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REFLECTI ONS

by

Members of

THE CREATIVE WRITING CLASS

of

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Instructor--Mrs. Ann Clark

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	
Edith Felsted-----	1
Evacuation	
Carl Yoshimine-----	2
Bon Odori	
Grace Nichols-----	3
Flower Arrangement	
Florence Neuhart-----	4
"A Little Child Shall Lead Them"	
Tsuduki Imoto-----	5
Summer School On The Desert	
Cecilia McNulty-----	6
A Dream	
Bob Montgomery-----	7
I Shall Remember	
Lillian Taylor-----	8
"I Live In a Camp"	
Paul Itaya-----	9
Desert Compensation	
Edith Felsted-----	10
An Ode To a Cotton-Tail Rabbit	
Taffee Tanimoto-----	15
His Majesty	
Louise Anderson-----	16
Champerico Interlude	
Benji Hara-----	17
Salting The Sheep	
Katharine Sheckler-----	19

Brack Man's Prayer	
Grace McKee Bottles -----	21
Visiting A Manti School	
Edith Waterman-----	22
A Ghostly Rainbow	
Faith Hunt-----	23
Rest	
Carl Yoshimine-----	25

Most of our writing is done at the command or desire of someone else. It is not creative. This writing is composed of borrowed thoughts that scream with worn-out cliché-phrases and expressions.

Seldom have we written for our own self-expression and pleasure. We have at times allowed creativeness to filter through our letter-writing but it was unconscious on our part. In reality we were only giving our friends a word picture of the world from our point of view. At those times we courted the urge of creativeness. But it was not for long. The fragile thread of creativeness thus formed was easily broken like one of the tiny delicate fibers of flax. But many of these tiny fibers rolled loosely together form a sliver, and many slivers of flax tightly twisted together, form a strong linen thread. Are these silken-like fibers of creative thinking never to be caught up and twisted into a strong thread of expression?

The years have left behind many gossamer filaments of thought whipping in the winds of time, until the frayed ends have disappeared or have been hidden in the crevices of passing experience.

Is it possible to go back over the past, recall those frayed ends of thought and roll them into strong strands that can be turned into tightly twisted rope dyed by our own experience?

Should we improve our power of expression by immediately grasping these loose ends and never allowing their freedom until they are turned into strong twists which are strengthened by the length and number of thought fibers?

Or could all of these frayed strands that have come from this mere bubbling of creativeness be like the simmering of a pan of syrup? Bubbles that come to the top of the surface, explode, and escape forever. Then the solution would be to apply more heat energy. Boil until a clamoring mass of bubbles rise again and again to be freed. When the final trial for freedom is the delicate gossamer filament, wafting from the spoon of cooling mixture--at just the right instant--when the rolling mass of bubbles rise, refine, and change color, we pour the whole in one great glistening rope to be cooled, polished, and brightened by the many turnings and twistings like a great length of burnished, glistening taffy.

Edith Felsted

EVACUATION

Carl Yoshimine

Love, hate, orders,

flung us into this barren waste.

Heat, dust, toil,

brought us a hell on earth.

Barren waste, beauty unseen,

Lord's matchless handiwork

present throughout.

Oasis of peace, joy, love unabounding,

lifting us from the deeps of despair

to the Savior's love.

Praise Him, Love him, Cherish Him,

For God is here.

BCN ODORI

Grace Nichols

An exotic flight of multi-colored butterflies, the dancers in their lovely kimonos swayed, posed, and bowed beneath the lights--as exquisitely graceful in their response to the strains of stringed instruments and the measured beating of the huge drum as willow branches moving in the wind, or poppies swaying on slender stems in a sheltered corner of a garden.

On around the wide oval they moved with measured grace--mothers and young girls, lads and fathers, children, even babies on fat, unsteady legs--, in exquisite silk kimonos, in picturesque rural costumes, in occidental street clothes--answering the insistent, almost hypnotic, call of the music. Bowing, swaying, stepping rhythmically, in a dance as old as the rice fields and as unmistakably oriental as a delicate silk tapestry or a fragile bit of porcelain.

Along the western horizon, a faint memory of gold silhouetted the raw, jagged outline of the mountains. The warm night wind breathed through the mesquite trees with a hinted fragrance of sage, and overhead, the desert sky flamed with innumerable stars.

