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"I am a Soldier!"



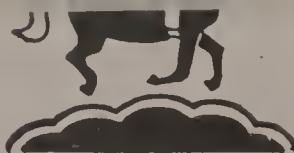
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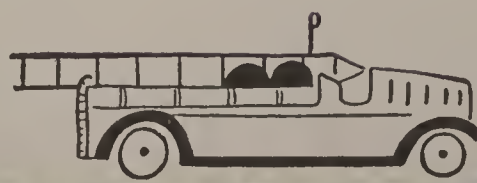
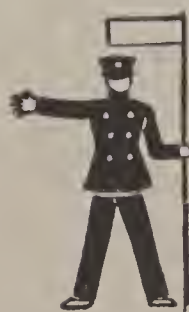
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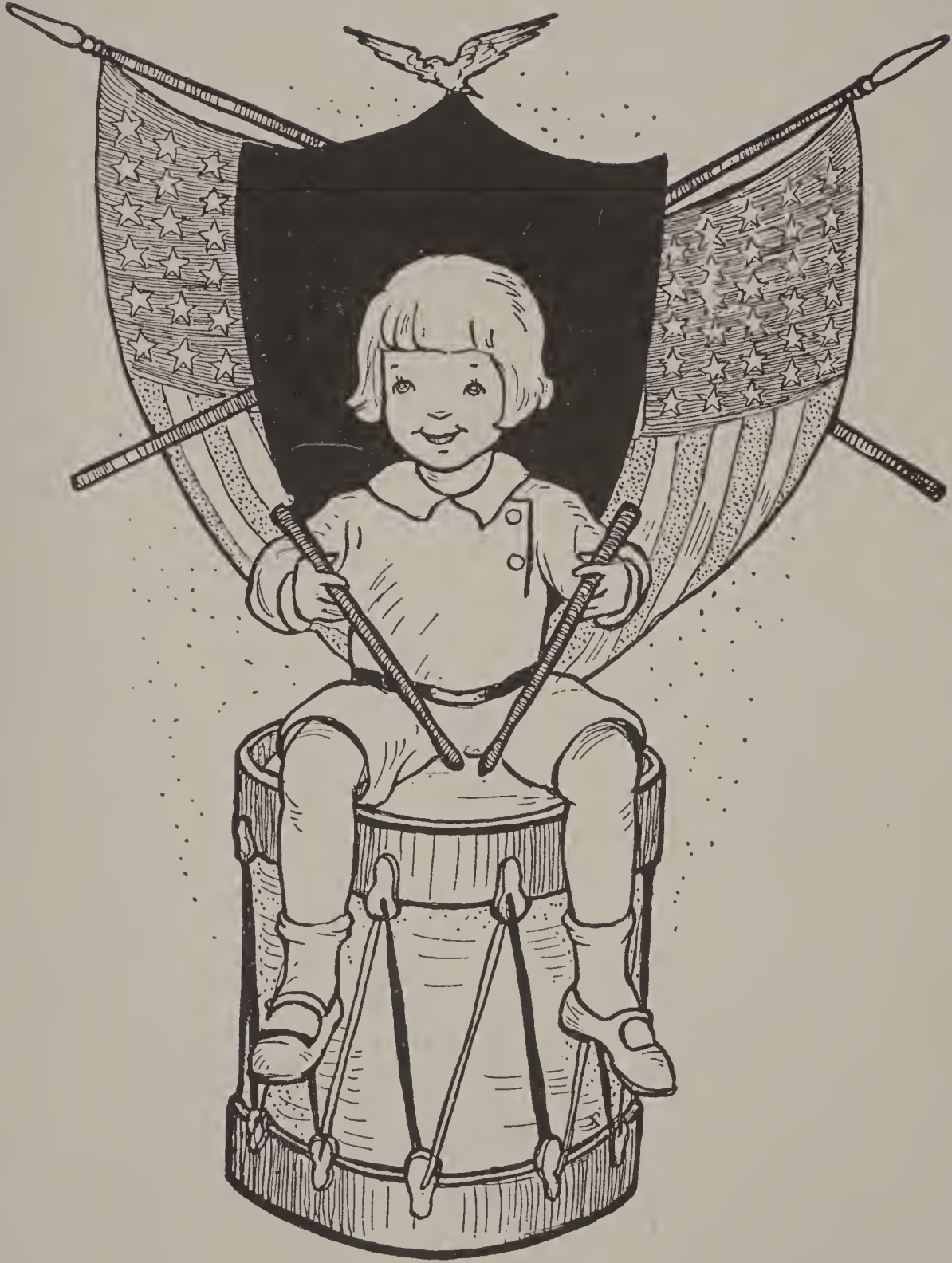
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FLAG TO THE FRONT.



