

GALE ZONA

PEACE IN
FRIENDSHIP
VILLAGE

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Peace in Friendship Village

"Whatever comes of it after this [in Russia] every one in the world should be plainly told of what took place in those first weeks. For it was a dazzling revelation of the deep, deep powers for brotherhood and friendliness that lie buried in mankind. I was no dreamer; I was a chemist, a scientist, used to dealing with facts. All my life I had smiled at social dreams as nothing but Utopias. But in those days I was wholly changed, for I could feel beneath my feet this brotherhood like solid ground. There is no end to what men can do – for there is no limit to their good will, if only they can be shown the way."

Tarasov, in Ernest Poole's "The Village."

"I am the way ..."

Jesus Christ.

NOTE

These stories are told in the words of Calliope Marsh. Wherever I have myself intruded a word, it is with apology to her. I chronicle her stories as faithfully as I am able, faults and all, and, through her, the affairs of the village, reflecting in its small pool the people and the stars.

And always I hear most clearly as her conclusion:

"Life is something other than that which we believe it to be."

Zona Gale.

Portage, Wisconsin, 1919.

THE FEAST OF NATIONS ¹

Three-four of us older ones were down winding up Red Cross, and eight-ten of our daughters were helping; not my daughter – I ain't connect' – but Friendship Village daughters in general. Or I don't know but it was us older ones that were helping them. Anyway, Red Cross was being wound up from being active, and the rooms were going to be rented to a sewing-machine man. And that night we were to have our final entertainment in the Friendship Village Opera House, and we were all going to be in it.

There was a sound from the stairs like something walking with six feet, and little Achilles Poulaki came in. He always stumbled even when there was nothing in sight but the floor – he was that age. He was the Sykeses' grocery delivery boy, that Mis' Sykes thinks is her social secretary as well, and he'd been errand boy for us all day.

"Anything else, Mis' Sykes?" he says.

"I wonder," says Mis' Sykes, "if Killy can't take that basket of cotton pieces down to old Mis' Herman, for her woolen rugs?"

We all thought he could, and some of the girls went to work to find the basket for him.

"Killy," I says, "I hear you can speak a nice Greek piece."

He didn't say anything. He hardly ever did say anything.

"Can you?" I pressed him, because somebody had been telling me that he could speak a piece his Greek grandfather had taught him.

"Yes'm," he says.

"Will you?" I took it further.

"No'm," he says, in exactly the same tone.

"You ought to speak it for me," I said. "I'm going to be Greece in the show to-night."

But they brought the basket then, and he went off with it. He was a little thin-legged chap – such awful thin legs he had, and a pale neck, and cropped hair, and high eyebrows and big, chapped hands.

"Don't you drop it, now!" says Mis' Sykes, that always uses a club when a sliver would do it.

Achilles straightened up his thin little shoulders and threw out his thin little chest, and says he:

"My grandfather was in the gover'nment."

"Go *on!*" says Mis' Sykes. "In Greece?"

"Sure," he says – which wasn't Greek talk, though I bet Greek boys have got something like it.

Then Achilles was scared to think he'd spoke, and he run off, still stumbling. His father had been killed in a strike in the Friendship mills, and his mother was sick and tried to sew some; and she hadn't nothing left that wasn't married, only Achilles.

The work went on among us as before, only I always waste a lot of time watching the girls work. I love to see girls working together – they seem to touch at things with the tips of their fingers. They remind me of butterflies washing out their own wings. And yet what a lot they could get done, and how capable they got to be. Ina Clare and Irene Ayres and Ruth Holcomb and some more – they were packing up and making a regular lark of it. Seemed like they were so big and strong and young they could do 'most anything. Seemed like it was a shame to close down Red Cross and send them back to their separate church choirs and such, to operate in, exclusive.

That was what I was thinking when Mis' Silas Sykes broke in – her that's the leading woman of the Friendship Village caste of folks.

"I don't know," says Mis' Sykes, "I don't know but pride is wicked. But I *cannot* help feeling pride that I've lived in Friendship Village for three generations of us, unbroken. And for three

¹ Copyright, *Red Cross Magazine*, April, 1919.

generations back of that we were American, on American soil, under the American flag – as soon as ever it got here."

"Was you?" I says. "Well, a strain of me is English, and a touch of me way back was Scotch-Irish; and I've got a little Welsh. And I'd like to find some Indian, but I haven't ever done it. And I'm proud of all them, Mis' Sykes."

Mis' Hubbelthwait spoke up – her that's never been able to get a plate really to fit her, and when she talks it bothers out loud.

"I got some of nearly all the Allies in me," she says, complacent.

"What?" says Mis' Sykes.

"Yes, sir," says Mis' Hubbelthwait. "I was counting up, and there ain't hardly any of 'em I ain't."

"Japanese?" says Mis' Sykes, withering. "How interesting, Mis' Hubbelthwait," says she.

"Oh, I mean Europe," says Mis' Hubbelthwait, cross. "Of course you can't descend from different continents. There's English – I've got that. And French – I've got that. And Italian is in me – I know that by my eyes. And folks that come from County Galway has Spanish – "

"Spain ain't ally," says Mis' Fire Chief Merriman, majestic. "It's neuter."

"Well, there's that much more credit – to be allies *and* neuter," says Mis' Hubbelthwait triumphant.

"Well, sir," says Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss. "I ain't got anything in me but sheer American – you can't beat that."

"How'd you manage that, Mame?" I ask her. "Kind of a trick, wasn't it?"

"I don't know what you mean," she says. And went right on over my head, like she does. "Ain't it nice, ladies," she says, "to be living in the very tip-top nation of this world?"

"Except of course England," says Mis' Jimmy Sturgis.

"Why except England?" snaps Mame Holcomb.

"Oh well, we all know England's the grandest nation," says Mis' Sturgis. "Don't the sun never set on her possessions? Don't she rule the wave? Ain't she got the largest city? And all like that?"

Mame looked mad.

"Well, I'm sure I don't know," she says. "But from the time I studied g'ography I always understood that no nation could touch us Americans."

"Why," says Mis' Sturgis, "I *love* America best. But I never had any doubts that England that my folks came from was the most important country."

Mis' Holcomb made her mouth both tight and firm.

"Their gover'ment beats ours, I s'pose?" she says. "You know very well you can't beat our gover'ment."

Berta, Mis' Sykes's little Switzerland maid, spoke up.

"Oh," she says, "I guess Sweetzerland has got the nicest gover'ment. Everybody speaks so nice of that."

Mame looked over at me, behind Berta. But of course we wouldn't say a word to hurt the poor little thing's feelings.

Up spoke that new Mis' Antonio, whose husband has the fluff rug store.

"Of course," she says, "nothing has Rome but Italy."

We kep' still for a minute. Nobody could contradict that.

"I feel bad," said Mis' Antonio, "for the new countries – America, England – that have not so much old history in them. And no old sceneries."

Berta spoke up again. "Yes, but then who's got part of the Alps?" she wanted to know, kind of self-conscious.

Mame Holcomb looked around, sort of puzzled.

"Rome used to be nice," she admitted, "and of course the Alps is high. But everybody knows they can't hold a candle to the United States, all in all."

After that we worked on without saying anything. It seemed like pretty near everything had been said.

Pretty soon the girls had their part all done. And they stood up, looking like rainbows in their pretty furs and flowers.

"Miss Calliope," Ina Clare said to me, "come on with us to get some things for to-night."

"Go with you and get out of doing any more work?" says I, joyful. "Well, won't I!"

"But we are working," cried Ruth. "We've got oceans of things to collect."

"Well," says I, "come along. Sometimes I can't tell work from play and this is one of the times."

I thought that more than once while I went round with them in Ruth's big car late that afternoon. How do you tell work from play when both are the right kind? How do we know that some day play won't be only just the happiest kind of work, done joyful and together?

"I guess you're going to miss this kind of work when Red Cross stops," I said to them.

Ruth is tall and powerful and sure, and she drives as if it was only one of the things she knows about.

"Miss it?" she said. "We'll be *lost*— simply. What we're going to do I don't know."

"We've been some use in the world," said Clare, "and now we've got to go back to being nothing but happy."

"We'll have to play bridge five nights a week to keep from being bored to tears," says Irene — that is pretty but she thinks with her scalp and no more.

Ruth, that's the prettiest of them all, she shook her head.

"We can't go back to that," she said. "At least, I *won't* go back to that. But what I'm going on to do I don't know."

What were they going on to do? That was what I kept wondering all the while we gathered up the finishing touches of what we wanted for the stage that night.

"Now the Greek flag," said Ruth finally. "Mis' Sykes said we could get that at Mis' Poulaki's."

That was Achilles' mother, and none of us had ever met her. We went in, real interested. And there in the middle of the floor sat Mis' Poulaki looking over the basket of cotton rags that the Red Cross had sent down by Achilles to old Mis' Herman.

"Oh," says little Mis' Poulaki, "you sent me such grand clothes for my rags. Thank you — thank you!"

She had tears in her eyes, and there wasn't one of us would tell her Achilles had just plain stole them for her.

"It is everything," she said to us in her broken talk. "Achilles, he had each week two dollar from Mr. Sykes. But it is not enough. I have hard time. Hard."

Over the lamp shelf I saw, just then, the picture of a big, handsome man; and out of being kind of embarrassed, I asked who he was.

"Oh," says Mis' Poulaki, "he's Achilles' grandfather — the father of my boy's father. He was officer of the Greek gover'ment," she added, proud. "He taught my boy a piece to speak — something all the Greek boys learn."