The spectators, seated on crude benches, boxes, home made stools, clustered in a vast throng beyond the blinding radiance of the unshaded lights on standards of peeled cottonwood. In the background, a convoy of squat, dust-covered army trucks, their canvas tops frayed and dirty, waited to take dancers and audience back to the stifling heat and confusion of life in the grim tar-paper barracks.

But now, for these brief hours, forgotten was the present with its heat and dust, the bitterness of exile, the discomforts of communal living amid the primitive immensity of the desert, while an entire settlement found artistic release and satisfaction and fulfillment in the age-old, traditional observance of Bon Odori, the Festival of the Dead.

FLOWER ARRANGEMENT
(Inspired by the Japanese Flower Exhibit
held in the Recreation Halls)

Florence Neuhart

God gave beauty to the world,
the gift of nature to mankind,
And hands and thoughts to arrange it
in delicacy of design.

How could these exiled people
find such beauty rare,
where seemingly there was death?

They wondered, they roamed, they sought
with search eyes the desert waste
And gathered in bundles on their backs
the treasures that they found.

Greasewood with yellow blossoms
they brought and grey twigs and grasses,
the graceful palo verde branches
upon which they fastened
bright paper flowers of loving fantasy.

Dead wood in shapes grotesque and wild
they worked it, they polished and they stained
until exact result was gained
their meaning to express
And lift to people's wondering gaze
a vase of beauty, calm serene.

"AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM"

(Poston Remedy)

Tsudoku Imoto

In the cool of a late August twilight little two- and three-year olds pulsed the air with cries of delight as they wildly chased back and forth across the Bermuda grass. (In California, we call it devil weed.) Chubby little Keiko youngest of the lot, clad only in a sunsuit, brought up the rear.

In her haste she tumbled, rolling on her back. As she struggled to regain her feet, sudden surprise flickered across her moon-face and she fell back, utter content in its place. Next she had kicked up her short, fat legs over her body and was thrashing her arms and legs about. She lay there, only the flat of her back touching the lawn, her whole body wriggling and twisting. For a long while she squirmed and scratched, fully enjoying her new discovery of another use for Bermuda grass.

The mothers, who had been buzzing along the barrack walls, suddenly realized they no longer heard the vociferous one. Instead they saw on the grass this compact mass with flying arms and legs--an almost indiscernible Keiko amid the quick flashing movements. Of one accord they burst into laughter. Forgetting everything else, they gathered in a row, thoroughly enjoying her enjoyment.

"Look! she's just like a horse rubbing its back in the dirt--the legs bent and all--only quicker."

"Or a cow."

"Keiko, Keiko!"

Keiko wriggled on. She neither heard nor saw. She just wriggled and wriggled.

"Shame, shame, Keiko!"

She was just too engrossed to make use of the other senses.

Four, five, six minutes sped by. Still the child turned and twisted. By now the ladies were shaking, helpless with laughter. Two were almost jumping up and down;

one was unconsciously rubbing her stomach with both hands as tears rolled down her upturned face.

The child's mother was not laughing. On her face was an expression faintly amused, slightly exasperated, greatly perplexed. She was bewildered by this creature of monstrous intelligence and unrestrained abandon--her offspring. Nor was she able to move or speak.

Surely after eight or nine minutes the child should be tired! Her activity diminished neither in intensity nor speed. She was oblivious of all except gratifying relief as the still, rough matting eased the itching. She ignored the audience of silly, inimportant, old ladies.

Then in one swift movement she was on her feet, resuming the chase and the shouting where she had abruptly deserted them ten minutes ago.

By chance she had succeeded in finding greater relief in those few minutes than in the countless scrubbings with salt and soaps, applications of calamine lotion, boric acid, and olive oil, ointments of cold cream, Vaseline, and Mentholatum dustings of talcum powder and cornstarch, paddings of Kleenex, handkerchiefs, and towels of the money-wise adults.

SUMMER SCHOOL ON THE DESERT

Cecilia McNulty

Last night I went home tired;
I had an awful peeve;
Nothing had gone to suit me;
I decided I would leave.

The coolers did not function;
The program had been changed;
The smell of oil, the heat, the noise
Came as if prearranged.

I walked thru heat and dust-storm;
And nearly tore my hair
When I reached a certain class-room
And found there was no chair.

I was so very weary
I would not condesend
To muster up a sickly smile
For my very closest friend.

At last the day was ended;
I tumbled into bed;
And thought of the tasks of another day
With distaste and with dread.

But now there comes the morning
And the dawn of a brand new day;
Which brings hope and confidence
And drives past cares away.

