Polly Evans' Story Page for Boys and Girls

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Ups and Downs

"LIFE has lots of ups and downs,"
So says Mother dear;
"Lots of smiles and lots of frowns;
Lots of hope and fear."

Think how often tenpins go
Up and down again!
Treated worse than "Life," I know;
Yet THEY don't complain.

The Haunted House

ONE big thing about Skinny is his 'riginality. Fact is, he can work out as many schemes in a minute as all the rest of the "Bloody Robbers" can in an hour. That's one reason why them "Bloody Pirates"—who ain't much account, anyway—never gets ahead of us.

'Course, when the time came to 'nitiate Jim Crawford into the "Robbers," it was Skinny who pervided what Bill Kane calls the ways an' means. We'd saved the 'nitiation until after Washington's Birthday, yuh know, so's not to have all our fun come in a lump.

"Fellers," says Skinny, "let's blindfold Jim an' after it's dark take 'im out to the old haunted house, near Gorman's. Jim's scared to death o' that old house. He told me he once knew a feller who'd seen a spook there, an' that he wouldn't go in for $100."

"Folks do say there's ghosteses and other orful things," chimed in Pete Hamilton.

"Well, you can bet yer life Jim'll let us know mighty quick if there is, for he's a fraidy-cat 'bout ghosts and such things. Maybe, though, he'll be too scared to holler," laughed Jack Warner.

DRAGGED HIM DOWN THE STEPS

So, when the night came for 'nitiation, we led poor, wonderin' Joe out to the edge of town. Here we blindfolded 'im 'fore we went the rest of the way. The old house is on a bluff right by the creek, an' about quarter of a mile from Gorman's farm. Some o' Gorman's folks lived in it long, long ago, but it's been empty for nigh on to fifty years—that is, empty 'cept for rats an' mice an' squirrels an' snakes an' toads an' wasps an' most every other kind of pests. We'd never done more than peek through a broken shutter, but we could see that much even then.

On we went with Jim, not one of us sayin' a single word. His legs began to shake more an' more. Whatever was goin' to happen to him he wanted it over with just as soon as possible. At last, though, we reached the house. An' some o' the other fellers were as trembly as Jim when an ol' owl hooted from the house, as though darin' us to come in.

They got more and more scared, too, so that the upshot o' the matter was that me an' Skinny had to do the whole thing ourselves. We'd already tied Jim's hands behind him, so we had a lot o' trouble 'iftin' him through the broken window. Pete Hamilton then handed us in a lighted candle.

Gosh, you ought to uv seen them rats an' things cut up a fuss! I tell yuh, Skinny an' I didn't feel any too pleasant. But we led 'im up an old pair of rickety steps that like to uv went to pieces every second, up to the old loft above. Here we left Jim an' started down the ladder fast as we could. 'Deed, Skinny was so scared at a bat that flew 'round his head that he tumbled down the last few steps and broke them, an' I missed my footing an' stumbled on top of him. In most cases, we'd had a fight right then and there—'cause Skinny won't let any one fall on top o' him any more than I would—but all we thought of just then was to scoot out o' there. This we did mighty quick. All the rest of the fellers was so scared at the noise that they were 'way off from the house.

But if they were scared, what must Jim uv felt like! 'Fore we even took him in he was so frightened with the fellers a-whisperin' that he could hardly walk. An' the owls an' rats an' bats had taken away the rest of his nerves.

We all waited silent-like. I guess we must uv stood there for 'bout fifteen minutes.

All at once there came an orful yell; then a mixture of shrieks an' barks an' groans an' howls an' squeaks an' bumpin' an' thumpin' that set our hair on end.

"You'd better go in, Bill, an' see what's up," says Skinny, his teeth chattering awful.

"Er—suppose you go this once, Skinny," says I, though I wasn't as 'fraid as he was.

'Fore we had time to argify any further we heard one thud after another, a smash, an' a great rattlin' of chains.

"He's fell down the stairs," whispers Skinny.

Another minute, an' out flew Jim through the winder. His hands were still tied behind him, but somehow the bandage 'round his eyes had worked loose an' we could see his eyes starin' with what Bill says is "mortal terror." But that wasn't all. There was something tied with chains 'round Jim's legs—something that was snappin' and snarlin' and makin' orful sounds.