Little American Books

Flag To The Front

by *arilda*
Bertha M. Rhodes
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Eleanore M. Hubbard

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Little American Books

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IT was Christmas morning!

When Peter, Andy and Joe awoke each little boy made a dash for the stocking he had hung up the night before. They found them filled with oranges, candy, games, toys,—for Joe a drum, for Peter a horn and for Andy a gun.

“Hurrah! Hurrah!” they shouted. “Let’s play parade!”

“This is Christmas Day,” said Mary, “and you cannot play in here. You will disturb our babies,” and she cuddled her new Christmas doll in her arms.

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“Babies like to be rocked and sung to,” said Anne, “and if you play parade it will frighten them.”

“We will play by ourselves,” replied the boys, and off they went.

The boys formed in line out on the sidewalk. Peter led. He was the oldest. David came last. He lived next door and had neither gun nor horn, so he carried a flag which his Aunt Josephine had given him. The line of boys started down the walk, keeping step as best they could.

“Halt!” cried a voice near by. The boys stopped in surprise. Near them stood a young man dressed in a lieutenant’s uniform.

“Colors to the front!” he commanded. “Don’t you know? The flag goes first. You



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follow the flag. The flag does not follow you.”

“Come up to the front, Davie,” called Peter. “He’s little,” he continued, “and he didn’t have a gun so his Aunt Josephine gave him a flag.”

“That is all right,” said the Lieutenant. “Size is not the only thing that counts. The bravest man carries the flag, for no matter what happens it must never touch the ground.”

Andy, Joe and Peter looked at one another. Just then any one of them would have been glad to trade gun, horn or drum for the flag, but David was already at the front of the line. He could be brave, he knew, though just how he could not have told.

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“Company, forward march! Left! Left!” commanded their new found friend. The boys marched down the walk, turned, and came back again.

“Good!” he said. “That was well done. You kept step together. Now I will tell you why the flag goes first. You see the stars?” pointing to the stars in the flag. “Each star stands for a certain part of our country, one for New York, one for California, one for Illinois, and so on. This star,” pointing to one near the center, “stands for the state in which we live. All the stars stand for the whole country. They say to us that everyone, no matter where he may be, must help to make our country good and beautiful, just as the stars, shining in the sky above, help to make the night bright.”

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“Oh! Let’s take turns carrying the flag! May we, Davie?” the boys asked.

David was willing, so Peter carried the flag while Joe became leader in his stead.

“David! David!” Aunt Josephine was calling. David ran into the house.

“I need more eggs,” said Aunt Josephine. “Run over to Mrs. Miller’s and bring me a dozen. Here is the money. Be careful not to break them. You know what Daddy said would happen if you broke the eggs again.”

“Yes, Aunt Josephine.”

“I will go along,” cried Joe, “and help him.”

It was not far to Mrs. Miller’s. David paid for the eggs and put them in his cart.

“I had better carry the eggs,” said Joe, “and then they can’t break.”



