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Forest Hills, November 10, 1923

Dear Art Young,

My days have been so busy since we dropped you in the Redding road last summer that I have not had a moment's time to inquire whether you ever reached the shelter of your great spruce.-- It is a spruce, is it not, that stands guard at your door. I had not realized until I started to write how long it had been ! Now my countenance is covered with confusion. How should one write to a friend who may have been lost in the wilds of Connecticut for upwards of two months? Should one indulge in belated anxiety and consolation, or should one assume that all is right with one's friend, since God is still in His heaven? How would the "Poor Fish" solve my dilemma? Methinks I hear him gurgle as he swims and splashes in the deep Pool of Wisdom,-- "Something tells me Art Young is safe. When the smoke of remorse clears away, you will probably see him standing at his south door, waiting for you."

I like to think of you framed in that south door, with the sunshine warm on the granite step and the morning-glories smiling up at you. I wish we were endowed with spiritual minds, so that those we love might perceive our thoughts and feelings as they come warm and tender into our consciousness. Then there would be no need of letters. Oh, what happiness it would be at this moment if I could be conscious of the beautiful or fantastic picture which is being etched upon your brain !



I should then be seeing through your eyes, and feeling the loveliness of things through your heart.

My teacher and I often speak of our invasion of your "Summer-Time"-- how dear and cordial you were to the gypsy bunch who descended upon you from the north like a flock of hungry birds, how you took us in, fed us and made us feel cosy and happy under your roof. That was an unforgettable evening we spent together in the quaint little study where you write and make pictures. As you talked to us of your work, of the grotesque creatures which inhabit trees, and appear at dusk to those who have eyes to see, of the buried life in the heart of each one of us-- the thoughts that are forever silent, the emotions, the tenderness, the longings we never express-- there was revealed a hidden Art Young who dwells apart in a seclusion deep as my own. It is strange, is it not, how alive, how perverse this hidden self is ! Sometimes it is like a flickering shadow of ourselves. Sometimes it is harder to keep down than the wild steer which the cow-boy throws in the show. It is difficult to put these things into words, although they are very real to me. That is why we so often conceal the best that is in us from the eyes of those we love most. It is not meant, I think, that in this world we should eat of the bread that satisfies, or drink of the water which quenches the deepest thirst.

Since writing the above, I have had a glorious sun-bath in my wee garden. Of course it is not exactly like "rolling down a Connecticut hill," billowing with goldenrod and sweet with new-mown hay.



But the sun is just as kindly here as it was on your door-step. I am always a little sad when the pearly gates of summer close. Then is the world full of farewells.

"The plumage drops from off my wings

Life and its humbler tasks henceforth are mine."

Just now the world is full of tragic premonitions as well as farewells to the glad summer-time. For the first time in her history France seems without a ray of light. Her every act betrays the savagery of her heart. Her attitude from first to last has been one of malice and destruction. All the piled-up experience of the past has not taught her that force never permanently settles anything. The effort to overcome evil with evil produces hatred and yet more hatred. No one of the misfortunes that have befallen the world has darkened my spirit so much as the spectacle of France driving Europe to ruin ! I see now that I, with many other admirers of the French people, have overestimated their intelligence, their vision.

Perhaps, though, there is more hope in the situation than we think. Under the turmoil and wreckage the Great Idea may be hastening slowly, with circumspection and invincible tread. May not Russia be the implement shaped by the ages to uproot the jungle which we have made of the earth God gave us to cultivate and to enjoy? Anyway, Russia has become a towering beacon to a world grappling with an unknown destiny. It is this unknown destiny we have now to face-- a destiny which will not stop to argue, will not persuade, will not be deterred by senti-



mental reasons or human agonies, but will stride on and on naked into the lightning-- into the ageless dawn, may we not hope, of a new day when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation any more," and man shall walk the earth with joy in his breast.

I have tried to put into words my idea of what is taking place in the world, not so much for your satisfaction as for my own. When the mind is bewildered by events, torn between a myriad paradoxes, it helps clear one's thoughts to tell them to a friend who will understand.

It is surprising, is it not, that we can be happy and full of the joy of life, no matter how deeply tinged with gloom our musings on the misfortunes of mankind may be ! Out in the morning sunshine, among my chrysanthemums, the old problems pass away, and all things seem new and beautiful.

With affectionate greetings in which my teacher joins, I am,

Sincerely yours,

HELEN KELLER