Jim an' the "thing" rolled right down the bluff almost into the creek. The other fellers had run by this time, but me and Skinny sneaked up to Jim. An' what do yuh think we found? Why, the "ghost" people talked so much about was only Gorman's old dog, Pete, that had broken off his chain and run away a long time ago! His chain had got twisted about Jim's legs, yuh see.

Well, you can just bet we had enough of 'nitiations that night. We had to nearly carry Jim all the way home—an' we didn't feel ourselves as though we had any too much ginger.

However, we'd found out that the Haunted House wasn't haunted after all; an' that's a whole lot.

Timorous Tib

OF ALL the goats on the mountain, Tib was the most timid. He was afraid to take the smallest kind of a leap. And his mother had no end of a time teaching him to climb. Once, as he stood hesitating on a narrow ledge of the mountain, a hunter dropped a noose from above and almost dragged Tib up to him by the horns. It was only by a desperate wriggle that he managed to escape.

Another day all the little mountain goats were playing Follow Your Leader. When it came Tib's turn to stand on a tiny pinnacle on the topmost part of the mountain, his legs trembled so with fright that he fell. Down he rolled, bounding from rock to rock, till at last his horns came in contact with a telegraph wire that wound in and out about the mountain; his horns became fastened in the wire, and there he hung for nearly half a day.

No sooner did he regain the ground than he was seized by a great, big bear. Fortunately, the bear was not hungry at the time. Lifting Tib above his head, he threw the poor goat with all his force against a bank of earth nearby. Tib stuck there by his horns, while the bear ambled off, promising himself a good meal in the evening. Well it was for Tib that he managed to wriggle himself loose.

"AND THERE TIB HUNG"

But ill luck still pursued him. He was captured by a sheep herder and for almost a month compelled to perform the duty of a bootjack, taking off the herder's boots with his horns.

At last, however, Tib escaped and made his way back to the mountain. He found, to his joy, that no longer did he feel afraid, so much had his strange experience done to develop his courage. And "Timorous Tib" became so daring that he was known thereafter as "Courageous Tib."

Mystery of Judith Lee

SYNOPSIS

JUDITH, when a baby, is cast ashore from a shipwreck and adopted by Mr. Lee. She and Tommy Lee grow up together as brother and sister. By accident they fly away in an airship which Tommy's uncle has invented. Landing on a tropical island, they are met by a little girl named Marjory Livingston, who takes them in her little submarine boat to the house of Professor Livingston, built under the sea. The professor remarks how closely Judith resembles his sister, who was supposed to have been lost at sea, together with her baby. A monkey flies away with the airship.

A MONTH had now passed since Tommy and Judith had landed upon the island. And were it not for the thought of the grief of those at home, they would have found their stay entirely pleasant.

Marjory seemed unusually quiet today. They had been spending the morning on the island. As they were about to enter the boat, she said:

"Father told me last evening he hoped to finish his experiment within the next few days, and that he will then take you home. 'Course, I'm glad for you, but you don't know how lonely I'll feel after you're gone."

Before the others could reply there was a sudden grumbling and rumbling. The water over the very place where the house lay rose in a great column, high in the air. Then the water subsided, and all was quiet.

Majory shook in terror. "Oh! I'm sure of it! I'm sure of it! Roberts always told me that some time father would blow himself and the house to pieces with his dangerous experiments!"

Tommy hastily forced the two into the submarine, and climbed into it himself. He could now manage the boat perfectly; and soon they were flying to the scene of the catastrophe. Sad to say, Marjory's fears were realized. Where the splendid house formerly stood, nothing but fragments remained. Other portions of the great building were scattered about the sea. Not a sign was there of Professor Livingston or of Roberts.

Realizing that further search was useless, Tommy steered for the island. Here they did their best to comfort Marjory, who was quite overcome with grief. All that night they remained on the island.