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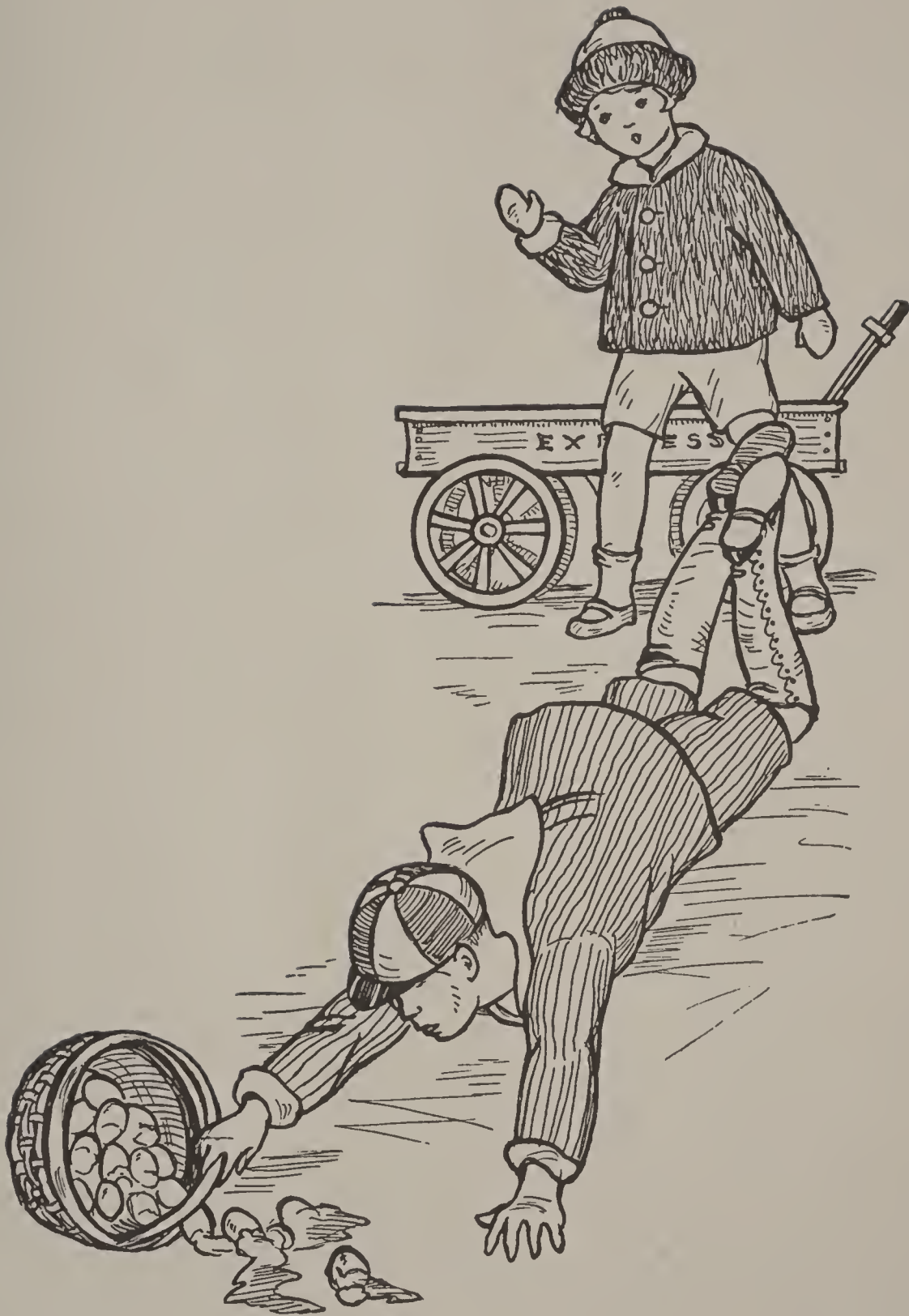
Joe had gone only a little way when he slipped. Down he went. Crash went the eggs. A few minutes later David walked into the kitchen and set the basket of broken eggs on the table.

“David!” exclaimed Aunt Josephine. “How could you do it! Nearly every egg is broken!”

“David, I am surprised!” said his mother.

“David! Come here!” called his father. “You know what I said. Now I shall have to punish you even though it is Christmas Day.” David stood before his father. His face was white, his lips quivered, but he said never a word. Just then the door flew open and Joe burst into the room.

“Here’s the money for the eggs!” he exclaimed, out of breath.



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“The money for what eggs?” asked David’s father.

“For the eggs I broke,” said Joe. “I fell down with them. Davie didn’t break them.”

David’s father sat down and looked at his son.

“Why did you not tell me, Davie?” he said.

“I didn’t want Joe to be punished,” replied David, “for he didn’t mean to break the eggs.”

“Hurrah for Davie! Hurrah for Davie!” shouted the boys, as they ran away from the open door. “Davie shall carry the flag!”

So David became the regular bearer of the flag.

