

## [Here We Can Be Glad #7]

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subject: Living Lore

HERE WE CAN BE GLAD

Chapter 7 New Hampshire

At last the day had come! To-night Katherine would go to the court house and be examined for her final citizenship papers. She was not only glad but confident. A friend of theirs had loaned her the questions he had been asked. He had taken out papers in Chicago and had somehow managed to obtain a copy of the questions. These questions had been passed around to all his friends until now the paper was grimy and about to fall apart. Every day Katherine asked herself the questions,

"Who makes the laws in the country?"

"Who makes the laws in the state?"

"Who makes the laws in the city?"

"What do you call the head of the country? What is his name?"

"What do you call the head of the state? Who is he?"

"What do you call the head of the city? What is his name?"

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"How long do they hold office?"

"Who are their helpers?"

"Why do you wish to become an American citizen?"

And so on and on.

"Yes, me know, me know everything on paper. Take long time to answer last question. Me just say, so I can vote! "

The money was ready too, seven dollars. One for her picture, one for the man who writes the answers and five dollars to the U.S. government . Same as before, seven dollars for first papers. She had managed to save this amount from her earnings. "Good, money all ready, my money."

It was three years since she had received her first papers. It

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seemed a long time. But it was more difficult to learn now than when she first came to America. Katherine thinks, " Only one year school in Poland country. No have time to go school in America. Work in mill all day, come home, work all evening. Wash, clean, iron, cook, care for leetle children. Too busy-go to school."

She sighs with relief, "No more school. No more long words. No more, 'Now Katherine you read the next page.' or 'Now, Katherine you take the next sentance on the board.' "

Those sentances on the board! Katherine could see them, one under the other. The strange, new words always tied her up inside. The teacher was so quick, he spoke so loudly her ears ached. It seemed that the less she understood the new words the louder

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he spoke. Sometimes the crayon would snap as he vigorously tapped the words on the board. When this happened she never know anything.

Of course it was a fine thing to go to school. To be to-gether, all learning. Their concerted efforts would help each one obtain his papers. Katherine was very proud of herself, nevertheless she was glad not to go anymore. She stretched herself at the thought. For two years, nearly every week, she would sit for two hours in those children's school seats. The parish school only had seats for children. The men never could find a comfortable position for their legs and feet and the women appeared stuffed into the seats.

Katherine smiles, "One man, foony, no sit down. All time stand up! One lady sit in front, without desk. Too / fat, me and 'nother lady pull her out seat, first time come." She laughed aloud at the remembrance. "Everybody stiff, everbody double up, everybody glad to walk home."

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At last Katherine could join the Polish-American Citizens [ club Club ?]. True, she had often been there to dances, as a guest. She had gone with the rest of them into the Hall, had sat down at the round tables, had had her beer and highballs with the rest. She too ate the little fish, made of pretzle pretzel dough and the good sausages. The first time she had felt a little odd about this drinking. She thought of Jan, how unpleasant he was after drinking too many whiskies and beer. Looking [?] around she could see no one acting like Jan. As no one ever acted like Jan she gave up thinking about the matter.

They were never in the Hall more than an hour before they heard the orchestra's music. Up the stairs they went to the dance. Once in that hall everone stayed. "No one go out get drink, come back. If go out, except when say so, get in again , must pay money." There was really no need for leaving, dressing rooms for "Ladies" and "Gents" were conveniently placed at the side of the musicians' platform ! Everyone stayed.

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Since they started drinking at seven and dancing at eight an intermission was declared around ten thirty. Then they once more crowded crowded into the smoke filled bar-room. Once again they fortified themselves. Four men back of the bar & three men on the floor kept everybody filled and satisfied. They These men seemed perpetual motion, not a moment did they stop. Nor did they collide with the patrons [nor?] each other, nor did they drop a tray or drink. Katherine watched it all and loved it. "This is freedom, this America, everybody glad!"

That had been very pleasant and lots of fun but now she would be a / member of the club. Now she too could take friends to banquets and dances. She too could wear a uniform and march in parades. She hoped there would be a parade soon. She had tried on a friend's outfit and she knew it was very becoming to her dark vivacity.

"Organization clothes pretty. Shoes, dress, gloves all white. Cape all bright red, cerise, white inside. Cap cerise,too." Katherine could scarcely wait to wrap herself in the silk folds of that lovely, flowing cape. Then the badge she could wear! As large as a silver dollar. Engraved with the name of the organization and its insignia. One side [?] bright, the other side in black, Katherine knew / what that was for, "Wear black, somebody die. Geeve them flowers, plenty flowers. Go to funeral, march, wear black [?] side." Always this idea comforted her. "When die pay one hundred dollars and geeve flowers, plenty flowers."

Katherine belonged to other organizations She was president of the one at her church. and very active in the others. However to be a member of the Citizens' Club had been her ambition for many years. This had been a big incentive for her to study for her papers. Of course she wanted to vote and of course she wanted to be equal to Jan. It would be a glad day when she heard Charlotte, Frances and Henry say to the neighbor's children, "Of course my mother is voting. She is an American citizen."