

"Take 'em, sonny—they're mine—I airned 'em. I've picked cotton for 'em an' saved 'em cent by cent and year by year 'gainst th' time when you'd be sick, since you was a little chap, so's there'd be money fer th' doctor an' fer med'cine. An' then, ef—ef you died, I couldn't bear to think o' my baby boy a lyin' all ragged in an old, plain pine coffin, bought by charity, an' buried the same way.

"I've gone hungry, sonny, rather'n touch that money—I've gone 'most naked, an' cold, an' stented myself, to keep it. Take 'em, my baby child, it's all I c'n give except my love.

"Go away an' make a man of yourself, Henry—an' oh, sonny—sonny, I want you to have yore chanst—but please don't

never quite forget yore pore old mammy—will you, son?"

She threw her arms about his neck and wept, for he was all of love she had.

As he turned at the bend of the road for a last look, in the door of the cabin a gaunt, time-scarred woman stood holding the spluttering light high above her head. She shaded her streaming eyes with the other hand.

Then he put his face to the north, and as he passed over the crest of the hill and faced the pole star gleaming with a light as high as his own resolve, his own eyes welled again, and a great hunger for the gaunt woman in the doorway gripped his heart.

ON FIFTH AVENUE

FAR wandered from his wonted deck
My sailor stood, with lips austere,
And clean, cool eyes and rounded neck
That comes of hauling at the gear.

Clad in his smartest stood he there,
Aloof, alert, before the crowd,
With yellow, close-curved Saxon hair,
Good shoulders, and a torso proud.

"What thinks he of the throng?" I mused,
And watched him stare with steady gaze
Of eyes to star and beacon used,
To northern mists and tropic blaze.

For he was fresh from hostile seas,
And straits where baffled currents swirled,
From waves that crush and winds that freeze
Before the headlands of the world.

And he on drunken decks had trod,
Lost in the storm's black universe,
When the stark spirit knows her God,
Yet greets Him with a mindless curse;

When, man among unshaken men,
He served the wills that stood to foil
The hurricane's compulsion—then
Turned at its close to meaner toil.

"What are his thoughts?" I mused again,
As briskly on the sunlit pave
Passed folly's clan, the weak, the vain,
The fop, the parasite, the slave—

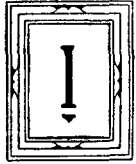
Thousands by thousands through the hours,
Withdrawn from life's realities,
And blinded to the wholesome powers
That walk the mountains and the seas.

I gazed, and there was none to warn;
I gazed incredulous, and saw
Those eyes that held the seas in scorn
Filled now with envy and with awe!

George Sterling

WOMEN AND CHILDREN LAST

BY SAMUEL J. LEWIS



It came as suddenly as the flashing sword of death.

In the morning Big Lenz—surname Struegman, but Big Lenz to all the countryside—was a rather phlegmatic and wholly unromantic gardener, laying aside his long-stemmed, after-breakfast pipe to worry and scrabble every square inch of his pocket-size farm; literally to force and jerk and wrest from it the necessities of life.

If occasionally he wrung from the reluctant soil a few skimpy comforts for Marie and Little Lenz, that was only because Big Lenz was stolid and untiring, and knew not much but how to work and smoke and love. Also occasionally he kissed Marie and Little Lenz—whenever he had time, and thought of it.

In the morning Marie was a broad-backed, deep-lunged, fat-fisted girl-wife who flat-footed about the house and yard, punctuating her toil with shrill yelps at Little Lenz to keep that head of his out of the rain-barrel and those meddling hands and feet out of the butter-pail. Marie, too, found time to lavish her kisses with a profuse abandon. They were moist, voluminous kisses, as became her style and size, but they were the kisses of true love, and Big Lenz and Little Lenz appreciated them at their full worth in spite of their explosive qualities.

At noon Big Lenz was a soldier, in capaciously bagging trousers and ill-fitting coat with ridiculous, flapping skirts. A flat cap was on his head; beneath it a colored handkerchief was tucked to curtain his neck against the August sun. He was already several miles from home, whistling and humming as he ambled along with a thousand others. He was going into battle. He was going to ride on the train. He might, perchance, also ride on the wings of death, but Big Lenz was not afraid. It was all in a man's work.

At noon Marie, brown hair flying, red cheeks still redder, if possible, skirt tucked around her knees, and bare feet stamping an emphasis to her rage, was bitterly and raucously reviling a regiment of invading cavalymen—"great, hulking, lazy swine," she dubbed them—who trampled the garden truck into the ground from whence it had sprung, stampeded the two cows, burned the sheds to give their approaching field-guns a free range of the garrisoned town in the distance, and created a most astounding havoc. All of which was to the intense delight of eighteen-months-old Little Lenz and the boiling, choking, smothering exasperation of buxom Marie, who for the first time in her twenty-one years fell back for relief upon the profanity of her fathers.

At night Big Lenz, hung with cartridges, tin cup, blanket, and smaller accouterment, as a Christmas-tree is strung with baubles, detrained in the open country some sixty miles from his dismantled farm. He washed in a shallow creek, ate what was handed to him from a perambulating army kitchen, heard the locomotive whistle shriek, and watched the train back away.

He noted that the camp lay between the stream and a woodland, that sentries were thrown out on every side, and precautions taken against sudden attack. Off in the distance heavy guns barked and coughed dully, but no shells came his way. At another point a great red reflection on the dark sky showed where a village was in flames. Smaller illuminations in the same general direction told of individual farm-houses going up in flames.

All the reflections, big and little, were in the path of the enemy, persistently advancing, but still too far away to attack, leaving Big Lenz no cause for immediate worry. He was lucky, escaping sentry detail, and having nothing to do but smoke and talk, and then, when the excitement had died down, to roll in his blanket and