* * * *

The Lieutenant proved to be a friend of



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Aunt Josephine's and was to have Christmas dinner at David's house. There was great excitement among the children, especially when they learned they were invited over for an hour after dinner.

"Tell us a story about some one who loved the flag," begged Peter, when they were gathered together at David's house.

"And who didn't have any gun," said Betty. The boys laughed but the Lieutenant looked sober.

"That is all right, Betty. I can tell you just such a story. His name was Old Abe, and he loved the American flag.

"In the early springtime, many years ago, Chief Sky and his Indians went out to make maple sugar. One day they discovered an eagle's nest in the top of an old pine tree.



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The nest, made of sticks and mud, was as large as a tub. In order to reach it the Indians had to cut down the tree. In the nest was a baby eagle not yet able to fly. Chief Sky took the baby eagle home and traded it for a bushel of corn. Some one bought it and gave it to a company of soldiers who were about to start upon a long march.

“ ‘The eagle stands for our country,’ they said, ‘just as our flag stands for our country. Let us take him with us. He shall be one of our company and his place shall be beside the flag.’

“They named him Old Abe, after Abraham Lincoln, and they fastened red, white and blue ribbons about his neck and a rosette upon his breast. Then they gave him a perch, shaped like a shield, with flags at

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either side, and appointed a man to carry it. On this perch the eagle rode wherever they went.

“Old Abe was a beautiful bird, strong and tireless. He knew every one of his companions and was always interested in what they were doing. One day when they were marching between crowds of cheering people, Old Abe caught up a corner of the flag, and holding it in his beak, flapped his wings again and again as though to say:

“ ‘Here comes the American Flag and the American Eagle! Follow them!’

“But his company was not always marching among cheering crowds. Sometimes they were tramping lonely woods with little to eat and no place to sleep. One day, cold and hungry, they came to a river through

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which they must wade. The water was waist deep. Old Abe was cold and hungry, but he looked at the ripples and the fishes in the water and began to whistle a merry tune. His companions joined in, and soon all were whistling and laughing. Many times Old Abe kept his companions happy and that made them stronger for the journey.

“One day the men on the other side tried to get the eagle. They started after him, but Old Abe saw them. With a scream he darted up into the sky, snapping the cord which held him to his perch. Higher and higher he flew. 'Round and 'round he circled among the clouds. Then looking down from the blue sky he screamed in fury, as though to say:



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“The Eagle and the Stars and Stripes stand for my Country. You cannot harm me’!”