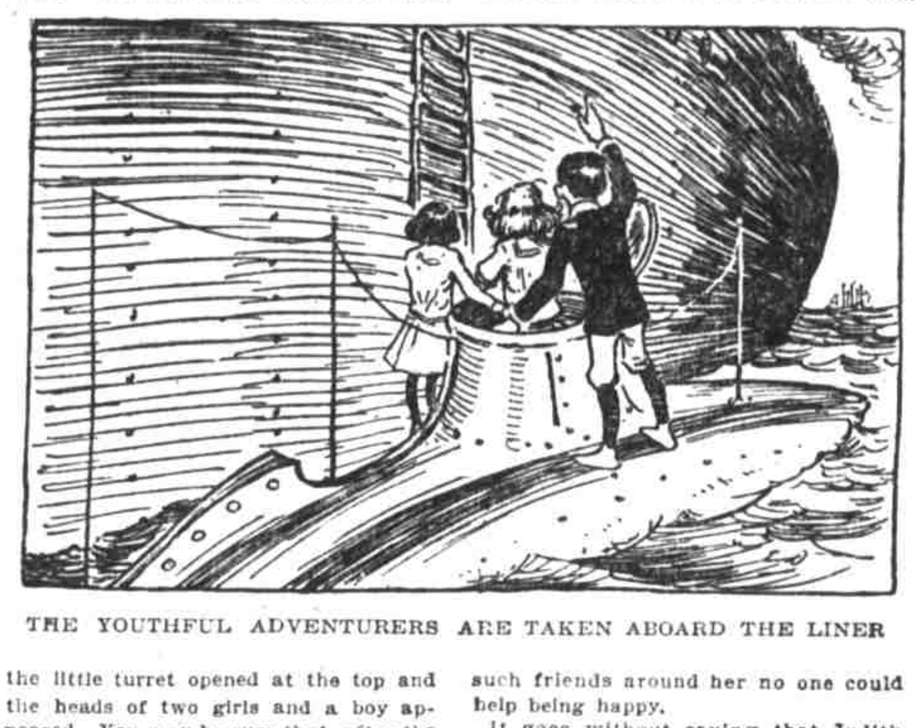
The next morning Tommy observed: "It doesn't seem to me that this island can be very far out of the course of vessels. The best plan, I think, would be to provision the submarine and try to make a trip. Of course, we wouldn't go so far but what we could get back again in time should our food give out."

Judith agreed with Tommy. Marjory, in her sorrow, did not care greatly what became of her, although her friend tried to comfort her with the assurance that she would certainly feel at home with the Lees, and that she would love Mr. and Mrs. Lee.

So the three set out to sea. For three days they traveled swiftly onward. Even the dauntless Tommy was becoming discouraged, and suggested that perhaps they had better turn back to the island, secure other provisions and try their fortune in another direction. But just as they raised the submarine to the surface of the ocean for a final observation, what should they see on the horizon but a tiny speck, that after a while resolved itself into a great ship!

"THE WATER ROSE IN A GREAT COLUMN"

Great was the amazement of the sailors when they saw the queer-shaped craft coming toward them on the surface of the water. Some thought it a whale; others a real sea-serpent. They were still more astonished when the little turret opened at the top and the heads of two girls and a boy appeared. You may be sure that, after the sailors hauled the submarine with its passengers upon deck, they were eager and excited to hear the story the children had to tell.



THE YOUTHFUL ADVENTURERS ARE TAKEN ABOARD THE LINER

The three found that the vessel was en route to San Francisco. This journey ended in due time. Then the captain very kindly wired Mr. Lee and arranged for the trip eastward.

Of course, Mr. and Mrs. Lee were overjoyed to see Tommy and Judith again. And Marjory was at once welcomed into the family and made to feel that she was one of them. Mrs. Lee mothered and petted her to such an extent that Marjory, unaccustomed to a mother's care, loved her with all her starved little soul. The only unhappiness, other than that of Marjory's loss of her father, was caused by the death of Tommy's uncle. The escape of his airship, coupled with the probable death of Tommy and Judith, had driven him violently ill. He was far from strong, and under this blow he sank until death came—shortly before the return of the adventurers.

One day Judith happened to mention to Mr. Lee what Professor Livingston had told her about her looking so much like his sister. Mr. Lee instantly asked question after question. Marjory had told him the name of her wealthy uncle was Henry Forbes, and Mr. Lee had already begun to inquire about such a person.

Judith, observing with surprise what excitement her story had produced, ventured to ask the cause. Thereupon Mr. Lee, after some hesitation, gently told her that she was really not his daughter—though he assured her that both he and Mrs. Lee loved her as one—and that he was inclined to believe that Judith was the daughter of Marjory's uncle.