What matters all those petty trials
That irked me yesterday!
Why choose to be a sour puss?
It really does not pay.

A DREAM

Bob Montgomery

I dragged up the stairs to my room. Tired, disheartened, despairing, I flung myself onto the bed. Affairs and news of the day jangled raucously in my brain--"Nazis Pierce Russian Line," "Naval Battle Sinks Japanese Transport," "Three Killed in Gun Battle," "Alcohol Blamed in Crash." My head throbbed. I took some aspirin and lay down again. My troubled brain reeled and clanged in a confusion of the days echos until, finally, they grew more distant, and as they faded, I found I was not alone.

I strained my tired eyes in the gathering gloom to no avail, yet someone was near; someone much different from an ordinary person, for I could feel a kindness and understanding which no one had shown in the confusing world of my affairs. I heard a voice through the clatter of my thoughts, and it soothed me, and made me want to listen. It was quiet at first, as if in the dim distance, then closer and clearer, yet soft and reassuring.

"Courage, friend! Of course you are disheartened. This world has given grief to many men. No person since the days of Eve and Adam But knew the toil and grief of many woes. A million men throughout the whole world's nations Now feel the weight of care and lack of hope. But take heart now, and view the world about you. Is there no hope, no ray of coming light? Think! Have you friends who toil for love, not profit? Is there no man who dares to build his dreams And live them out in faith and love and gladness? Few, you say? Surely! Few, and yet sufficient When given to the hope of all mankind To build on earth the land of hopes accomplished Where man shall dwell in peace, not blood and strife, And brotherhood shall reign through all the world. A dream, you say? Ah yes! The dream of Ages! The dream that formed the heavens and the earth. The dream that made of man, the ruler of it-- Gave him a soul, a mind, and yes---a dream. A dream is but the truth in early stages. Without a dream, there is no hope nor light.

Give man a dream, and he can build the ages--
The Dream of God, far more than mortal sight.
Dreams are not for men to be ashamed of--
Far from it! They can keep mankind in truth.
More time for dreams, and much more will to live them--
That is the key to all the needs of men.
Live by your dreams, not by men's wrath and praises,
And nobleness will guide you in the right.

I SHALL REMEMBER

Lillian Taylor

I shall remember the desert, the burning sand and the blazing sky, the mesquite with its gnarled and grotesque limbs, mountains standing like card-board cut-outs before a sunset back-drop, or veiled in purple mist or reflecting the sunset glow in colors of gold, turquoise, and rose, groups of young people singing and groups of old people chanting, Buddhist dances in the twilight, church services in the mesquite grove, movies under the stars.

I shall remember long walks down desert trails, hitch-hiking to Parker to quench the desert thirst with an ice cream soda, the ugliness of long, dark barracks in the noon-day sun, then the delicious coolness of the rooms inside, the crickets who sing continuously and eat holes in our best clothes, the crowd surging eagerly around the mail boxes at noon, and the large pile of Sears Roebuck catalogs just arrived, the exciting conversation in the mess hall among people from all over the world.

I shall remember the blue oaves of adobe school buildings, the expanse of pale grey sand broken by a pool where slim brown bodies flash through the water, poems read aloud and ideas shared, jokes and fun and friendships, and that all these things have enriched my life beyond words.

I shall remember Poston when Poston is no more.

Things I Love

The wind in my face, the great outdoors,
And dip of paddles in the stream
A good book read beneath a tree---
And sometimes just to sit and dream.

Fleecy clouds, the sunset's glow
A plunge in a pool all crystal clear
The notes of a violin muted low---
Old letters written this many a year.

Dried leaves crunching beneath my feet
Children laughing in innocent glee,
The sound of rain upon the roof---
A friend in the firelight, and a cup of tea.

"I LIVE IN A CAMP..."

Paul Itaya

I live in a relocation camp. Why I live in one is too long a story to tell. Suffice it to say the war made it a necessity. But I wonder why thousands of other loyal Niseis as well as I, steeped in American culture and traditions, endowed with an all-consuming love for America, were stuck in god-forsaken deserts, in mountains, and in other remote spots of a beautiful land to slowly suffer a mental and spiritual deterioration. Is there a justifiable answer?

Many Americans believe that we are incapable of love and loyalty for our beloved country, America. Of course, there are those among us whose sympathies lie counter to American ideals, but by far and large the greater majority of us Niseis only know America; we glory in her past, present, and future. America means to us more than mere words can describe; can any love be greater than this? Are we to be a segment of America, "the man without a country?"