I told her I'd heard about that piece; and then we asked for the Greek flag, and Mis' Poulaki got it for us, but she said:

"Would you leave Achilles carry it for you? He like that."

We said "yes," and got out as soon as possible — it seemed so sad, love of a country and stealing all mixed up promiscuous in one little boy.

Out by the car there was a whole band of little folks hanging round examining it. They were all going to be in the drill at the entertainment that night, and they all came running to Ruth that had trained them.

"Listen," she said to us, and then she held up her hand to them. "All say 'God bless you' in your own language."

They shouted it – a Bedlam, a Babylon. It seems there were about fourteen different nations of them, more or less, living around down there – it wasn't a neighborhood we'd known much about. They were cute little bits, all of them; and I felt better about taking part in the performance, at my age, for the children were so cute nobody would need to look at us.

Just as we got in the car, Achilles Poulaki came running home to his supper – one of the kind of suppers, I suppose, that would be all right, what there was of it; and enough of it, such as it was. When he see us, his eyes got wide and dark and scared – it was terrible to see that look in that little boy's face, that had stole to help his mother. We told him about the Greek flag, and his face lit, and he said he'd bring it. But he stood there staring at us, when we drove away.

His look was haunting me still when I went into the Friendship Village Opera House that night for the Red Cross final entertainment. "The Feast of Nations," it was going to be, and us ladies had worked at it hard and long, and using recipes we were not accustomed to using.

There's many different kinds of excitement in this vale of tears, but for the sheer, top-notch variety give me the last few minutes before the curtain goes up on a home-talent entertainment in a little town. All the different kinds of anxiety, apprehension and amateur agony are there together, and gasping for utterance.

For instance, Mis' Fire Chief Merriman was booked to represent a Jugo-Slav. None of us ladies knew how it ought to be done, so we had fixed up kind of a neutral costume of red, white and blue that couldn't be so very far out of the way. But the last minute Mis' Merriman got nervous for fear there'd be a Jugo-Slav in the audience, and she balked out on going on, and it took all we could do to persuade her. And then the Balkans got nervous – we weren't any of us real clear about the Balkans. And we didn't know whether the Dolomites was states or mountains, so we left them out altogether. But we'd been bound the little nations were going to be represented whether anybody else was or not – and there we were, nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, the Americas and the provinces, and somebody for every one of them. And for a curtain we'd sewed all the flags of every nation together because we were so sick and tired of the advertisements and the pink lady on the old Opera House curtain.

It's no part of my purpose, as the orators say, to tell about the Friendship Village "Feast of Nations" entire. It would take sheets. To mention the mere mistakes and misadventures of that evening would be Arabian Nights long. Us ladies were the nations, and the young girls were the spirits – Liberty, Democracy, To-morrow, Humanity, Raw Materials, Trade Routes, the High Seas, Disputed Territory, Commerce, Peace, and like that. There ought to have been one more, and she did come all dressed up and ready, in white with gold and silver on her; and then she sat flat down on a scaffold, and she says:

"I *can* not do it. I *can* not pronounce me. I shall get," she says wild, "nothing said out loud but a whisper. And what *is* the use?"

We gathered round her, and we understood. None of us could pronounce her easy, especially when scared. She was Reciprocity.

"Make a sign," says somebody, "make a sign with her name on it, and hold it over her head."

But that was no better, because nobody could spell her, either, including her herself. So we give it up, and she went down in the audience and looked on.

"It's all right," says Mis' Sykes. "Nobody knows what it means, anyway."

"No," says I, "but think of the work her mother's put on her dress."

And we all knew what that meant, anyway; and we all felt bad, and thought mebbe the word would be more in use by the next show we give, if any.

About in the middle of the program, just after Commerce and Raw Materials and Disputed Territory tried to raise a row, and had got held in place by Humanity, Mis' Sykes came to me behind the scenes. She was Columbia, of course, and she was dressed in the United States flag, and she carried an armful of all the other flags. We had had all we could do to keep her from wearing a crown

– she'd been bound and determined to wear a crown, though we explained to her that crowns was going out of fashion and getting to be very little worn.

"But they're so regal!" she kept saying, grieving.

"Crowns are all right," we had agreed with her. "It's the regal part that we object to. Not on Columbia you don't put no crown!"

And we made her wear a wreath of stars. But the wreath was near over one eye when she came to me there, between the acts.

"Killy Poulaki," she says, "he stole that whole basket of stuff we sent down to old Mis' Herman by him. Mis' Herman found it out."

"For his ma, though," I says pitiful.

"Ma or no ma, stole is stole," says Mis' Sykes. "We're going to make an example of him."

And I thought: "First we starve Achilles on two dollars a week, and then when he steals for his ma, we make an example of him. Ain't there anything else for him..."

There wasn't time to figure it out, because the flag curtain was parting for the children – the children that came capering up to do their drill, all proud and pleased and important. They didn't represent anything only themselves – the children of all the world. And Ruth Holcomb stood up to drill them, and she was the *Spirit of To-morrow*.

The curtains had parted on the empty stage, and *To-morrow* had stepped out alone and given a short, sharp word. And all over the house, where they were sitting with their families, they hopped up, boys and girls, and flashed into the aisles. And the orchestra started them, and they began to sing and march to the stage, and went through what Ruth had taught them.

Nothing military. Nothing with swords or anything of that. But instead, a little singing dance as they came up to meet *To-morrow*. And she gave them a star, a bird, a little pretend animal, a flower, a lyre, a green branch, a seed, and she told them to go out and make the world more beautiful and glad. They were willing! That was something they knew about already. They lined up at the footlights and held out their gifts to the audience. And it made it by far the more wonderful that we knew the children had really come from so many different nations, every one with its good gift to give to the world.

You know how they looked – how all children look when you give them something like that to do. Dear and small and themselves, so that you swallow your whole throat while you watch. Because they *are* To-morrow, and they want life to be nice, and they think it's going to be – but we haven't got it fixed up quite right for them yet. We're late.

As they stood there, young and fine and ready, Ruth, that was *To-morrow*, said:

"Now!"

They began speaking together, clear and strong and sweet. My heart did more things to my throat while I looked at them.

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Somebody punched at me, violent.

"Ain't it magnificent to hear 'em say it?" says Mis' Sykes. "Ain't it truly magnificent?"

But I was looking at Achilles and thinking of her being willing to make an example of him instead of helping him, and thinking, too, of his two dollars a week.

"It is if it is," says I, cryptic.

To-morrow was speaking again.

"Those of you whose fathers come from Europe, hold up your hands."

Up shot maybe twenty hands – scraggy and plump, and Achilles' little thin arm in the first row among them.

And at the same minute, out came us ladies, marching from the wings – all those of us that represented the different countries of the world; and we formed back of the children, and the stage was full of the nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, the Americas, the islands and all.

And *To-morrow* asked:

"What is it that your fathers have sworn to, so that you now all belong to one nation?"

Then we all said it with the children – waveringly at first, swelling, mounting to full chorus, the little bodies of the children waving from side to side as we all recited it:

"I absolutely and entirely renounce and adjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty, and particularly to – "

Here was a blur of sound as all the children named the ruler of the state from which their fathers had come.

" – of whom I have heretofore been subject ... that I will support and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign or domestic, and bear true faith and allegiance to the same, so help me God..."

Before they had finished, I began to notice something. I stood on the end, and Achilles was just near me. He had looked up and smiled at me, and at his Greek flag that I was carrying. But now, while the children recited together, Achilles stood there with them saying not one word. And then, when the names of the rulers all blurred together, Achilles scared me, for he put up the back of his hand as if to rub tears from his eyes. And when they all stopped speaking, only his sobbing broke the stillness of the hall.

I don't know how it came to me, save that things do come in shafts of light and splendor that no one can name; but in that second I knew what ailed him. Maybe I knew because I remembered the picture of his grandfather on the wall over the lamp shelf. Anyway, the big pang came to me to speak out, like it does sometimes, when you have to say what's in you or die.

"*To-morrow!*" I cried out to Ruth, and I was glad she had her back to the audience so they couldn't see how scared she looked at me speaking what wasn't in my part. "*To-morrow!* I am Greece! I ask that this little Greek boy here say the words that his Greek grandfather taught him!"

Ruth looked at Achilles and nodded, and I saw his face brighten all of a sudden through his tears; and I knew he was going to speak it, right out of his heart.

Achilles began to speak, indistinct at first, then getting clearer, and at last his voice went over the hall loud and strong and like he meant it:

"We will never bring disgrace to this our city by any act of dishonor or cowardice, nor ever desert our suffering comrades in the ranks. We will revere and obey the city's laws, and do our best to incite a like respect and reverence in those above us who are prone to annul them or set them at naught. We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public sense of civic duty. Thus in all these ways, we will transmit this city not less but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."

It was the Athenian boy's creed of citizenship, that Achilles' father had learned in Greece, and that Achilles' grandfather, that officer in the Greek government, had taught to them both.

The whole hall cheered him – how could they help that? And right out of the fullness of the lump in my throat, I spoke out again. And I says:

"*To-morrow! To-morrow!* You're going to give us a world, please God, where we can be true to our own nation and true to all others, for we shall all belong to the League of the World."

Oh, and they cheered that! They knew – they knew. Just like every hamlet and cross-roads in this country and in this world is getting to know – that a great new idea is waiting, for us to catch the throb of its new life. *To-morrow*, the League of the World is going to teach us how to be alive. If only we can make it the League of the World indeed.

Right then came beating out the first chords of the piece we were to close with. And as it was playing they brought out the great world flag that us ladies had made from the design that we had thought up and made ourselves: A white world and white stars on a blue field.

