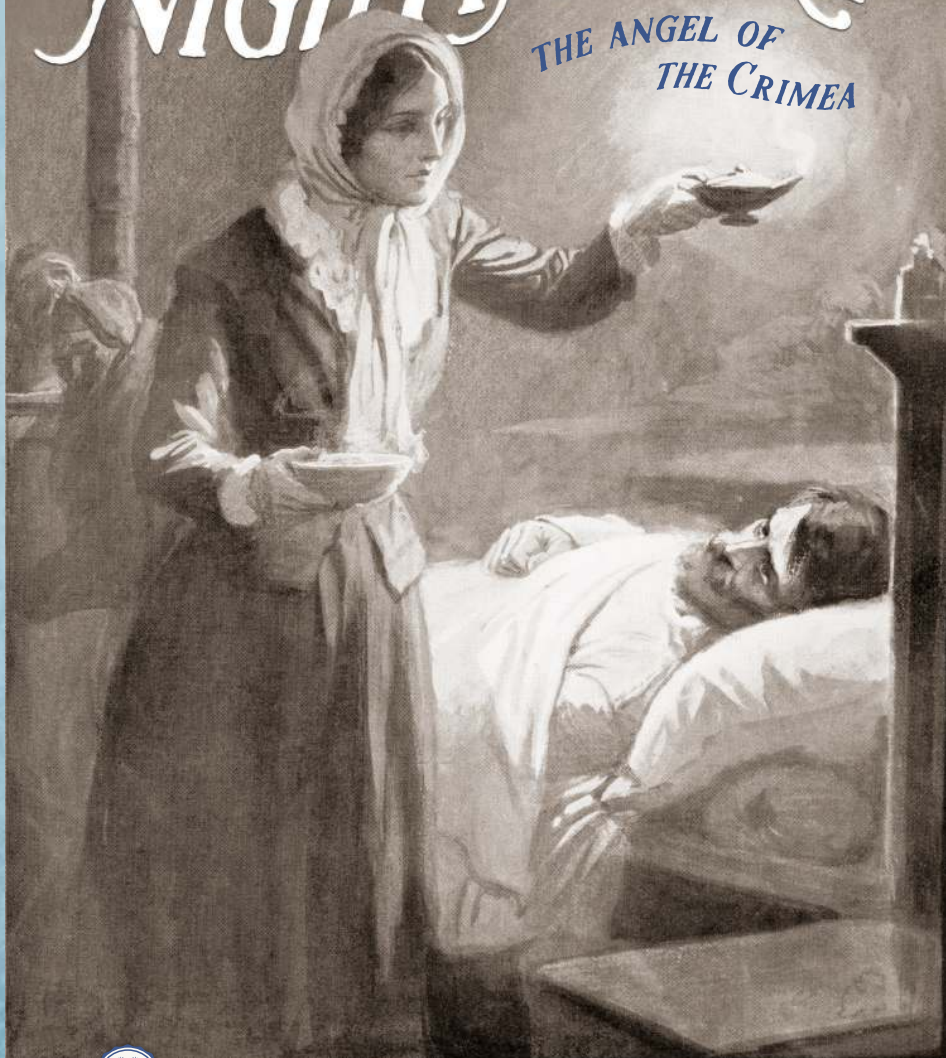


Florence NIGHTINGALE

THE ANGEL OF
THE CRIMEA



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

◀ LAURA E. RICHARDS ▶

Table of Contents

1. How Florence Got Her Name—Her Three Homes	1
2. Little Florence	6
3. The Squire's Daughter	12
4. Looking Out	20
5. Waiting for the Call.	25
6. The Trumpet Call.	28
7. The Response	36
8. Scutari	42
9. The Barrack Hospital	46
10. The Lady-in-Chief	51
11. The Lady with the Lamp	58
12. Winter	67
13. Miss Nightingale under Fire	76
14. The Close of the War.	84
15. The Tasks of Peace	93

Chapter 1

How Florence Got Her Name— Her Three Homes



ONE EVENING, some time after the great Crimean War of 1854–55, a company of military and naval officers met at dinner in London. They were talking over the war, as soldiers and sailors love to do, and somebody said: “Who of all the workers in the Crimea will be longest remembered?”

Each guest was asked to give his opinion on this point, and each one wrote a name on a slip of paper. There were many slips, but when they came to be examined there was only one name, for every single man had written “Florence Nightingale.”