Last winter, some friends of mine and I went on a hike to the mountains nearby. The way was long and dusty, the trail obscure, weaving in and out the brush and sage of a desolate wasteland. We reached the mountains, that is, the sand plateaus that lie at their foot. With a whoop and a shout, we dashed up the side. Thus began an afternoon of fun, running and sliding in the sand, like children on their first visit to the beach. And behind us loomed the steel-gray mountains, so massive and majestic in their silence, towering and watching over us like sentinels.

We then went tramping from one plateau to the other; and on the way here and there we picked up pretty, glittering stones, chattering like small excited children, oh-ing and ah-ing at each new treasure, squealing with childish delight and pleasure. We wandered hither and yon, scampering, alert to spring forward at once with all childish eagerness and curiosity at every discovery. We had let our physical years slip by, happy in giving wings to our souls, letting our forgotten dreams take flight. Where else but in America could we, though long past that stage, romp like children unmindful of our cares, wholly intent upon the pursuit of childish pleasures?

But, alas! the hour was spent. The very mountains seemed to shake their crags and nooks in disapproval as the shadows deepened; we were warned to start on our journey

home. Starting out with a song in our hearts, our load was light; we were happy because we were going home, even though they were no stately mansions, just a barrack or a room twenty by twenty-five feet. And as the evening shadows deepened, and twilight was fast falling, we quickened our steps; but now the load had gotten heavier, our legs had gotten wearier; and like the barren land about we became listless.

"Come on, kids, just a few more steps" was the cry; and gritting our teeth, we wearily plodded on. "We shouldn't have played so hard" was our thought, but with characteristic light-heartedness we replied, "It was fun while it lasted." Now the periods of rest came much closer; we were looking around for familiar sights; and running to a nearby mound, we peered eagerly in a westerly direction. "There it is!" How that cry did electrify us. With renewed hearts, we took up the march again. "It won't be long now, everybody; so let's go."

Walking in the rear of the group, I could not help but think of the bitter pill Fate had dealt us. First the war, that was bad enough; imagine the land of our fathers treacherously attacking my America! Then came the restrictions, the hatred and the suspicions; we were citizens treated and watched over as spies! Homes and families were broken up as fathers were hauled in as "dangerous aliens." The crowning blow which Fate had yet in store was to come. Evacuation! Vividly I remember that first notice, how every word was burned upon my mind. It read:

"Civilian Exclusion Order No. 83"

1. Pursuant to the provisions of Public Proclamation Nos. 1 and 2, this Headquarters, dated March 2, 1942, and March 16, 1942, respectively, it is hereby ordered that from and after 12 o'clock noon, P.W.T., of Monday, May 25, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, be excluded from that portion of Military Area No. 1 described as follows:

All that portion of the Counties of San Bernardino
...State of California..."

I could not read further. It has come! What could not happen in America had come about with startling rapidity. We were being kicked out of a state as unwholesome, unwanted people. Sadly, thousands of Isseis and Niseis packed their

belongings in one or two suitcases. We were herded into buses, escorted and sent off to place called Poston, Arizona, unfertile and hot like the surrounding desert.

As I plodded along, turning and musing over these things, I could not help but experience a tinge of bitterness. Wondering if we were getting any nearer home, I looked up. There waving, rippling so majestically in the breeze, was the red, white, and blue! I could not help but stop and gaze in awe at that sight of a flag so bravely whipping in the breeze. That flag stood for my America, the land of opportunity. That beautiful flag against a background of azure blue stood so boldly out I could only think "the home of the brave and free." That flag was symbolic of America, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. America stood for peace and quiet, for the enjoyment of life in its richest content. When these thoughts passed through my whirling brain, I was ashamed for the bitterness I had harbored. Could I ever lift up my head in pride? Could I become a worthy citizen?

I pray to God that I may become a better American, and not do anything that may bring shame either to my land or to my name. May I never again cast doubts upon an America which believes in equality for all. Of course, there are imperfections, but is it of my concern to bemoan and grumble? Those imperfections are but a challenge that might more actively assume our responsibilities and obligations as Nisei citizens, Americans in a greater America!

DESERT COMPENSATION

Edith Felsted

At the close of the long heated day
the desert folds gentle, warm arms about one
and strokes away the cares manifold.

Nature splashes the great sky canvas
with strange, beautiful splotches of color
and paints the soft cheek of the cloud.