It floated over the heads of all of us that were dressed as the nations of the earth, and not one of us ladies was trying to tell which was the best one, like we had that afternoon; and that flag floated

over the children, and over *To-morrow* and *Democracy* and *Liberty* and *Humanity* and *Peace* and like that. And then we sang, and the hall sang with us:

"The crest and crowning of all good,
Life's common goal is brotherhood."

And when the curtains swept together – the curtains made of everybody's flags – I tell you, it left us all feeling like we ain't felt in I don't know when.

Within about a minute afterward Ruth and Ina and Irene were around me.

"Miss Calliope," they said, "the Red Cross isn't going to stop."

"No?" I said.

"We're going to start in with these foreign-born boys and girls – " Ina said.

"We're going to teach them all the things *To-morrow* was pretending to teach them," Ruth said.

"And we're going to learn a thing or two they can teach us," I says, "beginning with Achilles."

They knew what I meant, and they nodded.

And the flag of the white world and white stars on a blue field was all ready-made to lead us – a kind of picture of God's universe.

PEACE IN FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE ²

Post-office Hall, where the Peace celebration was to be held, was filled with flags, both bought and borrowed, and some made up by us ladies, part guessed at but most of them real accurate out of the back of the dictionary.

Two days before the celebration us ladies were all down working in the hall, and all pretty tired, so that we were liable to take exception, and object, and I don't know but what you might say contradict.

"My feet," says Mis' Toplady, "ache like the headache, and my head aches as if I'd stood on it."

"Do they?" says Mis' Postmaster Sykes, with her little society pucker. "Why, I feel just as fresh. I've got a wonderful constitution."

"Oh, anybody's constitution feels fresh if they don't work it too hard," says Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss, having been down to the Hall all day long, as Mis' Sykes hadn't.

Then Mis' Toplady, that is always the one to pour oil and balm and myrrh and milk onto any troubled situation, she brought out her question more to reduce down the minute than anything else:

"Ladies," she says, holding up one foot to rest the aching sole of it, "Ladies, what under the sun are we going to do now that our war work's done?"

"What indeed?" says Mis' Holcomb-that-was-Mame-Bliss.

"What indeed?" says I.

"True for you," says Mis' Sykes, that always has to sound different, even though she means the same.

Of course we were all going to do what we could to help all Europe, but saving food is a kind of negative activity, and besides us ladies had always done it. Whereabouts was the novelty of that?

And we'd took over an orphan each and were going to skin it out of the egg-money and such – that is, not the orphan but its keep – and still these actions weren't quite what we meant, either.

"The mornings," says Mis' Toplady dreamy, "when I use' to wake up crazy to get through with my work and get with you ladies to sew – where's all that gone?"

"The meetings," says Mame Holcomb, "when Baptists and Catholics and young folks and Elks met promiscuous and sung and heard talking – where's them?"

And somebody brought out the thing we'd all thought most about.

"The days," she says, "when we worked next to our old enemies – both church and family enemies – and all bad feelings forgot – where's them times?"

"What we going to do about it?" I says. "And when?"

Mis' Sykes had a suggestion. She always does have a suggestion, being she loves to have folks disciple after her. "Why, ladies," she says, "there's some talking more military preparedness right off, I hear. That means for another war. Why not us start in and knit for it *now*?" And she beamed around triumphant.

"Well," says Mame Holcomb, reasonable, "if the men are going to prepare in any way, it does seem like women had ought to be getting ready too. Why *not* knit? And have a big box all setting ready, all knit up, to match the other preparednesses?"

It was on to this peaceful assemblage that Berta, Mis' Sykes's little Switzerland maid, came rushing. And her face was pale and white. "Oh, Mis' Sykes," she says, "oh, what jew s'pose? I found a little boy setting on the front stoop."

Mis' Sykes is always calm – not so much because calm is Christian as because calm is grand lady, I always think. "On whose stoop, Berta?" she ask' her kind.

"On your own stoop, ma'am," cried Berta excitable.

² Copyright, *Good Housekeeping*, June, 1919.

"And whose little boy is it, Berta?" she ask', still more calm and kind.

"That's what I donno, ma'am," says Berta. "Nor they don't no one seem to know."

We all ask' her then, so that I don't know, I'm sure, how she managed to say a word on her own hook. It seems that she'd come around the house and see him setting there, still as a mouse. When he see her, he looked up and smiled, and got up like he'd been waiting for somebody. Berta had taken him in the kitchen.

"And he's wearing all different clothes than I ever see before in my life," said Berta, "and he don't know who he is, nor nothing. Nor he don't talk right."

Mis' Sykes got up in her grand, deliberate way. "Undoubtedly it's wandered away from its ma," says she, and goes out with the girl that was still talking excitable without getting a great deal said.

The rest of us finished setting the hall in shape. It looked real nice, with the Friendship Village booth on one side and the Foreign booth on the other. Of course the Friendship Village booth was considerably the biggest, being that was the one we knew the most about.

Then us ladies started home, and we were rounding the corner by Mis' Sykes's, when we met her a-running out.

"Ladies," she says, "if this is anybody's child that lives in Friendship Village, I wish you'd tell me whose. Come along in."

She was awful excited, and I don't blame her. Sitting on the foot of the lounge in her dining-room was the funniest little dud ever I see. He was about four years old, and he had on a little dress that was all gold braid, and animals, and pictures, and biscuits, and shells, looked like. But his face was like any – black eyes he had, and a nice skin, and plain, brown hair, and no hat.

"For the land," we all says, "where *did* he come from?"

"Now listen at this," says Mis' Sykes, and she squatted down in front of him that was eating his cracker so pretty, and she says, "What's your name?"

It stumped him. He only stared.

Mis' Sykes rolled her eyes, and she pressed him. "Where d'you live?"

That stumped him too. He only stared on.

"What's your papa's name?"

That was a worse poser. So was everything else we asked him. Pretty soon he begun to cry, and that was a language we could all understand. But when we ask' him, frantic, what it was he wanted, he said words that sounded like soup with the alphabet stirred in.

"Heavens!" says Mis' Sykes. "He ain't English."

And that's what we all concluded. He wore what we'd never seen, he spoke what we couldn't speak, he come from nobody knew where.

But while we were a-staring at each other, the Switzerland maid come a-racing back. Seems she'd been up to the depot, a block away, and Copper, the baggageman, had noticed a queer-looking kid on the platform when some folks got off Number 16 that had gone through west an hour or so back. Copper thought the kid was with them, but he didn't notice it special. Where the folks went to, nobody knew.

"Down on the Flats somewhere, that's where its folks went," says Mis' Sykes. "Sure to. Well, then, they'll be looking for it. We must get it in the papers."

We raced around and advertised that little boy in the *Daily*. The Friendship Village *Evening Daily* goes to press almost any time, so if you happen to hit it right, you can get things in most up to seven o'clock. Quite often the *Evening Daily* comes after we're all in bed, and we get up and read it to go to sleep by. We told the sheriff, and he come up that evening and clucked at the little boy, without getting a word out of him, no more than we could. The news flew round town, and lots of folks come up to see him. It was more exciting than a night-blooming cereus night.

But not a soul come to claim him. He might have dropped down from inside the air.

"Well," says Mis' Sykes, "if some of them foreigners down on the Flats *has* lost him, it'll be us that'll have to find him. They ain't capable of nothing."

That was how Mis' Sykes, and Mis' Toplady, and Mame Holcomb and I hitched up and went down to the Flats and took the baby with us, right after breakfast next morning, to try our best to locate him.

The Flats are where the Friendship Village ex-foreigners live – ain't it scandalous the way we keep on calling ex-foreigners foreigners? And then, of course, nobody's so very foreign after you get acquainted. Americans, even, ain't so very foreign to Europeans after they get to know us, they say. I'd been down there often enough to see my wash-woman, or dicker for a load of wood, or buy new garden truck, or get somebody to houseclean, but I didn't know anybody down there to visit – and none of us ladies did. The Flats were like that. The Flats didn't seem ever to count real regular in real Friendship Village doings. For instance, the town was just getting in sewerage, but it wasn't to go in down on the Flats, and nobody seemed surprised. The only share the Flats seemed to have in sewerage was to house the long, red line of bunk cars, where the men lived, drawn up on a spur of track by the gas house.

It was a heavenly day, warm and cool and bright, with a little whiff of wind, like a sachet bag, thrown in. We had the Sykeses' surrey and old white horse, and Mis' Toplady and Mame and me squoze on the back seat so's to let Mis' Sykes, that was driving, have sitting beside her in plain sight that little boy in his blazing red dress.

We went first to see some folks named Amachi – her husband was up in the pineries, she said, and so she run their little home-made rug business. She was a wonderful, motherly soul, and she pooded the little boy with her big, thick hand and listened, with her face up and her hair low in her neck like some kind of a picture with big, sad eyes. But she hadn't heard of anybody lost.

"One trouble with these folks," Mis' Sykes says as we drove away, "they never know anything but their own affairs."

Then we went to some folks named Cardell. They tended the bridge and let the gypsies camp in their pasture whenever they wanted. She was cutting the grass with a blunt pair of shears; and she had lots of flowers and vines and the nicest way of talking off the tip of her tongue. She give the little boy a cup of warm milk, but she hadn't heard anything about anybody being lost anywheres.

"Real superior for a foreigner," says Mis' Sykes, so quick after she'd clucked to her horse I was afraid Mis' Cardell heard her.