Every English boy and girl knows the beautiful story of Miss Nightingale’s life. Indeed, hers is perhaps the best-loved name in England since good Queen Victoria died. It will be a great pleasure to me to tell this story to our own boys and girls in this country, and it shall begin, as all proper stories do, at the beginning.

Her father was named William Nightingale. He was an English gentleman and in the year 1820 was living in Italy with his wife. Their first child was born in Naples, and they named her Parthenope, that being the ancient name of Naples; two years later,

when they were living in Florence, another little girl came to them, and they decided to name her also after the city of her birth.

When Florence was still a very little child, her parents came back to England to live, bringing the two children with them. First they went to a house called Lea Hall, in Derbyshire. It was an old, old house of gray stone, standing on a hill, in meadows full of buttercups and clover. All about were blossoming hedgerows full of wild roses and great elder bushes heavy with white blossoms, and on the hillside below it lies the quaint old village of Lea with its curious little stone houses.

Lea Hall is a farmhouse now, but it still has its old flag-paved hall and its noble staircase of oak with twisted balustrade and broad solid steps where little Florence and her sister “Parthe” used to play and creep and tumble. There was another place nearby where they loved even better to play; that was the ancient house of Dethick. I ought rather to say the ancient kitchen, for little else remained of the once stately mansion. The rest of the house was comparatively new, but the great kitchen was (and no doubt is) much as it was in the days of Queen Elizabeth.

Imagine a great room with heavy-timbered roof, ponderous oaken doors, and huge open fireplace over which hung the ancient roasting jack. In the ceiling was a little trapdoor, which looked as if it might open on the roof, but in truth it was the entrance to a chamber hidden away under the roof, a good-sized room, big enough for several persons to hide in.

Florence and her sister loved to imagine the scenes that had taken place in that old kitchen—strange and thrilling, perhaps terrible scenes. They knew the story of Dethick, and now you shall hear it too.

In that old time which Tennyson calls “the spacious days of great Elizabeth,” Dethick belonged to a noble family named Babington. It was a fine house then. The oaken door of the old kitchen opened on long corridors and passages, which in turn led to stately halls and noble galleries. There were turrets and balconies overlooking beautiful gardens; and on the stone terraces, gay

lords and ladies used to walk and laugh and make merry, and little children ran and played and danced, and life went on very much as it does now, with work and play, love and laughter and tears.

One of the gay people who used to walk there was Anthony Babington. He was a gallant young gentleman, an ardent Catholic, and devoted to the cause of the beautiful and unfortunate Mary, Queen of Scots.

Though ardent and devoted, Babington was a weak and foolish young man. He fell under the influence of a certain Ballard, an artful and designing person who had resolved to bring about the death of the great English Queen, and was induced by him to form the plot which is known in history as Babington's Conspiracy; so he was brought to ruin and death.

In the year 1586, Queen Mary was imprisoned at Wingfield Manor, a country house only a few miles distant from Dethick. The conspirators gathered other Catholic noblemen about them and planned to release Queen Mary and set her once more on the throne.

They used to meet at Dethick where, it is said, there is a secret passage underground leading to Wingfield Manor. Perhaps—who knows?—they may have sat in the kitchen, gathering about the great fireplace for warmth; the lights out, for fear of spies, only the firelight gleaming here and there, lighting up the dark corners and the eager, intent faces. And when the plot was discovered, and Queen Elizabeth's soldiers were searching the country round for the young conspirators, riding hither and thither along the pleasant country lanes and thrusting their sabers in among the blossoming hedgerows, it was here at Dethick that they sought for Anthony Babington. They did not find him, for he was in hiding elsewhere, but one of his companions was actually discovered and arrested there.

Perhaps—again, who knows?—this man may have been hiding in the secret chamber above the trapdoor. One can fancy the pursuers rushing in, flinging open cupboards and presses in search for their prey, and finding no one, gathering baffled around the

fireplace. Then one, chancing to glance up, catches sight of the trapdoor in the ceiling. “Ha! Lads, look up! The rascal may be hiding yonder! Up with you, you tall fellow!” Then a piling up of benches, one man mounting on another’s shoulders—the door forced open, the young nobleman seized and overpowered and brought down to be carried off to London for trial.

Anthony Babington and his companions were executed for high treason, and Queen Mary, who was convicted of approving the plot, was put to death soon after.

All this Florence Nightingale and her sister knew, and they never tired of “playing suppose” in old Dethick kitchen and living over again in fancy the romantic time long past. And on Sundays the two children went with their parents to the old Dethick church and sat where Anthony Babington used to sit, for in his days it was the private chapel of Dethick. It is a tiny church; fifty people would fill it to overflowing, but Florence and her sister might easily feel that the four bare walls held all the wild history of Elizabeth’s reign.

