

[Mrs. Marguerite R. Thomas]

Written by,

Mabel V. Jones,

307 First Avenue

Rome, Georgia.

[Home?], Georgia,

February 16, 1939

(Mrs.) Marguerite R. Thomas,

West Seventh Street, Rome, Ga.

Recreational Center

Gladys Metcalf, although reared without a mother, lived a life of ease and indulgence in her early youth. Her father commanded a salary quite adequate to care for his two daughters, and to assist his aged mother and father, who, in turn, cared for his two motherless girls, indulging them rather more than was necessary, or quite good for their character building, as they considered that life was to be ladled out to them on a golden platter, at their command.

Gladys attended boarding school, where she graduated with honors. She is quite an artist, and also writes poetry. While she has never taken any lessons in art, she draws quits well, and her poems, which she writes on all occasions, and on many subjects, but mostly about children, are quite worthy of mention, and Good Housekeeping and other magazines of

Library of Congress

note have told her they considered them good, but not quite in line for their magazines. She is very persistent, and keeps hoping to be able to let them be published some day. Below is given one which she wrote one evening, after having received a scare over a misadventure of one of the boys:

THE WORKING MOTHER'S PRAYER. Be with my little boys, dear God,, I pray; I must leave them with You here again today— Those ever-racing, reckless little feet— Go with them when they chase across the street To search for balls that have bounced out of sight Please, God, stay here 'til I get home tonight! Four little hands, God, on two little boys Choose danger often when they choose their toys— Those jagged, rusty cans, the broken jars That by child-magic turn to trains and cars, The many things they handle thoughtlessly Please keep those four hands safe today for me! 2 I know You're busy God, but the design Of all the Universe seems working fine And running smoothly, so You won't forget My boys —They are such little fellows yet, And You're so wise, God, You must surely know How very anxious mothers' thoughts can grow. And then, when work is through and I can come Back where my heart has been all day—at home— In thanks to You, I'll say on bended knee, “Dear God, You've been so very good to me; —And, even though they're safe within my [sight?]- “Please, God, stay with us through the night.”

Married at an early age, not realising that the man she married was irresponsible, or rather, not taking the matter into consideration as of any importance whatsoever, she found several years of her life rather stormy. Although her husband was quite faithful to her, and was kind and pleasant at home, a willing worker, and a pleasant companion, without the assistance of her husband's people, and sometimes that of her own father, she would have had very hard rows, as he could not resist the temptation to drink, and money in his pocket meant self indulgence to such an extent that the family needs were neglected.

Of a very alert mind, having come of a family who possessed unusually bright minds, and were outstanding in literary and legal professions, she was yet without any experience as

Library of Congress

to ways and means of making money for herself and her two small boys, of whom she is very proud. The welfare of her children is the most important interest in life to her, and no sacrifice is too great to make for them.

her disposition is pleasant, and although her hair is "red", the usual application of a fiery temper supposed to accompany it fails to materialize, as she is calm and reasonable in all her dealings, and her patience with her children is really rare.

3

After trying various places for {?} in which she had no experience, she was finally able to secure employment through the Government on a .f. A. Project, being placed in the office of the Recreational Center. When first entering the office she had no experience whatsoever, except that she had learned to type on a borrowed machine, used at home. Her work was not so hard and her employer kind and helpful, and she learned very quickly, and is now quite able to handle all matters pertaining to her work without difficulty. She is now studying short-hand, alone, having secured a manual and learned the fundamentals of the study, and taking as much dictation as possible in her routine work.

Even though Gladys, all of her husband's people, and all of his friends (for he has a charming personality and makes friends easily) tried to help him overcome his drinking, he allowed the habit to grow, and it eventually affected his disposition, his ability to work, and life became a nightmare of worry, fear and uncertainty. Finally, realising that it was unfair to her children, to her mother-in-law, who was loyally standing by to help her in her fight to care for her children, and to herself, one secured a divorce. Still caring deeply for him, not only as her husband and the father of her children, but as a diseased, rather than a self-indulged person, she carries the load of maintaining the home, educating her boys and giving them the high ideals of a Christian home, with chin up, and a smile for all, although an {acne?} is deep in her heart.