Then we saw an old lady named Marchant, that her ancestors had settled up Friendship Village, but she was so poor now that everybody had kind of forgot about that, and some folks named Swenson that lived in the toll-gate house and had a regular hennery of homeless cats. And though they give the little boy a flower or two and left him stroke a kitty or more, they hadn't any of them either seen or heard of anybody that was out trying to locate a son.

It was just a little while after we started that Mis' Sykes had her great idea. I remember we were just coming out at Mis' Swenson's when she thought of it, and all the homeless cats were following along behind us with all their tails sticking up straight.

"Ladies," says Mis' Sykes, "why in under the canopy don't we get some work out of some of these folks for the peace meeting to-morrow night?"

"I was thinking of that," says Mame Holcomb.

"Some of them would wash the dishes and not charge anything, being it's for the peace."

"And help clean up next day," says Mis' Sykes. "That's when the backaching, feet-burning work comes in."

"Costs a sight to pay by the hour," says Mame, "and this way we could get the whole thing free, for patriotism."

"Mop the hall floor, too," says Mis' Sykes. "Land," she adds, only about half soft enough, "look at them children! Did you ever see such skinny sights?"

Awful pindling-looking children, the Swensons were, and there were most as many of them as there were cats.

When she got to the gate, Mis' Sykes turned round in her grand-lady way, and she says, "Mis' Swenson, why don't you and your husband come up to the peace meetin' to-morrow night and help us?"

Mis' Swenson was a peaked little thing, with too much throat in length and not enough in thickness. "I never heard of it," she says.

Mis' Sykes explained in her commanding way. "Peace, you know," she says, "is to be celebrated between the different countries. And, of course, this is your country, too," Mis' Sykes assured her, "and we'd like to hev you come up and help with the dishes, or like that."

"Is it dress-up?" says Mis' Swenson, not very loud.

"My, no!" we told her, and decided to stick to the usual hooks in our closets.

"I'd like to," says Mis' Swenson, "if I can get Pete to change his clothes."

"So do," says Mis' Sykes gracious and clucked her horse along. "My goodness," she says, "what awful stuff these folks must feed their children! And how they must bungle 'em when they're sick. And they won't hardly any of 'em come to-morrow night," she says. "You can not," she says, "get these folks to take part in nothing."

We went to twenty or thirty houses, and every one of them Mis' Sykes invited to come and help. But not one of the twenty or thirty houses had heard of any foreigner whatever having just arrived in Friendship Village, nor had ever seen or heard of that little boy before. He was awful good, the little soul, waving his hands so nice that I begun to be afraid everybody we met would claim foreign and ask for him.

By noon we begun to get pretty excited. And the sheriff, he was excited too, and he was hunting just as wild as any of us, being arrests was light. He was hanging on the canal bridge when we crossed it, going home along toward noon.

"They never had a case of lost child in Friendship Village in twenty years," he said. "I looked it up."

"Lost child nothing!" I told him. "The child ain't lost. Here he is. It's the parents," I said, "that's lost on us."

The noon whistle blew just then, and the men that were working on the sewer threw down their shovels.

"Look at their faces," says Mis' Sykes. "Did you ever see anything so terrible foreign?"

"Foreign ain't poison," says Mis' Toplady on the back seat.

"I'm going to have Silas put a button on the cellar window," says Mis' Sykes.

"Shucks, they ain't shaved, that's all," says Mis' Toplady.

Mis' Sykes leaned over to the sheriff. "You better be up around the peace celebration to-morrow night," she says. "We've been giving out invitations pretty miscellaneous, and we might need you."

"I'll drop up," says the sheriff. "But I like to watch them bunk cars pretty close, where the men live."

"Is there much lawlessness?" Mis' Sykes asks, fearful.

Mis' Toplady sings out, laughing, that there would be if she didn't get home to get Timothy's dinner, and Mis' Sykes come to herself and groaned.

"But oh, my land," she says, "we ain't found no ma nor pa for this child. What in time are we going to do? I'm too stiff," she says, "to adopt one personally."

But the little boy, he just smelled of the flowers the folks on the Flats had give him, and waved his hand to the sheriff, cute.

Late the next afternoon, us ladies that weren't tending to the supper were trying to get the Foreign booth to look like something. The Foreign booth looked kind of slimpsey. We hadn't got enough in it. We just had a few dishes that come from the old country, and a Swiss dress of Berta's

mother's and a Japanese dress, and like that. But we couldn't seem to connect up much of Europe with Friendship Village.

At five o'clock the door opened, and in walked Mis' Amachi and Mis' Swenson from the Flats, with nice black dresses on and big aprons pinned up in newspapers. Pretty soon in come old Mis' Marchant, that had rode up on a grocery delivery wagon, she said. Close behind these come some more of them we had asked. And Mis' Sykes, acting like the personal hostess to everything, took them around and showed them things, the Friendship Village booth that was loaded with stuff, and the Foreign booth that wasn't.

And Mis' Poulaki, one of the Greek women, she looked for a while and then she says, "We got two nice musics from old country."

She made her hands go like playing strings, and we made out that she meant two musical instruments.

"Good land!" says Mis' Sykes. "Post right straight home and get them. Got anything else?"

"A little boy's suit from Norway," says Mis' Swenson. "And my marriage dress."

"Get it up here!" cries Mis' Sykes. "Ladies, why do you s'pose we never thought of this before?"

There wasn't hardly one of them that couldn't think of something – a dish, or a candlestick, or wooden shoes, or an old box, or a kerchief. Old Mis' Marchant had come wearing a shoulder shawl that come from Lombardy years back, and we jerked it off her and hung it up, hole and all.

It made quite some fun for all of us. And all the time our little strange boy was running around the floor, playing with papers, and when we weren't talking of anything else, we were talking about him.

"Say," says Mis' Sykes, that never means to say "say" but gets it said unbeknownst when excited, "I guess he's the foreignest thing we've got."

But by six o'clock she was ready to take that back, about him being the foreignest. The women from the Flats had all come back, bringing all they had, and by the time we put it up the Foreign booth looked like Europe personified. And that wasn't all. Full three quarters of the folks that we'd asked from down there had showed up, and most of them says they'd got their husbands to come too. So we held off the supper a little bit for them – a fifteen-cent supper it was, coffee and sandwiches and baked beans and doughnuts – and it was funny, when you think of it, for us to be waiting for them, for most of us had never spoken to any of these folks before. The women weren't planning to eat, they said; they'd help, but their men would buy the fifteen-cent supper, they added, proud. Isn't it kind of sad and dear and *motherly*, the way, whenever there isn't food enough, it's always the woman who manages to go without and not let on, just exactly like her husband was her little boy?

By and by in they all come, dressed up clean but awful heavy-handed and big-footed and kind of wishing they hadn't come. But I liked to see them with our little lost red boy. They all picked him up and played with him like here was something they knew how to do.

The supper was to come first, and the peace part afterward, in some set speeches by the town orators; and we were just ready to pour out the coffee, I recollect, when the fire-bell rang. Us ladies didn't think much of that. Compared with getting supper onto the table, what was a fire? But the men all jumped up excitable, being fires are more in their line.

Then there was a scramble and rush and push outside, and the door of the hall was shoved open, and there stood a man I'd never seen before, white and shaking and shouting.

"The bunk cars!" he cried. "They're burning. Come!"

The bunk cars – the ten or twelve cars drawn up on a spur track below the gas house...

All of us ran out of the hall. It didn't occur to us till afterward that of course the man at the door was calling the men from the Flats, some of whom worked on the sewer too. I don't suppose it would ever have entered his head to come up to call us if the Flat folks hadn't been there. And it was they who rushed to the door first, and then the rest of us followed.

It was still dusk, with a smell of the ground in the air. And a little new moon was dropping down to bed. It didn't seem as if there ought to be a fire on such a night. Everything seemed too usual and casual.

But there was. When we got in sight of the gas house, we could see the red glare on the round wall. When we got nearer, we could see the raggedy flames eating up into the black air.

The men that lived in the cars were trying to scabble out their poor belongings. They were shouting queer, throaty cries that we didn't understand, but some of the folks from the Flats were answering them. I think that it seemed queer to some of us that those men of the bunk cars should be having a fire right there in our town.

"Don't let's get too near," says somebody. "They might have small-pox or something."

It was Mis' Sykes, with Silas, her husband, and him carrying that bright red little boy. And the baby, kind of scared at all the noise and the difference, was beginning to straighten out and cry words in that heathen tongue of his.

"Mercy," says Mis' Sykes, "I can't find Berta. He's going," she says, "to yell."

Just then I saw something that excited me more than the baby. There was one car near the middle that was burning hard when the stream of water struck it. And I saw that car had a little rag of lace curtain at its window, and a tin can with a flower in it. And when the blaze died for a minute, and the roof showed all burned, but not the lower part of the car or the steps, I saw somebody in blue overalls jump up the steps, and then an arm tearing down that rag of lace curtain and catching up the tin can.

"Well," I says pitiful, "ain't that funny? Some man down there in a bunk car, with a lace curtain and a posy."

I started down that way, and Mis' Toplady, Mis' Holcomb and the Sykeses come too, the Sykeses more to see if walking wouldn't keep the baby still. It wouldn't. That baby yelled louder than I'd ever heard one, which is saying lots but not too much.

When we all got down nearer, we came on Mis' Swenson and Mis' Amachi, counting up.

"We can take in two," says Mis' Swenson, "by four of the children sleeping on the floor that'll never wake up to know it."

"One can sleep on our lounge," says Mis' Amachi.

"We can put a couple or two in our barn," says a Flats man. "Oh, we'll find 'em room – no trouble to that."

Mis' Toplady and me looked at each other. Always before, in a Friendship Village catastrophe, her and me had been among the planners. But here we were, it seemed, left out, and the whole thing being seen to by the Flats.