Anthony Babington in doublet and hose, with velvet mantle, feathered cap, and sword by his side; little Florence Nightingale in round leghorn hat and short petticoats. It is a long step between these two, yet they are the two most famous people who ever said their prayers in the old Dethick church. The lad’s brief and tragic story contrasts strangely with the long and beautiful story of Florence Nightingale, a story that has no end.

When Florence was between five and six years old, she left Lea Hall for a new home, Lea Hurst, about a mile distant. Here her father had built a beautiful house in the Elizabethan style, of stone, with pointed gables, mullioned windows, and latticed panes. There was a tiny chapel on the site he chose, hundreds of years old, and this he built into the house, so that Lea Hurst, as well as Lea Hall and Dethick, joined hands with the old historic times. In this little chapel, by and by, we shall see Florence holding her Bible class. But I like still to think of her as a little rosy girl, running about the beautiful gardens of Lea Hurst, or playing house in the quaint old

summerhouse with its pointed roof of thatch. Perhaps she brought her dolls here, but the dolls must wait for another chapter.

Soon after moving to Lea Hurst, the Nightingales bought still another country seat, Embley Park, in Hampshire, a fine old mansion built in Queen Elizabeth's time and at some distance from Lea Hurst.

After this the family used to spend the summer at Lea Hurst and the winter at Embley. There were no railroads then in that neighborhood; the journey was sometimes made by stagecoach, sometimes in the Nightingales' own carriage.

Embley Park is one of the stately homes of England, with its lofty gables, terraces, and shadowing trees, and all around it are sunny lawns and gardens filled with every sweet and lovely flower.

Now you know a little of the three homes of Florence Nightingale: Lea Hall, Lea Hurst, and Embley Park; next you shall hear what kind of child she herself was.

THE LITTLE DUKE

BY
CHARLOTTE M. YONGE



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

Contents

CHAPTER I	I
CHAPTER II	10
CHAPTER III	23
CHAPTER IV	31
CHAPTER V	40
CHAPTER VI	57
CHAPTER VII	67
CHAPTER VIII	81
CHAPTER IX	96
CHAPTER X	105
CHAPTER XI	112
CHAPTER XII	117
CONCLUSION	122
ENDNOTES	125

CHAPTER I



ON A BRIGHT AUTUMN DAY, as long ago as the year 943, there was a great bustle in the Castle of Bayeux in Normandy.

The hall was large and low, the roof arched, and supported on thick short columns, almost like the crypt of a Cathedral; the walls were thick, and the windows, which had no glass, were very small, set in such a depth of wall that there was a wide deep window seat upon which the rain might beat without reaching the interior of the room. And even if it had come in, there was nothing for it to hurt, for the walls were of rough stone and the floor of tiles. There was a fire at each end of this great dark apartment, but there were no chimneys over the ample hearths, and the smoke curled about in thick white folds in the vaulted roof, adding to the wreaths of soot, which made the hall look still darker.

The fire at the lower end was by far the largest and hottest. Great black cauldrons hung over it, and servants, both men and women, with red faces, bare and grimed arms, and long iron hooks, or pots and pans, were busied around it. At the other end, which was raised about three steps above the floor of the hall, other servants were engaged. Two young maidens were strewing fresh rushes on the floor; some men were setting up a long table of rough boards, supported on trestles, and then arranging upon it silver cups, drinking horns, and wooden trenchers.

Benches were placed to receive most of the guests, but in the middle, at the place of honor, was a high chair with very thick

crossing legs and the arms curiously carved with lions' faces and claws; a clumsy wooden footstool was set in front, and the silver drinking cup on the table was of far more beautiful workmanship than the others, richly chased with vine leaves and grapes and figures of little boys with goats' legs. If that cup could have told its story, it would have been a strange one, for it had been made long since, in the old Roman times, and been carried off from Italy by some Northman pirate.

From one of these scenes of activity to the other, there moved a stately old lady: her long, thick, light hair, hardly touched with grey, was bound around her head, under a tall white cap, with a band passing under her chin: she wore a long sweeping dark robe, with wide-hanging sleeves, and thick gold earrings and necklace, which had possibly come from the same quarter as the cup. She directed the servants, inspected both the cookery and arrangements of the table, held council with an old steward, now and then looked rather anxiously from the window, as if expecting someone, and began to say something about fears that these loitering youths would not bring home the venison in time for Duke William's supper.