Judith was greatly shocked at this news. She begged Mr. and Mrs. Lee not to send her away. They tried to point out to her very kindly that, while it would grieve them as much to part with her as it would for her to go, it would be only just that she should live with her father, when he was found.

Mr. Lee discovered in England that the vessel upon which Mrs. Forbes and her baby had sailed years ago was indeed the ill-fated ship that went to pieces within sight of his cottage and from which Judith had been rescued. Altogether this proof, together with the embroidered name on the baby's garment, seemed to establish the fact that Judith was Marjory's cousin.

After much tracing, Mr. Forbes was found to be in Europe. As soon as he received Mr. Lee's communication he started for America. And Judith was forced to admit that her father was just the nicest sort of man. Nor did she have to part from Tommy and Mr. and Mrs. Lee, for Mr. Forbes erected a fine house near the Lees' cottage. Marjory, who, by the way, had fallen heir to much valuable property owned by her father in London, lived with her cousin.

Altogether, it so happened that the airship adventure of Tommy and Judith brought nothing but good luck—except to Tommy's poor uncle, with whom the secret of the wonderful airship died. As for Professor Livingston's death, Marjory sadly observed that she was sure it would happen sooner or later. But Time mercifully lessened Marjory's sorrow, and with such friends around her no one could help being happy.

It goes without saying that Judith and Marjory and Tommy were inseparable chums. What happened to them afterward is another story. Perhaps Polly Evans will tell it to you some time.

A Prince's Reward

WHERE Prince Edward of England goes to school he is obliged, of course, to obey all the customary rules and regulations. So he must fag for the older boys.

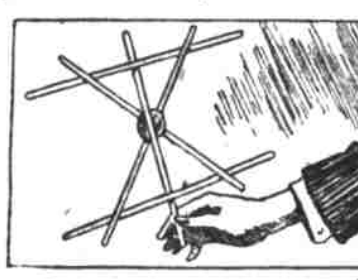
Not long ago he was requested by a superior in class rank to go buy some jam puffs. Prince Edward scurried away on the errand and presently returned with the puffs and threepence change.

When he delivered this change, the older cadet said, with a lordly air, "Keep the change, boy."

And the future ruler of 400,000,000 people calmly pocketed the threepence!

Trick With Straws

IT will require some little patience to arrange the straws, as you see in the picture; but once you have acquired this skill you will be able to surprise your friends by the ease with which you can balance the coin. Indeed, the trick is really harder than would appear from the picture.



BALANCING THE COIN

Ditto.

William has just learned how to use the ditto mark. He thoroughly appreciated its use as a time-saver and determined to put it to account. Therefore, his next letter home read like this:

"Dear Father:
I hope you are well.
" " mother is "
" " sister " "
" " brother " "
I wish you were here.
" " mother was "
" " sister " "
" " brother " "
"WILLIAM."

His Father the En[illegible]

A certain little boy was the son of a Frenchman, but he himself had been born in England and so regarded himself as an Englishman. After he had received his first lessons in English history, he observed triumphantly to his father one day: "Father, we gave you an awful lickin' at the battle of Waterloo, didn't we?"

Unreasonable Baby.

Robert—Pa, baby cried all the time I was eating my cake.

Father—Well, the piece I gave him isn't finished already, is it?

Robert—Yes, sir; and the funny thing about it is that he cried when I ate that, too.

The Artist's Kindness.

Billie—Why, you've drawn that cat with six legs!

Millie—Yes, stupid! So's he can run away from the dogs.

What He Liked Best.

Kindhearted Gentleman—My lad, what are you fondest of at school?

Boy—The holidays, sir.

"Your son," said the professor, "has been laboring under a misapprehension."

"What?" exclaimed the humble but honest parent, with joy in his voice, "ye don't mean it!"

"Mean what?"

"That Josiar has been workin' [illegible]"

Guessing the Maskers

TO PLAY this very amusing game large fools' caps must be made—so large that they will entirely cover the heads of the persons wearing them. Eyeholes should be cut and the person "inside" each cap must look through these holes.

The players wearing the caps sit in a row. The rest endeavor to guess who they are. When the clothing of the person is hidden, as well as the head, and only the eyes are visible, this becomes very difficult, indeed. You will be surprised to learn that perhaps you have never noticed the exact color of the eyes of those with whom you have always lived.

Happiest Condition.

Mother—Were you a good boy at school today, Tommy?