"Say," says Mis' Toplady all of a sudden, "it's a woman!"

We were down in front by now, and I saw her too. The blue overalls, as I had called them, were a blue dress. And the woman, a little dark thing with earrings, stood there with her poor, torn lace curtain and her tin can with a geranium all wilted down.

"Mercy!" says Mis' Sykes, shuddering. "A woman down here!"

But I was looking at that woman. And I saw she wasn't listening to what some of the Flat women were saying to her. She had her head up and back as if she was listening to something else. And now she began moving through the crowd, and now she began running, straight to where all of us stood and Mis' Sykes was trying to hush the crying child.

The next second Mis' Sykes was near knocked down by the wildness and the strength of that little dark thing who threw herself on her and grabbed the baby.

Speaking Greek, speaking Hebrew, and Hittite, and Amalekite, and the tongues of Babylon at the confusion and the last day – for all we knew, these were what that woman was speaking. We couldn't make more head nor tail out of what she was saying than we had of the baby. But we could understand without understanding. It was in her throat, it was in her tears, it was in her heart. She

cried, she sunk down to the ground, kissing that baby. He put out his hands and went right to her, laughing in the midst of the crying – oh, I've heard a baby laugh in its tears when it saw its mother, but this one was the best. And he snuggled up close, while she poured all over him them barbarous accents. But he knew what she said, and he said them back. Like before our eyes the alphabet of vermicelli had begun spelling words.

Then a man come running – I can see now that open collar, that face covered with stubble, those great eyes under their mass of tangled hair, the huge, rough hands that he laid about the baby's shoulders. And they both began talking to us, first one and then both, asking, looking, waiting for us to reply. Nobody replied. We all looked to Mis' Sykes to see what she could think of, as we always do in a village emergency.

But it wasn't Mis' Sykes that could help us now. It was the Flat folks. It was them that could understand. Half a dozen of them began telling us what it was they said. It seemed so wonderful to see the folks that we had never paid attention to, or thought they knew anything, take those tangled sounds and unravel them for us, easy, into regular, right-down words.

It seems the family had got to Friendship Village night before last, him to work on the sewer and his wife to cook for the men in the bunk cars. There were five other little folks with them – sure enough, there they were now, all flocking about her – and the oldest girl had somehow lost the baby. Poor souls, they had tried to ask. But he knew that he must dig and she must cook, and there was not much time for asking, and eight weeks in this country was all that they had and hardly three words of English. As for asking the law, they knew the law only as something that arrests you.

We were all there in a bunch by that time, everybody making signs to everybody, whether anybody could understand or not. There was something about those two, with our little chap in the midst of them, that sort of loosened us all up. We all of us understood so thorough that we pretty near forgot the fire.

By then it had most died down anyhow, and somebody started to move back up-town.

"The hall, the hall!" says Mis' Toplady to us. "Have 'em all go up to the Post-office Hall. Spread it, spread it!"

We did spread it, to go up there and see what we could do for the burned-out folks, and incidentally finish the peace celebration.

Up there in Post-office Hall the lights were all on, just as we'd left them, and there was kind of a cozy feel of supper in the air.

"Look here," says Mis' Toplady, "there's quarts of coffee hot on the back of the stove and a whole mountain of sandwiches –"

"Let's," I says. And we all begun to do so.

We all begun to do so, and I begun to do something more. I'd learned quite a little from seeing them there in the hall and kitchen that afternoon, the Swensons and Poulakis and Amachis and the rest. And now here were these others, from the bunk cars, – big, beautiful eyes they had, and patient looks, and little bobbing curtsies, and white teeth when they smiled. I saw them now, trying to eat and behave the best they knew how, and back of them the Foreign booth, under the Foreign flag. And what I begun to have to do, was to get in over behind that Foreign Booth and wipe up my eyes a little.

Once I peeked out. And I happened to see the sheriff going by. He was needed, like Mis' Sykes told him he might be, but not the same, either. He was passing the sugar and cream.

What brought me out finally was what I heard Mis' Sykes saying:

"Ladies," says she, "let's us set her up there in the middle of the Foreign Booth, with her little boy in her lap. That'll be just the finishing foreign touch," says she, "to our booth."

So we covered a chair with foreign flags, promiscuous, and set her there. Awful pretty and serious she looked.

"If only we could talk to her," says Mis' Sykes, grieving. "Ladies, any of you know any foreign sentences?"

All any of us could get together was terra cotton and delirium tremens. So we left it go, and just stood and looked at her, and smiled at her, and clucked at the little boy, and at all her little folks that come around her in the booth, under the different flags.

"We'll call her Democracy!" says Marne Holcomb, that often blazes up before the match is lit. "Why not call her the Spirit of Democracy, in the newspaper write-up?"

With that Mis' Sykes kind of stopped winking and breathing, in a way she has.

"My land," she says, "but *s'pose he's an enemy baby and she's his enemy ma?*"

There hadn't one of us thought of that. For all we had made out, they might be anything. We got hold of Mis' Poulaki and Mis' Amachi, hot foot.

"Ast her what she is," we told them. "Ast her what country it is she comes from."

"Oh," says Mis' Poulaki, "that we know already. They're Lithuanians – that is what they are."

Lithuanians. Where was it? Us ladies drew together still more close. Was Lithuanians central power or was it ally? Us ladies ain't so very geographical, and not one of us knew or could make out.

"Say," says Mis' Toplady finally, "shut up, all of us. If it gets around for folks to wonder at – Why, my land," she says, "their bunk car's burned up anyhow, ain't it? Let's us shut up."

And so we done. And everybody was up around the Foreign Booth. And the Friendship Village booth was most forgot.

All of a sudden, somebody started up "America." I don't know where they'd learned it. There aren't so very many chances for such as these to learn it very good. Some of them couldn't say a word of it, but they could all keep in tune. I saw the side faces of the Flats folks and the bunk car folks, while they hummed away, broken, at that tune that they knew about. Oh, if you want to know what to do next with your life, go somewhere and look at a foreigner in this country singing "America," when he doesn't know you're looking. I don't see how we rest till we get our land a little more like what he thinks it is. And while I was listening, it seemed as if Europe was there in the room.

It was while they were singing that the magic began to work in us all. I remember how it started.

"Oh," says Mis' Toplady, "ladies! Think of that little boy, and the other folks, living in those bunk cars. Don't it seem as if, while they're here, us ladies could – "

"Don't it?" I says.

"And the little skinny ones down on the Flats," Mis' Toplady whispers pretty soon. "Can't some of us teach them women how to feed them better and cost no more?"

"And take care of them when they're sick," says Mame Holcomb. "I shouldn't wonder if they die when they don't need to, all day long."

We see ideas gathering back of one another's eyes. And all of a sudden I thought of something else. "Ladies," I says, "and get sewerage down there on the Flats! Don't it belong there just exactly as much as in the residence part?"

Us ladies all looked at each other. We'd just taken it for granted the Flats shouldn't have sewerage and should have the skeptic tank.

"Say," says Mis' Toplady, "it don't look to me like we'd have a very hard time knowing what to do with ourselves, now this war is over."

"The mornings," says Mame Holcomb, "when we use' to wake up, crazy to start in on something – it looks to me like they ain't all through with yet!"

"The meetings," says Mis' Toplady, "when Baptists and Catholics and Elks – "

Mis' Sykes was listening. It ain't very often that she comes down off her high horse, but when she does, I tell you she lands hard.

"Ladies!" she says. "It was me that was talking about beginning to knit for another war. Why didn't you shut me up and bolt the door?"

THE STORY OF JEFFRO ³

When I have told this story of Jeffro, the alien, some one has always said:

"Yes, but there's another side to that. They aren't all Jeffros."

When stories are told of American gentleness, childlike faith, sensitiveness to duty, love of freedom, I do not remember to have heard any one rejoin:

"Yes, but Americans are not all like that."

So I wonder why this comment should be made about Jeffro.

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I

When Jeffro first came knocking at my door that Spring morning, he said that which surprised me more than anything that had been said to me in years. He said:

"Madam, if you have a house for rent – a house for rent. Have you?"

For years nobody had said that to me; and the little house which I own on the Red Barns road, not far from the schoolhouse, was falling in pieces because I never could get enough ahead to mend it up. In the road in front of it there was a big hole that had never been filled in. And the house only had two rooms anyway – and a piece of ground about as big as a rug; and the house was pretty near as old as the ground was.

"Land," I says, "man, you don't want to rent that house?"

He smiled, nice and wrinkled and gentle, and said yes, he did; and nothing that I, as my own real estate agent, could say discouraged him. Even when I'd whipped off my kitchen apron and found the key to the little house in my button-box, and had gone down the road with him to look the house over, and let him see what it was like, he insisted that he wanted to rent it. And so in the end he done: at four dollars a month, which wasn't much more than, by rights, the sale price should have been.

"I do little things to this house," said Jeffro. "I make little change for good. I have some handy with a hammer."

I remember turning back a ways from the house, and seeing him standing there, with his hands behind him, looking at the house as if it *was* something, and something of his.

When I got home and was up in the garret hunting up the three green paper shades for his windows, it come to me that I hadn't asked him for any references, and that for all I knew he might be going to counterfeit money or whisky or something there on the premises. But anybody'd known better than that just to look at Jeffro's face. A wonderful surprised face he had; surprised, but believing it all too, and trusting the good. A brown face, with big, brown eyes, and that wrinkled smile of his. I like to think about him.

After a few days I went over with the shades, and he'd got a few pieces of furniture there, setting round, loose and unattached. And on a big basket of stuff was sitting a little boy, about eight years old.