Presently, she looked up rejoiced, for a few notes of a bugle horn were sounded; there was a clattering of feet, and in a few moments there bounded into the hall a boy of about eight years old, his cheeks and large blue eyes bright with air and exercise, and his long light-brown hair streaming behind him as he ran forward flourishing a bow in his hand and crying out, "I hit him, I hit him! Dame Astrida, do you hear?" 'Tis a stag of ten branches, and I hit him in the neck."

"You! my Lord Richard! you killed him?"

"Oh, no, I only struck him. It was Osmond's shaft that took him in the eye, and—Look, Fru Astrida, he came thus through the wood, and I stood here, it might be, under the great elm with my bow thus"—And Richard was beginning to act over again the whole scene of the deer hunt, but Fru, that is to say, Lady Astrida,

was too busy to listen and broke in with, "Have they brought home the haunch?"

"Yes, Walter is bringing it. I had a long arrow—"

A stout forester was at this instant seen bringing in the venison, and Dame Astrida hastened to meet it and gave directions, little Richard following her all the way and talking as eagerly as if she were attending to him, showing how he shot, how Osmond shot, how the deer bounded, and how it fell, and then counting the branches of its antlers, always ending with, "This is something to tell my father. Do you think he will come soon?"

In the meantime, two men entered the hall, one about fifty, the other, one or two-and-twenty, both in hunting dresses of plain leather, crossed by broad embroidered belts, supporting a knife and a bugle horn. The elder was broad shouldered, sun burnt, ruddy, and rather stern looking; the younger, who was also the taller, was slightly made, and very active, with a bright keen grey eye and merry smile. These were Dame Astrida's son, Sir Eric de Centeville, and her grandson, Osmond; and to their care Duke William of Normandy had committed his only child, Richard, to be fostered, or brought up.¹

It was always the custom among the Northmen that young princes should thus be put under the care of some trusty vassal instead of being brought up at home, and one reason why the Centevilles had been chosen by Duke William was that both Sir Eric and his mother spoke only the old Norwegian tongue, which he wished young Richard to understand well, whereas, in other parts of the Duchy, the Normans had forgotten their own tongue and had taken up what was then called the *Languéd'ouï*, a language between German and Latin, which was the beginning of French.

On this day Duke William himself was expected at Bayeux, to pay a visit to his son before setting out on a journey to settle the disputes between the Counts of Flanders and Montreuil, and this was the reason of Fru Astrida's great preparations. No sooner had she seen the haunch placed upon a spit, which a little boy was

to turn before the fire, than she turned to dress something else, namely, the young Prince Richard himself, whom she led off to one of the upper rooms, and there he had full time to talk, while she, great lady though she was, herself combed smooth his long flowing curls and fastened his short scarlet cloth tunic, which just reached to his knee, leaving his neck, arms, and legs bare. He begged hard to be allowed to wear a short, beautifully ornamented dagger at his belt, but this Fru Astrida would not allow.

"You will have enough to do with steel and dagger before your life is at an end," said she, "without seeking to begin over soon."

"To be sure I shall," answered Richard. "I will be called Richard of the Sharp Axe, or the Bold Spirit, I promise you, Fru Astrida. We are as brave in these days as the Sigurds and Ragnars you sing of! I only wish there were serpents and dragons to slay here in Normandy."

"Never fear but you will find even too many of them," said Dame Astrida. "There be dragons of wrong here and everywhere, quite as venomous as any in my Sagas."

"I fear them not," said Richard, but half understanding her, "if you would only let me have the dagger! But, hark! hark!" he darted to the window. "They come, they come! There is the banner of Normandy."

Away ran the happy child and never rested till he stood at the bottom of the long, steep, stone stair, leading to the embattled porch. Thither came the Baron de Centeville and his son to receive their Prince. Richard looked up at Osmond, saying, "Let me hold his stirrup," and then sprang up and shouted for joy, as under the arched gateway there came a tall black horse, bearing the stately form of the Duke of Normandy. His purple robe was fastened around him by a rich belt, sustaining the mighty weapon from which he was called "William of the Long Sword;" his legs and feet were cased in linked steel chain-work, his gilded spurs were on his heels, and his short brown hair was covered by his ducal cap of purple, turned up with fur and a feather fastened

in by a jewelled clasp. His brow was grave and thoughtful, and there was something both of dignity and sorrow in his face at the first moment of looking at it, recalling the recollection that he had early lost his young wife, the Duchess Emma, and that he was beset by many cares and toils; but the next glance generally conveyed encouragement, so full of mildness were his eyes and so kind the expression of his lips.