She arrays the rugged shoulders of the mountain
and the dead tree with its grewsome sprawling arms
alike, in trailing gauzy gowns of fragile texture
tinted in the milky color-vats of the rainbow.

Then she strokes away the mental anguish of man
with cooling zephyr fingers,
lulling him in the downy hammock of night
and gently withdraws leaving his soul at peace.

AN ODE TO A COTTON-TAIL RABBIT

Taffee Tanimoto

While wandering through the gulches
A rustle is suddenly heard
And out pops a cotton-tail rabbit
With a hopping like a bird.

One look at you and away he runs
With the swiftness of an arrow
With his white tail, bobbing up and down
You'd admire him 'till the morrow.

As he runs directly away from you
The only things you'd spot
Are the tips of the ears and the moving hind legs
And the large bobbing white dot.

The End

HIS MAJESTY

Louise Anderson

The following paragraphs are taken from the story "His Majesty".

Like a huge sea turtle sunning itself on a lone rock, the dome-like roof of a cottage rose above the mass of low trees and shrubbery. In varying shades of green, asbestos shingles had been cut, matched, and shaped to imitate the diamond patches of the turtle's shell. Above small dormer windows, slightly drooping over, suggesting awning effects, rested the head and four claws. Plastic stucco, muddy gray, had lent itself in fancifully fulfilling the imagery in the artist's mind. It was realistic even to the folds about the turtle's neck. Tall trees partly obscured the rear view, but in rowing around to one side, I caught a glimpse of the curved part of the tail above another small dormer.

Below on the sandy beach, as though under the protecting care of the guardian eyes of this master turtle, were swarms of terrapins moving at their own slow pace, in and out of the water. While a few yards to the right, still under the gaze of the sphinx-like eyes, the water was fairly jettied with these reptile creatures. Big and little stones scattered carelessly along the shore, were each topped by some member of the turtle family luxuriating in the warm sunshine.

CHAMPERICO INTERLUDE

Benji Hara

We are off the small Guatemalan village port of Champerico. The long rolling swells are undulating the glassy sea and hurrying toward the shore to crash in foamy white spray upon the silvery beach. As we look shoreward, we see the slender pier, which serves the open roadstead port, jutting seaward out through the pounding surf.

Beyond, we see the little village of Champerico sitting beneath the tropical sun. The brown thatched huts and the bright orange tiled-roof storehouses stand out from the tall coconut palms and the tropical growth that are within the village. The sandy beach strings out away beyond the horizon and the green palms, the lush fruit-laden trees, the entangling vines; the home of the chattering monkeys and the squawking macaws, come down the sloping beach to meet the sea.

Looking beyond the village, we see the wide open flatlands and far in the dim distance the smoking peaks of volcanoes loom out of the purple mist, miles high, towering to watch over the scattered villages of this ancient land. This land had known an advanced civilization long before the days of Cortez but today its people know nothing of the glories of their past and now there are only the cobblestone streets, the ox carts, and the natives, huge loads

upon their backs, plodding the weary narrow trails and roads to do their trading at the village markets.

As we think of the deep canyons and valleys that lie at the foot of the smoking craters, we can but wonder if there might be some long forgotten "Shangri-La" continuing the civilization of the ancient past, unaware or unheedful of the civilization that is ours.

All this is a challenge to explore further the strangeness and the beauties of this land. Turning seaward, we see, rising above the horizon, the lazy smoke of a distant steamer drifting above the unmarked lanes heedless of the things that lie shoreward. It brings us out of our reverie and dream of the pleasures that might be ours if we took up the challenge of these tropical shores. But we too, like the steamer, must be on our way for we are not traveling to seek pleasures. We are aboard a fishing vessel; just one of the many ships that must do the work of the world.

SALTING THE SHEEP

Katharine Sheckler

Could I journey back to my childhood,
One thing I would do if I might.
I'd go salt the sheep with my grandpa,
And feel again the delight.

I had as I raced hand in hand with my sister
And watched 'round the bend in the lane,
'Till grandpa appeared in his buggy,
In spite of the sun or the rain.

Then proudly we rode beside him.
Soon grandpa said "Sakes alive".
While I open the gate to the pasture
Do you s'pose that you could drive?"

He took the pail from the buggy.
And scattered pile after pile,
Of gleaming white salt crystals,
As far as the neighbor's stile.

While he called "Sheepie so boss"
Then quickly from under the trees
They came, so eager for salt.
That some fell down on their knees.