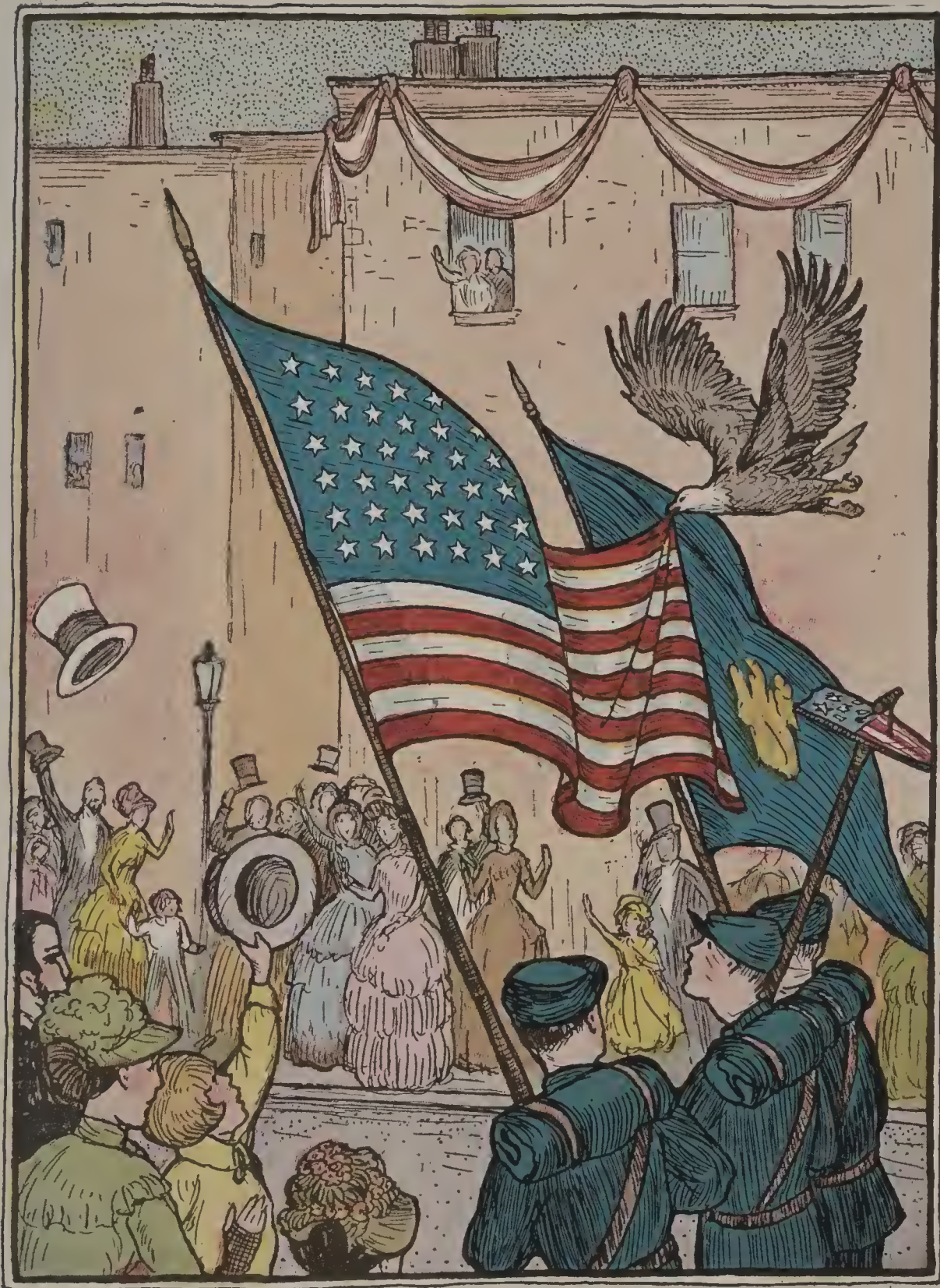
“When the trouble was over, Old Abe went back to his perch and his friends.”

“I should like to have seen Old Abe,” cried Davie.

“So would I,” said each of the others.

“Old Abe was brave in time of trouble, but he liked peace best,” continued their friend. “In time, all of the men went back to their homes. Then they made a home for Old Abe in one of the public buildings, where everyone could go to see him.

“Sometimes they took him to other cities where there were great gatherings of people. Wherever he went the flag went with him, and the people cheered them both.



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“Once, when Old Abe was on a visit, they gave him a rooster for his dinner. Eagles like chicken to eat as well as do little children, but they like to catch their own food, as that is the way of all wild creatures.

“ ‘This is the end of me,’ thought the red rooster. ‘The eagle is my enemy. He will surely kill me.’

“Old Abe looked down at the rooster, turned his head to one side, and gave a low whistle.

“ ‘Come on! Come on!’ he whistled. ‘Come up on the perch! There’s room for two!’ The rooster obeyed. They lived together and became the best of friends. Everybody went to see them.

“ ‘The old eagle has made peace with the rooster!’ they said.

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“Old Abe just whistled on without paying any attention to them. He knew the flag stood first for peace and he was glad to make friends with the rooster.”

“Did you know, boys,” said Aunt Josephine, “that every day the Lieutenant directs the building of a new road which shall lead from here out into the country? All the old marsh land has been drained. Some day homes will be built beside it. There will be playgrounds for little children and green shady places for picnics. That is one way in which a man may serve his country.”

“The road is finished,” said their guest. “Next Thursday we shall christen it and open it to the public. It will be called Lincoln Parkway.”