And now, how bright a smile beamed upon the little Richard, who, for the first time, paid him the duty of a pupil in chivalry by holding the stirrup while he sprung from his horse. Next, Richard knelt to receive his blessing, which was always the custom when children met their parents. The Duke laid his hand on his head, saying, "God of His mercy bless thee, my son," and lifting him in his arms, held him to his breast and let him cling to his neck and kiss him again and again before setting him down, while Sir Eric came forward, bent his knee, kissed the hand of his Prince, and welcomed him to his Castle.

It would take too long to tell all the friendly and courteous words that were spoken, the greeting of the Duke and the noble old Lady Astrida, and the reception of the Barons who had come in the train of their Lord. Richard was bidden to greet them, but, though he held out his hand as desired, he shrank a little to his father's side, gazing at them in dread and shyness.

There was Count Bernard, of Harcourt, called the "Dane,"² with his shaggy red hair and beard, to which a touch of grey had given a strange unnatural tint, his eyes looking fierce and wild under his thick eyebrows, one of them misshapen in consequence of a sword cut, which had left a broad red and purple scar across both cheek and forehead. There, too, came tall Baron Rainulf, of Ferrières, cased in a linked steel hauberk that rang as he walked, and the men-at-arms, with helmets and shields, looking as if Sir Eric's armour that hung in the hall had come to life and were walking about.

They sat down to Fru Astrida's banquet, the old Lady at the Duke's right hand and the Count of Harcourt on his left;

Osmond carved for the Duke, and Richard handed his cup and trencher. All through the meal, the Duke and his Lords talked earnestly of the expedition on which they were bound to meet Count Arnulf of Flanders on a little islet in the river Somme, there to come to some agreement by which Arnulf might make restitution to Count Herluin of Montreuil for certain wrongs which he had done him.

Some said that this would be the fittest time for requiring Arnulf to yield up some towns on his borders to which Normandy had long laid claim, but the Duke shook his head, saying that he must seek no selfish advantage when called to judge between others.

Richard was rather tired of their grave talk and thought the supper very long; but at last it was over, the Grace was said, the boards which had served for tables were removed, and as it was still light, some of the guests went to see how their steeds had been bestowed, others to look at Sir Eric's horses and hounds, and others collected together in groups.

The Duke had time to attend to his little boy, and Richard sat upon his knee and talked, told about all his pleasures, how his arrow had hit the deer to-day, how Sir Eric let him ride out to the chase on his little pony, how Osmond would take him to bathe in the cool bright river, and how he had watched the raven's nest in the top of the old tower.

Duke William listened and smiled and seemed as well pleased to hear as the boy was to tell. "And, Richard," said he at last, "have you naught to tell me of Father Lucas and his great book? What, not a word? Look up, Richard, and tell me how it goes with the learning."³

"Oh, father!" said Richard in a low voice, playing with the clasp of his father's belt and looking down, "I don't like those crabbed letters on the old yellow parchment."

"But you try to learn them, I hope!" said the Duke.

"Yes, father, I do, but they are very hard, and the words are

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to Matsuo Bashō.....	1
The Aged Mother.....	6
Introduction to Charles Dickens.....	10
The Child's Story.....	15
Introduction to Louisa May Alcott.....	21
The Cross on the Old Church Tower.....	26
Introduction to Leo Tolstoy.....	43
A Spark Neglected Burns the House.....	49
Where Love Is, There God Is Also.....	67
Introduction to James Baldwin.....	82
The King and His Hawk.....	85
Introduction to L.M. Montgomery.....	89
The Man on the Train.....	94
Miss Calista's Peppermint Bottle.....	104
The Jest That Failed.....	112
Introduction to O. Henry.....	119
After Twenty Years.....	123
The Gift of the Magi.....	128

The Aged Mother

MATSUO BASHŌ

LONG, LONG ago there lived at the foot of the mountain a poor farmer and his aged, widowed mother. They owned a bit of land which supplied them with food. They were humble, peaceful, and happy.

Shinano was governed by a despotic leader who, though a warrior, had a great and cowardly shrinking from anything suggestive of failing health and strength. This caused him to send out a cruel proclamation. The entire province was given strict orders to immediately put to death all aged people. These were barbarous days, and the custom of abandoning old people to die was not uncommon.

