and vice-president, arm in arm, returned up the walk. Their faces were yet wreathed in smiles. "Now aren't you thankful that we carried out our plans?" asked Fred's wife. "I guess even our husbands can't say a word now about our citified ideas. It was worth all the preparation, wasn't it, just to meet these two old dears? Weren't they sweet?"



"YOU'LL BE LUCKY"

"Simply idyllic. Do you know, I came near telling the pink-cheeked one how doleful we'd been, and how she and her angular friend saved the day. In a way, it seems as if they ought to understand."

A gentle mist was falling, restricting the landscape with a pleasurable restfulness to a strip of roadway, its boundary stone wall, and, beyond, to mingled red milkweed and golden-rod in upland meadows rolling softly away to the pearl-colored sky. The two friends, blissfully relaxed in the reaction after the adventures of their thrilling day, leaned back in the buggy. The horse took his own gait along the grassy road that led

home to East Weston. Laurretta broke the silence.

"I *am* glad we went, Sarah," she said; "it was the right thing to do, after all. Weren't they pleasant-appearing women? They might have lived in East Weston all their lives."

"Yes," said Sarah; "they didn't seem a bit like strangers. Do you know, I had a feeling that we were deceiving them, somehow, in not telling them that we hadn't meant to come, and that we dreaded meeting a crowd, and that we were thankful no one was there."

"I almost did tell," confessed Laurretta, "for it seems rather a pity, doesn't it, that they'll never understand?"

## Without the Gate

BY ARTHUR COLTON

THE birds have gone with their dewy throats,  
Gone to its covert each bubble of notes;  
The rivers and rills  
In the folds of the hills  
Mutter their Delphic oracles.

Spectral birches, slim and white,  
Stand apart in the pale moonlight;  
The faint thin cries  
Of the night arise,  
And the stars are out in companies.

They are but lamps on your palace stair,  
My queen of the night with dusky hair,  
Whose heart is a rose  
In a garden close,  
And the gate is shut where the highway goes.

Margaret, Margaret, early and late  
I knock and whisper without that gate.  
Oh, may I win  
My way within,  
Out of the highway enter in?

I knock and listen. No answer yet?  
And the rose still slumbers, Margaret?  
Early and late  
I watch and wait,  
For the love of a rose, by a garden gate.