Library of Congress

Her greatest burden is having the children ask for their “daddy”. Their father, though very weak, was devoted to his family, and was never too busy to build a toy for his boys, or show them the rules of a game, or enter their play with them. He was always a “pal” to his sons, and if he is 4 never able to be with them again, they will always treasure the memory of their father, as they only saw his gentleness, and were protected from the unpleasantness that went with the life he was living.

Through her work she has “been able to secure rooms for herself, her mother-in-law and her children at a much cheaper rental than she could otherwise get it, being near the playground, and are under the supervision of a very able director, who is also a friend of Gladys. The environment of her home is not of the standard to which she is accustomed, or that she desires, as the children are thrown with children of illiterate classes to some extent, and they quite easily acquire their [verucular?] of speech, and other {manneriame?} Billy, the younger son, only six years old, in his baby days used very correct English, very unusual to a child of his years. Since moving into this community, he has adopted the Manner of speech of the children he plays with, [?] few days ago, the playground being closed, as the leaders had gone home, some children came to the door. Billy, in a very courteous manner, went to the door and said: “The playground is closed, Miss Collock has already “came and went.”

The mother often worries lest, by trying to give them the material things they need, she gives them an environment that will be detrimental to their character building; then, she will try to figure that the best in them will develop with hardships, and she usually stays “on the fence as to whether she is right or wrong.”

For a person who has had no hardships in youth, and nothing to bring out the steel in her character during her early days, Gladys has developed a wonderful strength of endurance, and with it all she carries a pleasantness that is rather contagious to those with whom

Library of Congress

she comes in contact. (The usual remark that is made when speaking of her is that she is “trustworthy” or “good”)

5

The older boy, “Sonny, who is nearly ten years old, is very large for his age, and is considered by anyone who doesn't know his age, to be about twelve or fourteen. He is larger than some of the fourteen year old boys who are his associates. His mind is very bright, and he masters his studies easily. During the first three years of school, he was an honor pupil almost every month, unless kept out by illness. Since moving to the present location, although his marks are high, his average being 95.45 to 94.62, he has not been able to attain the honor roll. His mother will be elated the first of the month, being confident that he will make it this month,” and when the card comes at the end of the month with one or two demerits, she slumps, for her disposition is to be either in the heights or the depths - there is no middle course. After talking the matter over with the teachers in that ward, she has been advised that it is hard for any boy to make the honor roll in this particular grade, as a certain element is in the ascendent, which demoralises the whole grade, and “Sonny” is not perfect - just a boy. This month he made “A” on every subject, 100 in attendance and 99 in deportment. A note from the teacher said: “This beautiful card spoiled by chewing gum” and it was learned that on the last day, “Sonny” had a mouth full (almost a whole package) of gum, and did not try to keep the teacher from seeing it, but rather displayed it, so the general conclusion is that he is afraid of being called a “sissy” by the boys in the grade, and deliberately failed to make the honor roll.

Billy is not quite so bright in his studies; it is harder for him to grasp a subject, or else he is too energetic (or nervous) to concentrate. He was rather handicapped in starting out, as his books did not come and the other classes were ahead of him and he could not catch up easily; then too, his teacher said he was very sensitive, and it is noted in the home that his feelings can be hurt very easily. He is bright, small of status, white-haired 6 and

Library of Congress

freckled faced, with his front teeth wideapart; in fact, a freckled faced boy, shown on a magazine cover.

The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are very close companions; each striving at all times to do something that will help the other, and praise for the other being constantly given. It is quite unusual to find such companionship existing between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The work of the home is carried on by each of them, the grandmother caring for the home and the children while the mother works, she doing quite a lot of the work at home after her office hours. Gladys prepares breakfast in the morning, dresses the children for school, prepares their lunch, and does as much as possible to “clean house” before she leaves, as the grandmother does not rest well at night, and sleeps late. The grandmother prepares the dinner, sews, and sometimes does the washing on the washing machine that is furnished by the Community Chest, but as it is rather hard for her, and she is susceptible to cold, Gladys does much of this work after she returns at night. The ironing and other work is divided between them, the one having the most leisure doing the job.