The poor farmer loved his aged mother with tender reverence, and the order filled his heart with sorrow. But no one ever thought a second time about obeying the mandate of the governor. So, with many deep, hopeless sighs, the youth prepared for what at that time was considered the kindest mode of death.

Just at sundown, when his day's work was ended, he took a

quantity of unwhitened rice, which is principal food for the poor, cooked and dried it. After tying it in a square cloth, he swung the bundle around his neck along with a gourd filled with cool, sweet water. Then he lifted his helpless old mother to his back and started on his painful journey up the mountain.

The road was long and steep; the narrow road was crossed and recrossed by many paths made by hunters and woodcutters. In some places the paths mingled in a confused puzzle. But, he gave no heed. One path or another, it mattered not. On he went, climbing blindly upward, ever upward, towards the high bare summit of what is known as Obatsuyama, the mountain of the “abandoning of the aged.”

The eyes of the old mother were not so dim but that they noted the reckless hastening from one path to another. Her loving heart grew anxious. Her son did not know the mountain’s many paths, and his return might be one of danger, so she stretched forth her hand and, snapping the twigs from brushes as they passed, she quietly dropped a handful every few steps of the way so that as they climbed, the narrow path behind them was dotted at frequent intervals with tiny piles of twigs. At last the summit was reached.

Wearied and heartsick, the youth gently released his burden and silently prepared a place of comfort as his last duty to his beloved mother. Gathering fallen pine needles, he made a soft cushion. He tenderly lifted his old mother onto it and wrapped her padded coat more closely about her stooping shoulders. With tearful eyes and an aching heart, he said farewell.

The trembling mother’s voice was full of unselfish love as she gave her last injunction. “Let not thine eyes be blinded, my son,” she said. “The mountain road is full of dangers. Look carefully and follow the path which holds the piles of twigs. They will guide you to the familiar way down.”

The son’s surprised eyes looked back over the path, then at the

poor old, shriveled hands all scratched and soiled by their work of love. His heart smote him, and bowing to the ground, he cried aloud, "Oh, Honorable Mother, thy kindness thrusts my heart! I will not leave thee. Together we will follow the path of twigs, and together we will die!"

Once more he shouldered his burden (how light it seemed now) and hastened down the path, through the shadows and the moonlight, to the little hut in the valley. Beneath the kitchen floor was a walled closet for food, which was covered and hidden from view. There the son put his mother, supplying her with everything needful.

Time passed, and he was beginning to feel safe when again the governor sent forth heralds bearing an unreasonable order, seemingly as a boast of his power. His demand was that his subjects should present him with a rope of ashes. The entire province trembled with dread. The order must be obeyed, yet who in all Shinano could make a rope of ashes? One night, in great distress, the son whispered the news to his hidden mother.

"Wait!" she said. "I will think. I will think." On the second day she told him what to do.

"Make a rope of twisted straw," she said. "Then stretch it upon a row of flat stones and burn it there on the windless night."

He called the people together and did as she said, and when the blaze had died, behold upon the stones with every twist and fiber showing perfectly lay a rope of whitened ashes.

The governor was pleased at the wit of the youth and praised him greatly. But he demanded to know where he had obtained his wisdom. "Alas! Alas!" cried the farmer. "The truth must be told!" And with deep bows he related his story.