"That's Joseph," says Jeffro, simple. "We are the two that came."

Then he told me. In "the old country" his wife and two little ones were waiting till he could earn money to send back for them.

"I thought when I had thes' little follow here," he said, "I could work then more easy. He don't eat but little," he added.

"But how," says I, "are you expecting to earn all that money out of Friendship Village – where folks saves for years to put on a new stoop?"

At this he smiled, sort of knowing. And he pointed to a poster over his wood-box. It was printed in Yiddish, all but the words "United States"; but the picture – that was plain enough. It showed a mill on one side of the street, and a bank on the other. And from the mill a stream of workingmen, with bags of money on their backs, were streaming over toward the bank.

"That was put up on my cow-shed at home," said Jeffro. "I have brought it. But I have no trade – I can not earn money fast like those. I make the toys."

He threw open the door into the only other room of the house. In it was piled dozens of boxes, and some broad shelves to be put up, and a table was covered with colored stuff. "Then I go up to the city and sell," said he. "It is only five miles. But I can not live there – not with thes' boy. I say, 'I vill find some little cheap place out in the country for us two.' So then I come here. I am now in America five weeks," he added, proud.

"Five weeks!" says I. "Then where'd you learn to talk American?"

"I have study and save' for six-seven years, to be ready," said Jeffro, simple. "Now I come. Next year I think I send for them."

All day long those words of his kept coming and ringing in my ears. And it kind of seemed to me that in them was a great chorus – a chorus of thousands going up that minute, and this minute, and all the time, all over America:

"Now I come. Next year I think I send for them."

And I says to myself: "What's America going to do for him? What's America going to do to him? What are we going to do to him? And what is he going to do for us?"

Well, the story of the first few weeks of Jeffro's in Friendship Village is for me a kind of window set in the side-wall of the way things are.

One morning, a little before nine o'clock, I had to go to the schoolhouse to see Miss Mayhew. When I went by Jeffro's I didn't see anything of him, but when I got along by the schoolhouse grounds, there I saw him, leaning on the fence under the locust-tree.

"Good morning, Mr. Jeffro," I says. "Do the children bother you down to your house with their noise? That's one reason my house used to be so hard to rent, it was so close by the schoolhouse."

His face, when he turned to me, startled me.

"Bother me!" he said, slow. "Every day I come across to look at them near. To see them – it is a vonder. Thes' big building, thes' big yard, thes' children that do no vork, only learn, learn. And see – Joseph is there. Over by the swing – you see him? He learn, too – my Joseph – I do not even buy his books. It is free – all free. I am always vatching them in thes' place. It is a vonder."

Then one night, when he had been there about two weeks, Jeffro's house caught fire. A candle that he used for melting his wax tipped over on his toy shavings and blazed up. Timothy Toplady, driving by, heard him shout, and galloped into town for the department, and they went tearing out Red Barns way soon after Jeffro had the fire put out. He was making toys again when the fire-engine drew up at his gate, and the men came trampling up to his porch, wanting the blaze pointed out to them. Bud Miles, that's in the department, told me how Jeffro stood in the door bowing to them and regretting the trouble he'd made, and apologizing to them for not having any fire ready for them to put out.

And the next day Jeffro walked into the engine house and asked the men sitting round with their heels up how much he owed them.

"For what?" says they.

"For putting down my fire," Jeffro says. "That is, for coming to put it down if I had one."

The men stared at him and burst out laughing. "Why nothing," they said. "That don't cost anything. That's free."

Jeffro just stood and looked at them. "Free?" he said. "But the big engine and the wagons and the men and the horses – does nobody pay them to come and put down fires?"

"Why, the town does," they told him. "The town pays them."

He said eagerly: "No, no – you have not understood. I pay no taxes – I do not help that way with taxes. Then I must pay instead – no?"

They could hardly make him understand. All these big things put at his service, even the town fire-bell rung, and nothing to pay for it. His experience with cities was slight, in any case. He went off, looking all dazed, and left the men shouting. It seemed such a joke to the men that it shouldn't be all free. It seemed so wonderful to Jeffro that it should.

He hadn't gone half a block from the engine-house when he turned round and went back.

"The gentlemen have not understood," he said. "I am not yet a citizen. I have apply for my first papers, but I am not yet a citizen. Whoever is not citizen must pay for this fire attention. Is it not so?"

Then they shouted again. Think of stopping to find out whether a man was a citizen before they put his fire out! Everybody in Friendship Village was telling that to each other for weeks, and splitting their sides over it.

Less than a couple of weeks afterward Jeffro got a letter from home, from his wife. Postmaster Silas Sykes handed it out to him when Jeffro come in the post-office store for some groceries, and when he started to pay for the groceries Jeffro says:

"How much on the letter?"

"Why, they's nothing due on that," says Silas, squinting at it over the sugar-barrel.

"But thes' is only old country stamp on here," said Jeffro. "It is not enough for all this way in America too?"

Silas waved his hand at him like the representative of the gover'ment he was. "Your Uncle Sam pays for all that," says he.

Jeffro looks at him a minute, then he says: "Uncle Sam – is that, then, a person? I see the pictures – "

"Sure, sure," says Silas, winking to Timothy Toplady that stood by. "Uncle Sam takes grand care of us, you bet."

"I am not yet a citizen," Jeffro insisted. "I have apply for my first papers – "

"Go 'long," says Silas, magnificent. "Do you s'pose Uncle Sam bothers himself about that? You belong to his family as soon as you strike shore."

Timothy Toplady told me about it. "And," says he, "do you know that man went out of the store looking perfectly queer! And kind of solemn."

All these things begun to open my eyes. Here, all my life, I'd been taking things for granted. My school-days, the fire-engine, postage-stamps, and all the rest, I'd took for granted, just like this generation is taking for granted aëroplanes. And all of a sudden now, I see how they were: not gifts to me, but powers of the big land. I'd always thought of a village as a person. But a Big Land – that had powers too! And was developing more as fast as its folks would let it.

And it was wonderful consoling. It helped me over more than I can tell. When Silas Sykes give light measure on my sugar and oatmeal, thinks I:

"Well, you're just a little piece of the Big Land's power of business – and it ain't grown yet. It's only just growing."

And when the Friendship Village Married Ladies' Cemetery Improvement Sodality – that's just the name of it and it works at more things than just cemetery – when it had spent five years studying our gover'ment, and then turned around and created an executive board whose reports to the Society of Forty had to be made unanimous – I says to myself:

"Well, the club's just a little piece of the Big Land's power of democracy, and it ain't grown yet. It's only just growing."

And when the Friendship Village chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to leave us ladies borrow their copy of the American flag because they revered it so hard they were afraid it would get tore, I says to myself:

"But it's just a little scrap of the Big Land's power of patriotism to the universe, and it ain't grown yet only just to one country – and not entirely to that."

And it made me see things intimate and tender. And it was Jeffro that did that for me.

That summer he come to kind of belong to the town, the way a hill or a tree does, only lots more so. At first, folks used to call him "that Jew peddler," and circus day I heard Mis' Sykes saying we better lock up our doors during the parade, because we didn't know what "that foreigner" might take it in his head to do.

"Mis' Sykes," says I, "where were your mother and father born?"

"New York state," says she, like the right answer.

"And their folks?" I went on.

"Massachusetts," says she, like she was going to the head now sure.

"And *their* folks?" I continued, smooth. "Where'd *they* come from?"

Mis' Sykes began to wobble. "Well," says she, "there was three brothers come over together – "

"Yes," I says, "I know. There always is. Well, where'd they come from? And where'd their folks come from? Were they immigrants to America, too? Or did they just stay foreigners in England or Germany or Scandinavia or Russia, maybe?" says I. "Which was it?"

Mis' Sykes put on her most ancestral look. "You can ask the most personal questions, Calliope," she began.

"Personal," says I. "Why, I dunno. I thought that question was real universal. For all we know, it takes in a dozen nations with their blood flowing, sociable, in with yours. It's awful hard for any of us," I says, "to find a real race to be foreign to. I wouldn't bet I was foreign to no one," says I, "nor that no one was foreign, for certain, to me."

"I shall lock my door circus day, just the same," says Mis' Sykes.

"Do," says I. "Circuses is likely to be followed up by hoodlums. And I've known them to be native-born, now and again."

But after a while, in spite of his being a foreigner, most everybody got to like Jeffro. You couldn't help it – he was so patient and ready to believe. And the children – the children that like your heart – they all loved him. They would follow him along the curb, and he'd set down and show them his pack – time and again I've come on him in a shady side-street opening his pack for them. And sometimes when he had a new toy made, he'd walk up to the schoolhouse a-purpose to show it to them, and they'd all crowd round him, at recess.

On account of that, the children's folks took to noticing him and speaking to him. And folks done little things for him and for Joseph. Abigail Arnold, that keeps the home bakery, she had him make a wooden bridal pair for the top of the wedding-cake she keeps permanent in her show window; Mis' Timothy Toplady had him do little odd jobs around their place, and she'd pay him with a cooked chicken. He'd show most all of us the picture of his little young wife and the two children —

"I declare," says Mis' Toplady, kind of wondering, "since I've seen the picture of his wife and babies he don't seem to me much more foreign than anybody else."