Tommy—No'm.

Mother—I hope you weren't a very bad boy, Tommy.

Tommy—No'm, I wasn't a very good boy or a very bad boy; I was just comfortable, ma.

Quest of Count Frederic

"UNHAPPIEST of mortals am I," muttered Count Frederic.

This had been the burden of his plaint for many days, for the spirit of the count was sorely vexed.

Indeed, there was reason for his unhappiness. The Princess Juliet was beautiful of feature and of character. Not in the whole kingdom could be found her equal in grace and excellence. Small wonder was it that when, in the very midst of the preparations for her wedding with Count Frederic, she was seized with a fatal malady and died suddenly, the count was plunged in a gloom and sadness from which nothing could move him.

That night Count Frederic had a vision. In his dream there appeared the radiant Princess Juliet. Sweetly she smiled upon him, and yet reproachfully, as she murmured:

"My love, do not mourn so for me. I wouldst see thee happy and contented."

"Alas! where can I find happiness now that thou art gone from me?" bitterly lamented the count.

"But hast thou earnestly sought for happiness?" asked the princess of the vision.

Then the princess vanished, leaving Count Frederic more lonely and disconsolate than before.

Yet the last words of the princess lingered in his mind. No, he had not sought for happiness; he was sure that happiness could not be for him, the most unfortunate man in all the world. Since the princess wished it, however, he would go in diligent quest for it.

Forthwith the count mounted his trusty steed and journeyed thence. Across vast plains he rode; across deserts that seemed never-ending. As the deserts were barren and bleak and unfavored with the beautiful things of nature, so was his heart empty of goodwill. Always with dejection and deepest melancholy he traveled. Mostly, he rode as one wrapped in thought and no one dared address him.

The count saw much from which he would have learned. Once in his path there were two lovers, both gay and contented. But when he asked where they had secured happiness, they replied, shaking their heads:

"We do not know. We did not seek it; it sought us."

And to the huntsman, who rode with eagerness to the chase; to the warrior, who plunged into the fray with savage glee; to the peasant woman, cheerfully nursing her babe in an ill-kept cottage—to all these he spoke, and though the answers were courteous, yet they taught him nothing.

By chance, one day he met an old woman who had met with misfortune after misfortune. Wonderingly the count besought her to tell him why it was she preserved contentment in the face of such discouragements. And the woman answered:

"'Tis true that I have had great sorrow and trial; but there are so many of those about me who continually need my help that I hardly have time to be unhappy. Indeed, I feel truly thankful when I think how great my joys are when compared with the sufferings of some of my neighbors."

Over seas Count Frederic voyaged in search of a learned sage of whom he had been told.

Entering the rough cave of the wise man, again he put the question:

"Where can I find happiness?"

The sage quietly responded: "Thou dost not have to go afar to seek happiness. Seek it within thyself and thou shalt find it."

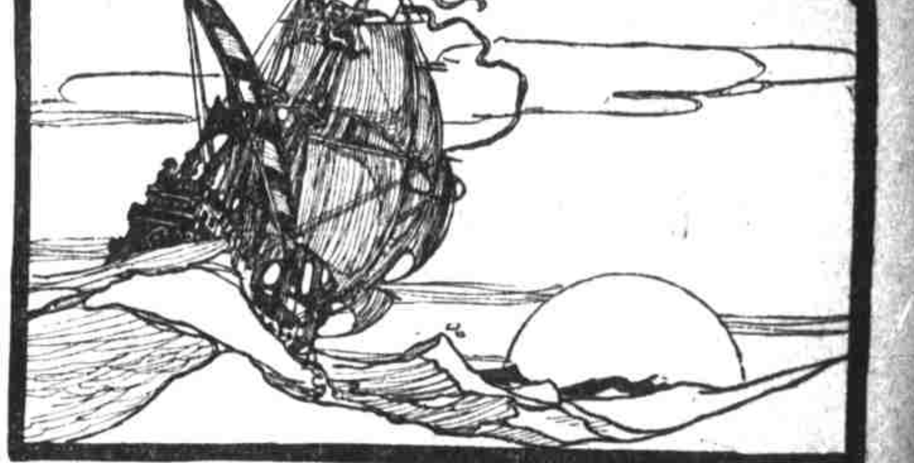
"But I have tried to find it within my own heart," protested the count; "'tis not that I have not willed it to be there."