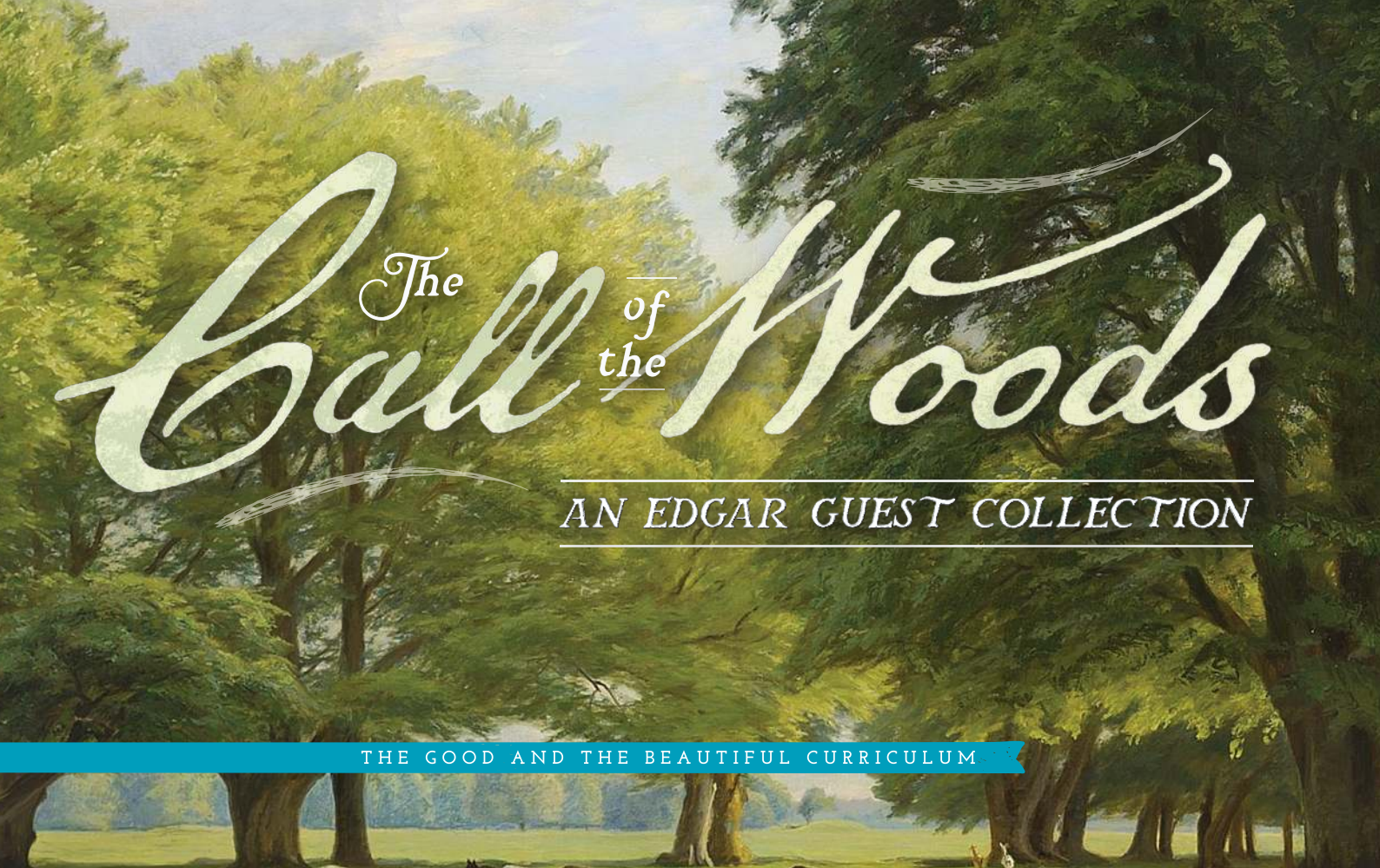
The governor listened and then meditated in silence. Finally he lifted his head. "Shinano needs more than strength of youth," he said gravely. "Ah, that I should have forgotten the well-known

The Aged Mother

saying, ‘with the crown of snow, there cometh a wisdom!’” That very hour the cruel law was abolished, and custom drifted into as far a past that only legends remain.



“The Moon and the Abandoned Old Woman,” by Yoshitoshi
(1839–1892) from *Hundred Aspects of the Moon*, c. 1885–1892



The Ball of the Woods

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THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL CURRICULUM

Chapter 1

An Introduction

It's wonderful when poems bring you delight as you read them. It's wonderful when poems fill your mind with beautiful images and messages. Nevertheless, it is *astounding* when a poem stays with you for years to come and changes the way you act and think.

This is exactly how poems by Edgar Guest have affected my own life. For example, years after reading a poem by Edgar Guest, I had a newborn baby that cried for hours a day and hardly slept at night. As I exhaustedly took care of my baby, lines from Edgar Guest's poem "Baby Feet" kept flooding my mind:

Tell me, what is half so sweet
As a baby's tiny feet

Those lines repeatedly changed my mood from frustration to appreciation as I cared for my precious baby.

In addition, I often hear lines from Edgar Guest's poem "Silent" when I see flowers or magnificent trees, and my mind is turned to gratitude and deeper joy.

Too well I know what accident
And chance and force disclose
To think blind fury could invent
The beauty of a rose.