On Saturday, most of the house-cleaning is done, and everything laid aside for Sunday morning, when Gladys dresses the two children and herself for Sunday school and church, which is missed only on the {rarest?} occasions, and the children consider it a part of their weekly to attend; Sunday school is just as essential to them as day school, and they carry their Bibles to reach the standard of excellence. When the meals are served, Grace is always said at the table by “Sonny” but Billy will not allow anyone to begin eating until it is over.

7

The general health of the family is good. The children have had the usual ailments of measles, mumps, sometimes tonsillitis in a light form. At this time Sonny has the mumps, but is getting along nicely, and except for being out of school, it is of little consequence. The grandmother had a very serious throat infection about a year ago, but her sister took her to the hospital for treatment, taking care of the expenses entailed. She was fed

Library of Congress

through the veins for a week. She recuperated from this illness, but is not very strong. She has other children who are in much better circumstances financially, who could give her every care and attention, and are willing and anxious to do so, but she feels that she can be of use to Gladys and her children, and will not leave her to go to her own children to live.

The diet for the family is varied, The main item on the menu being milk and butter. The grandmother and smaller son, Billy, both depend almost entirely upon milk as a diet. Sometimes Billy will eat nothing but milk and bread. About three years ago the situation was rather acute, as the family budget would not allow for a sufficient amount of milk for the family. An aunt bought a cow, paying \$5.00 for her, and found her to be a five-gallon a day cow, when properly fed. At the present time they are unable to keep her at home, as there is no barn at the Recreational Center, where they are now living, so a man in the country is feeding and caring for her, and giving the family a gallon of sweet milk per day, which cares for the situation very nicely. They have been offered a nice sum for the cow, but are unwilling to sell her. They also have grown vegetables quite often and most of the time they keep a small garden, with turnip greens, collards, onions and lettuce. At this they are minus the garden, also, but they manage to get the 8 vegetables cheaply. They also serve dried beans, butter beans and peas often. Very little meat is used, although the grandmother and smaller grandson are great "meat eaters."

The main recreation, or diversion, for Gladys is the association with her husband's brother and his wife. The two families have always been very close, and now they spend each week-end together. One Saturday and Sunday will be spent at the home of Gladys, and the next week-end with the brother-in-law and sister-in-law; each carries a small supply of groceries to help care for the week-end meals, without expense to the other. They all attend Sunday school and church on Sunday mornings.

The home is rather hard to describe. It was at one time a home for under-privileged children, but the house has been abandoned and a new one built. The old building was

Library of Congress

taken over by the local sponsors as a recreational center for the children in this district. They also installed a washing machine for the benefit of the women in that community. A janitor is kept to keep a fire and hot water for the use of the women in their washing. Each person is allowed to use the machine, with hot and cold water, one hour, for a dime. The grandmother looks after the engagements and collects for the use of the machine, which amount is turned in to the sponsors for the partial up-keep of the machine. The old home is large, and from the outside looks very nice, setting back from the street, with a large yard, with big cedar trees surrounding. The walls are bad, the plaster being broken in many places, the floors sunken, and the room which the use is badly lighted. They have to burn electric lights all day, but anything over the dollar minimum they pay is provided by the sponsors. They furnish their own fuel, but the house rent is given them for the care of the home and services rendered. The greatest inconvenience is the bedroom 9 facilities, all having to sleep in one room, but with plenty of ventilation. They have a nice, new, gas stove, but their quarters are too small to care for their furniture, having the use of only two rooms (although they have access to a large sun parlor, formerly a glassed-in sleeping porch for the children at the Open Door) with furniture for five. They have placed their piano in the recreational hall for the supervisors to use in their plays; their machine in the sun parlor, where the leaders sometimes make clothes for needy children in the community; their dining table is also in the sun parlor, and magazines and other articles are kept on this, and in this way they are well cared for.

Insurance is kept on all the family. The mother-in-law's insurance is kept paid by her sister, and Gladys keeps small policies on both the children and herself, also one on her former husband, knowing that if misfortune should overtake him the family would have to meet the expenses.

Gladys is very loyal to the administration, feeling that she is very fortunate to live in a country where the leaders are interested in the masses to the extent that our government

Library of Congress

is, and is confident that now, that she has had some experience in the business world, she will be able to carry on.