Then we all rode back home to mother
Whom we were most anxious to see.
And had fresh hickory nut cookies,
With candy and cambric tea.

BRACK MAN'S PRAYER

Grace McKee Bottles

"Please Mistuh Load doan' git hebbier
On dis pore ol' niggah's frame."
An' de load done ansuh, "Brack Man, Taint no trouble-
Jes' a game.

"Doan' square yosef
An' hurt along so pround,
Wiggle 'long loose-like
Shet up yer groanin' loud.

"I is a gettin' hebbier
I feels it in yer bones.
But amble 'long thankful-like
Fergit dis hebby load.

"An' Old Man Load'll promise Niggah
Promise true-
He'll try to shift a little
Of de misery offen you.

"Effen you pull--He push
An' yo'll soon be goin' through
Ol' Load a sittin' pretty
But a pushin' Niggah, too.

VISITING A MAORI SCHOOL

Edith Waterman

Before Mars laid his devastating hand on the South seas, Rarotonga, most important of the seven islands of the Hervey group, had impressed its tropical charm on the memory of thousands of tourists who had cruised that way.

The island's topography is one of pleasant contrasts. Towering volcanic peaks etch a rugged skyline the length of the island. The mountains are broken by valleys of pictorial loveliness. The surf breaks gently on white sandy beaches framed by coral reefs. Blue water sparkles in the sunshine.

Copra, coffee, pearls, hulahula skirts, are the punctuation marks which place a tropical emphasis on this island story.

The natives of this Polynesian fairyland are Maoris, a highly intelligent people, who took readily to the Christian teachings of the early missionaries and have since maintained a keen interest in education.

When I visited (1935) this British-owned island, it was vacation-time for teachers north of the equator, but "down under" it was late autumn and all the schools were in session.

Thus it happened that I was able to slip away from the routine prescribed for tourists to visit a Maori school tucked away in a coconut grove.

Maori Children

In the little schoolroom were crowded 50 Maori boys and girls, all writing on slates (not paper) when we first appeared. Not a word of English did they know when they became pupils three years before.

The teacher asked what they would like to do to entertain us. With one simultaneous burst of enthusiasm they said, "Sing." Their first number was Mary had a Little Lamb. With great gusto they emphasized words in that song I had never thought much about but to them every word and every syllable was vital.

When they finished I said, "Was there really a Mary and a little lamb?" To this question their affirmative answer was unanimous. No doubt there. Then I said, "Mary and the little lamb lived in Massachusetts."

Such puzzled scowls as indented their foreheads! They had never heard the long name of that state I mentioned. Then I tried again. "Mary and the little lamb lived about 20 miles west of Boston." The name Boston was about as foreign to their minds as Massachusetts.

Subconsciously I said to myself, "Imagine, think of any man, woman or child living in this world who has never heard of Boston!" Finally in desperation I said, "Little Mary and her lamb lived in America."

Joyous America

All at once light broke through the darkened clouds of their countenances and their faces were wreathed with smiles of recognition of a familiar name they greatly liked. They nodded to one another and repeated over and over again the word. "America" with such joy and relish I shall never forget.

Evidently some parent, teacher or friend (perhaps all three) had been kind enough to impress that magic word "America" on their intelligent young minds as to make it call forth joy.

It really had been fun to turn from tourist to teacher for that brief half hour. In my memory is etched a picture of those happy brown-skinned youngsters lustily singing Mary Had a Little Lamb, and their enthusiastic pleasure in learning, that way off in the magic land of America, there really once lived a Mary and her little lamb.

A GHOSTLY RAINBOW

Faith Hunt

Last night a ghostly rainbow
Spanned the starlit sky.
A filmy floating semi-circle
Floated before my eye.

No prismic colors there, as it danced
In the pale moon light,---
* But all combined in a milky ring---
A bow of dazz'ling white.

REST

Carl Yoshimine

Rest, rest my child,
Tomorrow, tomorrow is
another day.
Wake, work, labor
for the lord.
Then a crown of glory shall
be aided.

Trust in Him,
Trust in Him,
Thou shall find
Comfort there.
Be not afraid,
for He never fails.

Pray my son,
Pray my son.
Remember Him
Before each meal.
Prayer changes things, my son
And only prayer can change a thing.

Read the Word, my son
Read the Word, my son
Drink from the fountain
Of living water.
Until thy life
No longer thirst.
When thou shall meet
Thy Father at His feet.