I happened over to Jeffro's one morning with a loaf of my brown bread and a half a johnny-cake. He seemed to know how to cook pretty well, but still I felt more or less sorry for him and the little boy, and I used to take them in a thing or two less than half occasionally. When I stepped up to the door that night I heard him singing – he used to sing low, funny songs while he worked. And when he opened the door for me, all of a sudden he blushed to the top of his face. And he bowed his funny, stiff way, and says:

"Vell, I see I blush like boys. It is because I was singing a little – vat-you-call, lull'by. Ven I make the toys I am always thinking how little children vill go to sleep holding vat I make, and sometimes I put in lull'bies, in case there is no mother to sing them."

That was like Jeffro. I mention it because Jeffro was just like that.

I'd set down the bread and the johnny-cake, and he'd thanked me – Jeffro always thanked folks like he'd just been give a piece of new life with every kindness – and I dunno but he had – I dunno but we all have; and I'd started to go, when he says hesitating:

"I have wanted to ask you thes': If I vork at that bad place in the road in front – if I bring sand from the hill behind, what I can, and fill in that hole, slow, you know – but some every day – you would not mind?"

"Mind?" says I. "Why, my, no. But it's part the village's business to do that. You're in the village limits, you know. It'd ought to been done long ago."

"The village?" said he. "But it is your place. Why should the village fix that hole?"

"It's the village's business," I told him, "to keep the streets good. Most of them do it pretty lackadaisical, but it's their business to do it."

His face lit up like turning up the wick. "Nu!" he cried. "So I vill do. I thought it would be you I am doing it for, and I vas glad. But if it is the village, then I am many times more glad of that."

It wasn't much of a compliment to a lady, but I thought I see what he meant.

"Why are you glad, Mr. Jeffro," I says, to make sure, "that it's the village?"

"It does all the things for me," he says, simple. "The fire-engine, the post-office – even the telephone is free to me in the village. So it is America doing this for me; for thes' village, it belongs to America. There is no army that I go in or pay to keep out of – there are no soldiers that are jostling me in the streets – they do not even make me buy and put up any flag. And my little Joseph, all day long he is learning. And the people – here they call me 'Mr.' All is free – free. For all thes' I pay nothing. And now you tell me here is a hole that it is the village business to fill up. It is the business of America to fill up that hole! Vell, I can make that my business, for a little – what-you-say —*pay-back*."

It was awful hard to know what to say. I wonder what you'd have said? I just stood still and kept still. Because, if I'd known what to say, it would have been pretty hard, just then, to say it anyway.

"It is a luck for the folks," he said, "that their own vork lets them make some paying back. My toys, they don't pay back, not very much. I must find another vay."

He followed me out on the stoop.

"There is von thing they vill let me do after a vile, though," he said, with a smile. "In America, I hear everybody make von long, strong groaning about their taxes. Those taxes, ven vill they come? And are they so very big, then? They must be very big to pay for all the free things."

"Why, Mr. Jeffro," I said, "but you won't have any taxes."

"But I am to be a citizen!" he cried. "Every citizen pays his taxes."

"No," I told him. "No, they don't. And unless you own property or – or something," says I, stumbling as delicate as I could, "you don't pay any taxes at all, Mr. Jeffro."

When I made him know that sure, he lifted his arms and let them drop; and he come on down the path with me, and he stood there by the syringa bush at the gate, looking off down the little swelling hill to where the village nestled at the foot. School was just out, and the children were flooding down the road, and the whole time was peaceful and spacious and close-up-to, like a friend. We stood still for a minute, while I was thinking that; and when I turned to Jeffro, he stood with the tears running down his cheeks.

"To think there is such a place," he said reverently. "And me in it. And them going to be here." Then he looked at me like he was seeing more than his words were saying. "I keep thinking," he said, "how hard God is vorking, all over the earth – and how good He's succeeded here."

Up to the gate run little Joseph, his school-books in his arms. Jeffro put both hands on the boy.

"Little citizen, little citizen," his father said. And it was like one way of being baptized.

II

When I was a little girl, a cardinal bird came one summer and nested in our yard. They almost never come so far north, and I loved him like a friend. When autumn came, the other birds all went, but he didn't go. And one day, in the first snow and high wind, he was storm-beaten into our little porch, and we caught him. We dare not let him go, in the cold. So we kept him until he died. I shall never forget the change that the days made. I cannot bear to tell or to think about the change in him that the days made. That is why I will never have about me a caged thing, bird or beast or spirit. The cardinal helped me to understand. I wonder if the death of any beauty or any life is as much Nature's will as we still think it is...

This is why I shrink from telling what next happened to Jeffro – what I knew must happen to him if he came here and lived the life of his kind – of my kind. Lived it, I mean, with his eyes open. There are plenty who live it and never know anything about it, after all. But Jeffro would know. He had seeing eyes, and his heart was the heart of a child, and his face was always surprised – surprised, but believing it all too, and trusting the good. He trusted the good just as you and I did, in the beginning. Just as you and I do, in the end. But in between the two trusts there comes a black time; and if it hasn't come to you, then you don't know the Big Land; and you don't see what's going on in it; and you haven't questioned where it's all going to lead. As, after a while, Jeffro questioned it.

All summer he worked at his toys, and all the autumn. But when winter began to come, the little house was hard to heat. The roof was decayed, the windows were shrunken, the floor was in a draft from all four directions; and I didn't have the money to make the house over – which was just about what it needed. I offered to rent him and the little boy a room in my house, and to let him do his work there; but it was far for the little fellow to go to school. And just then came the Offer.

A man from a mining town in the next state gave Jeffro a chance to go there with him, and he'd give him work in the mines all winter. Jeffro listened, and heard about the good pay, and the plain, hearty food, and the chance to get ahead; and Miss Mayhew said she'd keep the little boy; and Jeffro thought about the cold little house, and feeding himself all winter, and about standing on street corners with his pack; and there was Miss Mayhew's nice, warm house and woman-care for the little boy. And in the end Jeffro went. I told him to leave his things in the little house and I wouldn't charge him rent, which it wasn't worth it.

The night before he started he come round to my house to say good-by. He thanked me, so nice, for what I'd done, off and on. And then he pulled something out of his pocket.

"Look!" he said. "It is from the National Bank. It is my bank-book – the proofs that I have money there. Here is my checker book," said he. "You know how these things go. See that!" His eyes got big and deep. "They give me credit – and thes' two books," he said. "And they vill give me interest on thes' little money. It vill make money for me vile I am gone. It is a vonder. I ask' them vat there is to pay for this chance, and the man laughed. And see – all the vile I am gone, Joseph vill be learning free. I pay no more than his little board. It is a vonder."

He showed me the entry, thirty-seven dollars, his summer's savings. He had had to keep back the amount of his fare.

"The ticket is much," he said, "but thes' vay I can save enough by spring so they can come. They can live in your little house – oh, it is a plenty room. Ve shall have a little garden – as big as Joseph's plate! She vill keep a little coop of chickens – "

So he ran on with his happy planning. I remember how he looked when he left my house that night – his two books tightly clasped, his shoulders back, his head full of dreams, his face sort of held up to the stars. I never saw him that way again.

It was a long winter. It's strange how the calendar sets down winter as just being three months when everybody that's lived through one knows how it's either long or short and never, never clipped

right off at the three months, same as the almanac would have you believe. This one was long, and it was white, and it was deep. It kept me shoveling coal and splitting kindling and paying for stove-wood and warming my feet, and it seemed to me that was pretty near all I did do those months. It's surprising and it's discouraging how much of our lives goes along just doing the little fussy things necessary to keep a-going, that you can't count in on just pure, sheer living.

"Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, and eight hours for exercise," they used to tell me; and I used to think: "Yes, but what about just messing-round?" That don't get itself counted in at all, and that just eats up time by the dialful. And I think, if you look close, that one of the things we've got to learn is how to do less of the little hectoring, wearing messing-round, and to do more of the big, plain, real, true, unvarnished living – like real work, and real play, and real talk, and real thinking. And fewer little jobs – fewer little jobs.

But after a while the winter got done, and early April came – a little faint green down below, a little fine gold up above, and a great wide wash of pale blue at the top; Spring in three layers.

I'd been often to see Joseph, and he was well, and in the reader ahead of the reader a boy of his age would naturally have been in. He had had several short letters from his father, and I was looking to have one of them say when we might expect him, but none of them did.

Then in April no letter came. We thought it meant that he'd be home. I'd been over and cleaned the little house. And then when April was almost to a close, and he hadn't come yet, I saw it would be too late for his garden, so I planted that – a few vegetables, and a few flowers, and a morning-glory or two over the stoop. And I laid in a few canned things in his cupboard, so's he would have something to start in on.

May came, and we wondered. Then one day there was a letter in a strange writing. Jeffro was in the hospital, it said, and he wanted to send word that he was all right and would send a letter himself in a little while. That was all that it told us.

Everybody in Friendship Village remembers that spring, because it was the year the bank closed down. Nobody knew the reason. Some day, when the world gets really to going, one of the things they'll read about in musty books and marvel over will be the things we call panics. They'll know then that, put simple, it's just another name for somebody's greed, dressed up becoming as Conditions. We're beginning now to look at the quality of the clothes Conditions dress in, and we're finding them pretty poor quality sometimes, and cut awful old-fashioned, and the dye rubs off. But in those days, all we knew was that the bank had "suspended payment."

"But what's that mean – 'suspended payment?'" I says to Silas Sykes that told me. "You can't suspend your debts, can you? I never could."

"It means," Silas says, "that they'll never pay a cent on the dollar. That's what it means."

"But," I says, "I don't understand. If I owe you ten dollars, I can't put down my curtain and suspend *that* payment, *can* I?"

"Well, you ain't banks," says Silas. "And banks is."

I was walking away and thinking it over, when I stopped stock-still in the street. The National Bank – it was the National Bank that Jeffro had his thirty-seven dollars in.