I'm not alone in being changed by Edgar Guest's poetry. ESPN.com explains how Guest's poetry affected football player Kordell Stewart, who had a successful 11-year NFL career:

In *Truth*, Stewart's 2016 autobiography, he describes a particularly ugly scene after a game in Pittsburgh. "As I walked off the field and into the tunnel," he wrote,

“someone threw a cup full of beer at my head that gushed into my eyes. I looked up. A man looked me dead in the eyes and yelled ‘[a derogatory term]!’” Stewart walked away. Somewhere in the back of his mind was the Edgar Albert Guest poem “See It Through.” He had memorized it growing up and took comfort in the words “You may fail, but you may conquer/See it through!”¹

When you’re up against a trouble,
Meet it squarely, face to face;
Lift your chin and set your shoulders,
Plant your feet and take a brace.
When it’s vain to try to dodge it,
Do the best that you can do;
You may fail, but you may conquer,
See it through!

Black may be the clouds about you
And your future may seem grim,
But don’t let your nerve desert you;
Keep yourself in fighting trim.
If the worst is bound to happen,
Spite of all that you can do,
Running from it will not save you,
See it through!

Even hope may seem but futile,
When with troubles you’re beset,
But remember you are facing
Just what other men have met.
You may fail, but fall still fighting;
Don’t give up, whate’er you do;
Eyes front, head high to the finish.
See it through!

Kordell Stewart and I join millions of people who have been influenced by Guest in emphatic

1. Steve Wulf, “Who’s Got Next? The Four Athletes Who Appeared on Our First Cover,” September 10, 2019, https://www.espn.com/espn/story/_/id/27500438/got-next-four-athletes-appeared-our-first-cover.

ways. His sagacious gift with words and his understanding of how to connect to the cares and joys of everyday people gave him the name the People's Poet and made him one of the most successful poetry writers in modern history, even though other poets of his day didn't take his poetry seriously.

Truly one of the most prolific poets of all time, Guest wrote well over 11,000 poems during his lifetime. His works appeared daily in hundreds of newspapers across America, making his name known in most homes in the country.

The following quotes give insight into the impact of Guest's poetry:

"Such poetry as that of Edgar A. Guest has the ring of genuineness, for it is based on

a deep, abiding faith in human nature—an essential goodness and loveliness. It is this human quality in his verse that has made Mr. Guest one of the favorite poets of America." —R. Marshall²

"He is both wise and witty; he is the best serum I know against pessimistic philosophy, indigestion, and bad temper." —Rev. Dr. Cavanaugh, President of the University of Notre Dame³

"He had what every person must have who goes far in the education of his fellow-man—enthusiasm, enthusiasm that no worry, no interruption, or disquieting news can take the edge from." —Edward H. Cotton⁴

2. R. Marshall, *Edgar Guest: A Biographical Sketch* (n.p.: Reilly & Lee, 1920).

3. As quoted in Royce Howes and John S. Knight, *Edgar A. Guest: A Biography* (n.p.: Literary Licensing, 2011).

4. Edward H. Cotton, "Edgar A. Guest, the Fireside Poet," *The Christian Register*, December 7, 1922, 1161–62.

Perhaps Edgar Guest was beloved by people because he himself had a deep love for all people. He said, “I like people wherever I see them, whatever they are doing, whoever they are.”⁵

Proverbs 13:20 states: “He that walketh with wise men shall be wise.” As you journey through this book, feasting on the wisdom and wit of Edgar Guest, I hope you will be one of the people who becomes just a little better and one whose soul expands just a little more for having experienced the works of Edgar Guest.

Edward H. Cotton said it best: “Men are better after hearing Edgar Guest or reading his poems. . . . Fortunate are we who find the road somewhat rough and blinding in having such companions for the journey as Edgar Guest.”⁶

Edgar once wrote a poem titled “My Creed,” which

described the beliefs that drove his actions and the principles behind his poetry. As you study the poems in this book, you will see the foundations in the principles of this poem.

My Creed

To live as gently as I can;
To be, no matter where, a man;
To take what comes of good or ill
And cling to faith and honor still;
To do my best, and let that stand
The record of my brain and hand;
And then, should failure come to me,
Still work and hope for victory.

To have no secret place wherein
I stoop unseen to shame or sin;
To be the same when I’m alone
As when my every deed is known;

5. Edgar A. Guest, as quoted in Cotton, “Edgar A. Guest.”

6. Cotton, “Edgar A. Guest.”

To live undaunted, unafraid
Of any step that I have made;
To be without pretense or sham
Exactly what men think I am.

To leave some simple mark behind
To keep my having lived in mind;
If enmity to aught I show,
To be an honest, generous foe,
To play my little part, nor whine
That greater honors are not mine.
This, I believe, is all I need
For my philosophy and creed.