"Then, my son," kindly advised the sage, "forget for a while thy quest; busy thyself with those about thee and thou shalt find, like the old woman, that unhappiness can no longer dwell within thee. Thou shalt soon have within thy heart the happiness thou hast long desired."

And as the count went upon his way he pondered over the words of the sage.

"Mayhaps 'tis good advice; I'll take it," quoth he.

Soon, true to the sage's words, unhappiness was banished from the count's heart by the joy which came from doing good. Instead, there came a great happiness, which ever increased as he thought that now he had fulfilled the desire of his loved princess.



A Strange Coat.

There is a story of a pig in Canada, who was left behind when the drove was sent from one farm to another. Some days later piggy turned up among his fellow-porkers, having grown, in the meantime, a thick coat of hair. It was evident that he had been exposed to some very cold weather.

Jamie's Surprise

"PAPA, when are you going to get me a new choo-choo? Mother, dear, can't I have a pony cart soon?"

This was the only bad quality Jamie possessed—always asking father or mother, or hinting to uncle or auntie that he wanted a train or a bicycle or something else that would "go." Yes, really and truly he did so love to "go." Jamie wasn't at all satisfied unless it was real speed. He had already decided that when he grew to be a big man he would be a railroad president like father.

Jamie was to pay a visit to his grandpa. This he always enjoyed very much, indeed, especially since he would have to travel in a great, smoking "choo-choo."

But Jamie was always glad to get home to mother again, too. So that upon his return, no sooner did he take his last, lingering look at the "choo-choo" fast disappearing in the distance, than he was more than willing to reach home just as soon as possible.

That evening, after dinner, mother whispered in Jamie's ear:

"Dear, your father has a splendid surprise for you—the bestest surprise you've ever had."

Sure enough, father very soon asked Jamie to walk with him out into the garden. You could never guess what Jamie found—'way back in the garden. You see, father had taken a whole railway coach, had it brought into the garden, and there had fitted it up as a playhouse for Jamie. All of Jamie's playthings were there.

Jamie just couldn't speak.

"Why, father," he finally whispered, "now I can ride in a 'choo-choo' car all the time, can't I?"

Then he threw his arms around father's neck and promised never to ask for anything else. No, indeed; not while he had the best playhouse in all the world.

First Boy—Your father must be an awful mean man. Him a shoemaker and makin' you wear them old boots.

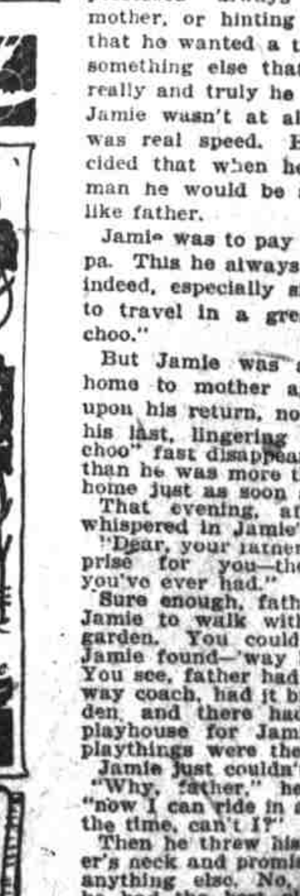
Second Boy—He's nothin' to what your father is. Him a dentist, and your baby's only got one tooth!

The Gifts of the Winds

NOW tell us truly, winds of Spring,
What joys to childhood do you bring?
With varied arts I strive to please—
I bring warm suns and April showers,
I bring fresh buds for naked trees,
And scatter growing grass with flowers.

And you, sweet Summer's gentle breeze,
What gifts of yours do children please?
The joyous holiday time I bring,
The many pleasures of field and shore.
Long, sunny days at their feet I fling:
These are my gifts—can you ask for more?

Oh, howling winds of Autumn drear,
What are your joys for children dear?
I bring down nuts from brilliant trees,
And ripe fruits drop beneath my spell;
I brighten their hearts with gifts like these—
No other wind they love so well!

And now, sharp wind of Winter cold,
What joys are yours? Can they be told?
I sweep with a wail over barren fields,
Best loved of all the winds that blow;
No other wind such pleasure yields
To boys and girls—for I bring snow!

—AMY SMITH.