I felt as if I had to do something for him, then and there. And that afternoon I took my trowel and went up to his little place, and thought I'd dig round some in the garden that was coming up, gay as a button.

When I stepped inside the gate, I looked up at the house, and I saw the front door was open. "Land," I thought, "I hope they haven't stole what little he had in there, too." And I stepped up to the door.

In the wooden chair in the middle of the floor sat Jeffro. His hat was pulled down over his eyes, his legs were thrust out in front of him, one of his arms was hanging down, and the other one was in a white sling.

"Mr. Jeffro – Mr. Jeffro!" I says. "Oh – what's the matter?"

He looked up, and his face never changed at sight of me, nor he never got up or moved. And his look – well, it wasn't the look of Jeffro any more than feathers have the look of a bird. But one thing I knew about that look – he was hungry. I could tell that look anywhere, because I've been hungry myself, with no food coming from anywheres.

I flew to the cupboard where I'd put in the few things, and in a jiffy I had some soup heating and a box of crackers opened. I brought the bowl to the table, all steaming and good-smelling, and he drew up there without a word and ate with his hat on – ate like I never saw a man eat before.

When he got through: "Tell me about it, Mr. Jeffro," I says. And he told me.

It wasn't anything very new. Jeffro had been in the mines since the first of November, and the first of January the strike had begun – the strike against a situation that Jeffro drew for me that afternoon, telling it without any particular heat, but just plain and quiet. He told me how he had gone with some of the men to the house of one of the owners to talk of settlement.

"I spoke out to him once," said Jeffro. "I said: 'Will *you* tell me how this is? They can not make me understand. America gives me free all the things that I did not expect: The fire-engine, it takes no pay. My little boy's school costs me not anything. When I come to this state I have no passport to get, and they did not search me at the frontier. All this is very free. But when we want more bread, and we are willing to work for it all day long with our hands, you will not let us have more, even then. Even when we pay with work. Will you tell me how this is?'"

Of all that the man had said to him, kindly enough, Jeffro understood nothing. And he could speak the language, while many of the men in the mines could not say one word of English.

"But they could strike in Russian and Polish and Lithuanian," Jeffro said, "and they did."

Then came the soldiers. Jeffro told me about that.

"Ve vere standing there outside the Angel mine," he said, "to see that nobody vent to vork and spoiled our hopes, ven somebody cried out: 'The soldiers!' Many of the men ran – I did not know vy. Here was some of the United States army. I had never seen any of the army before. I hurried toward them, my cap in my hand. I saw their fine uniforms, their fine horses, this army that was kept to protect me, a citizen, and vich I did not have to pay. I stood bowing. My heart felt good. They had come to help us then – free! And then somebody cried. 'He's one of the damned, disorderly picketers. Arrest him!' And they did; and nothing I could say vould make them understand. I vas in jail four days, but all those days I thought it vas a mistake. I smiled to think how sorry they vould be ven they found out they had arrested von they were paid to protect – free."

He told me how there went on the days, the weeks, of the strike; hunger, cold; the militia everywhere. The little that Jeffro had earned was spent, dime by dime. He stayed on, hoping for the settlement, certain that it would all be right as soon as everybody "understood."

"It vas this vay," he said laboriously. "Mine-owners and money and militia vere here. Over here vere the men. Vrong vas done on both sides – different kinds of vrong. The sides could not speak together clear. No von understood no von."

Then a miner had resisted an officer who tried to arrest him, the officer fired, and Jeffro had the bullet in his shoulder, and had been locked up for being "implicated" – "I don't know yet vat they mean by that long vord," Jeffro said – and had been taken to the courthouse and later to the hospital. On his discharge, eight days ago, he had started to walk home to Friendship Village.

"To-morrow," Jeffro said, "I vill get out from the bank my money – I have not touched that – and send to her vat I have. It may be she has saved a little bit. Somehow she vill come. To-morrow I vill get it, as soon as the bank is open."

I knew I had to tell him – I knew I had to tell him right then. "Mr. Jeffro – Mr. Jeffro," I said, "you can't. You can't get your money. The bank's failed."

He looked at me, not understanding.

"Vat is that?" he said. "'Failed' – for a bank?"

"I don't know what it is," I told him. "It's something banks can do. You never can tell when. And this one has done it."

"But," he cried, "vat do you mean? It vas the *National Bank*! This nation can not fail!"

"This much of it has," I says. "The bank's shut up tight. Everybody that had money in it has lost it – unless maybe they pay back to each one just a little bit."

He stood up then and looked at me as if I were strange. "Then this too," he says, "can happen in America. And the things I see all winter – the soldiers to shoot you down?"

"No, no," I says. "You mustn't think –"

"I do not think," says Jeffro. "I know. I have seen. I am there ven it happens. And more that I did not tell. In March a man came to me ven I was hungry, and tried to buy my vote. Ven I understood, I struck him in his face, just the same as if I have von. But I saw men sell their vote, and laugh at it. And now I understand. You throw dust in our eyes, free fire-engines, free letter-carriers, free this and free that, and all the time somebody must be laughing somewhere at how it makes us fools. I hate America. Being free here, it is a lie!"

And me, I set still, trying to think. I set looking at the bright-colored poster that Jeffro had found on his cow-shed in the old country, and I was trying to think. I knew that a great deal of what he'd said was true. I knew that folks all over the country were waking up and getting to know that it was true. And yet I knew that it wasn't all the truth. That there was more, and that something had got to make him know. But what was going to do that?

Faint and high and quite a ways off, I heard a little call. It wasn't much of a call, but when another came and then another, it set my heart to beating and the blood to rushing through me as though it was trying to tell me something.

I stood up and looked. And up the street I saw them – running and jumping, shouting little songs and laughing all the way – the children, coming out of the Friendship Village schoolhouse, there at the top of the hill. And in a minute it came over me that even if I couldn't help him, there was something to do that mebbe might comfort him some, just now, when he was needing it.

I stepped to the door, and up by the locust-tree I see Joseph coming. I could pick out his little black head and his bobbed hair and his red cheeks. And I called to him.

"Joseph, Joseph!" I says. "You come over here – and have the rest come too!"

He came running, his eyes beginning to shine. And the others came running and followed him, eager to know what was what. And up the road a piece I see some more coming, and they all begun to run too.

Joseph ran in the gate ahead of everybody, and past me, and in at the door that was close to the road. And he threw away his book, and ran to his father, and flung both arms around his neck. And the rest all came pressing up around the door, and when they see inside, they set up a shout:

"It's the Present-man! It's the Present-man! He's back a'ready!"

Because I guess 'most every one of them there had had something or other of Jeffro's making for Christmas. But I'd never known till that minute, and neither had he, that they'd ever called him that. When he heard it, he looked up from Joseph, where he stood holding him in his arms almost fierce, and he come over to the door. And the children pressed up close to the door, shouting like children will, and the nearest ones shook his hand over Joseph's shoulder.

And me, all of a sudden I shouted louder'n they did: "Who you glad to see come home?"

And they all shouted together, loud as their lungs: "*The Present-man! The Present-man!*"

And then they caught sight of Miss Mayhew, coming from the school, and they all ran for her, to tell her the news. And she came in the gate to shake hands with him. And then in a minute they all trooped off down the road together, around Miss Mayhew, one or two of them waving back at him.

Then I turned round and looked at Jeffro.

"Why, they have felt – felt glad to see me!" he says, breathless. And back to his face came creeping some of the old Jeffro look.

"Why, they are glad," says I. "We all are. We've missed you like everything – trudging along with your toys."

Joseph wasn't saying a word. He was just snuggling up, nosing his father's elbow, like a young puppy. Jeffro stood patting him with his cracked, chapped hand. And Jeffro was looking down the road, far as he could watch, after the children.

"I've got a little canned stuff there in the cupboard for your suppers," I says, not knowing what else to say. "And I stuck a few things in the ground for you out there, that are coming up real nice – potatoes and onions and a cabbage or two. And they's a little patch of corn that'll be along by and by."

All of a sudden Jeffro turned his back to me and walked a few steps away. "A garden?" he says, not looking round. "A little garden?"

"Kind of a one," I told him. "Such as it is, it's all right – what there is of it. And Abigail Arnold," I says, "wants you should make her another wooden bridal pair for the cake in the window – the groom to the other one is all specked up. And I heard her say you could set some of your toys there in her front case. Oh yes, and Mis' Timothy Toplady's got a clucking hen she's been trying to hold back for you, and she says you can pay her in eggs – "

I stopped, because Jeffro frightened me. He wheeled round and stood looking out the door across the pasture opposite, and his lips were moving. I thought maybe he was figuring something with them, and I kept still. But he wasn't – he was thinking with them. In a minute he straightened up. And his face – it wasn't brave or confident the way it had been once, but it was saying a thing for him – a nice thing, even before he spoke.

He came and put out his hand to me, round Joseph. "My friend," he says, "I will tell you what it is. Thes' is what I thought America was like."

Wasn't that queer, when I understood all he had hoped from America, and all he hadn't found? A lump come in my throat – not a sad one though! But a glad one. And oh, the difference in them lumps!

He went back to work at his toys again, and he began at the bottom, a whole year after his first coming, to save up money to bring over his wife and the little ones. And it wasn't two weeks later that I went there one night and saw him out working on the hole in the road again.

"I work for you this time, though," he said, when he see I noticed. "Thes' I do not for America – no! I do it for you and for thes' village. No one else."

And I thought, while I watched him pounding away at the dirt:

"Anybody might think Friendship Village knows things America hasn't found out yet – but of course that can't be so."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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