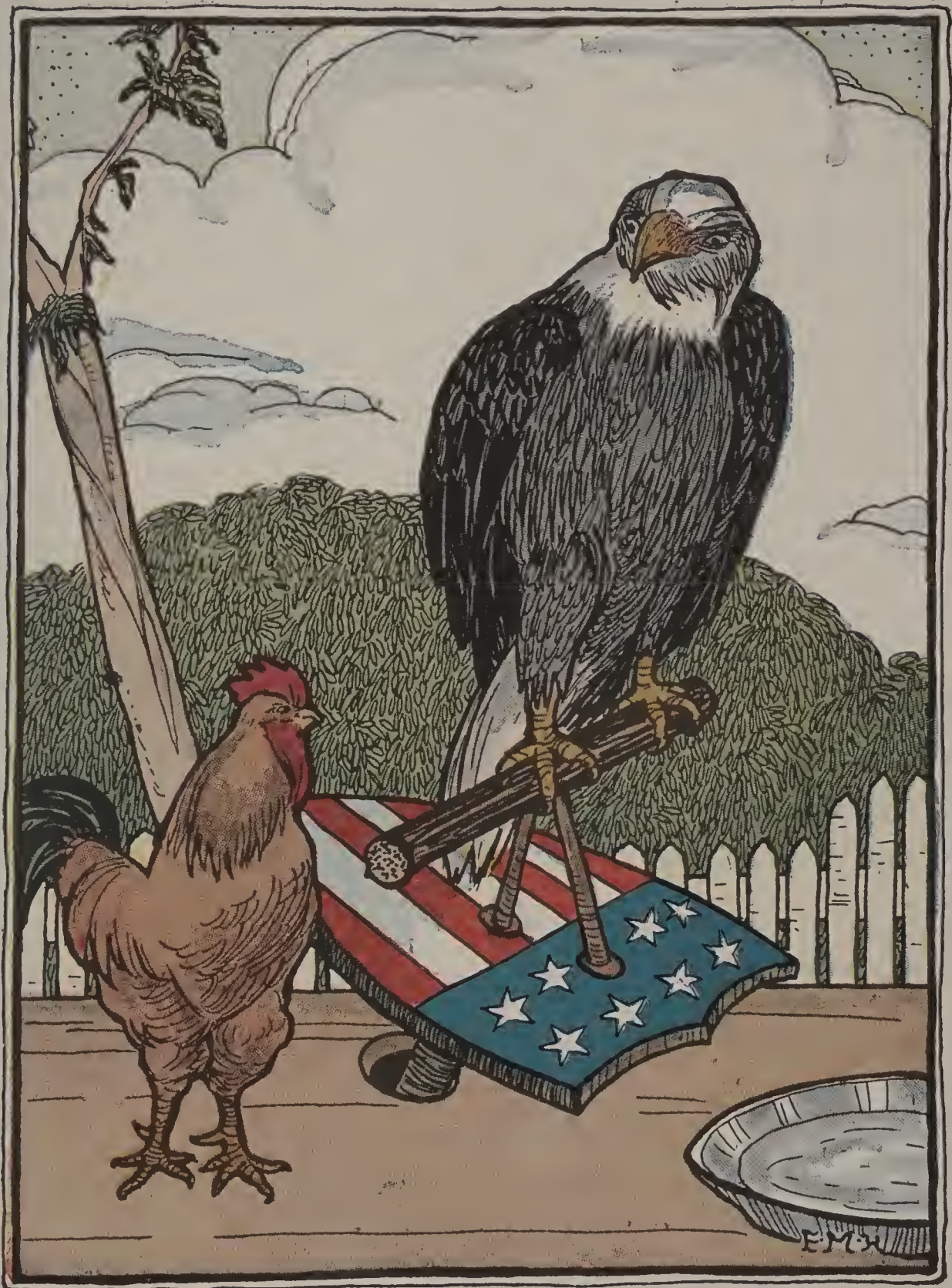
FLAG TO THE FRONT

The hour was over, and the children went back to their play.

* * * *

It was the day of the grand opening of Lincoln Parkway. The plans had been successfully carried out. The workmen stood at one side, hats off, while the people cheered. Then the band came, and beyond, crowds of people, some on foot, others in autos. Some one spoke. The children caught the words, "For all the people"; then everyone cheered.

Aunt Josephine's friend, the Lieutenant, stood, watch in hand, looking anxiously about him. The mayor had not arrived and it was the mayor who was to press the button which should open the highway to the public. Something had detained him. The



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Lieutenant's eye fell upon a company of small boys. One carried a flag, one a banner representing Old Abe, one a horn and one a drum.

"This way, boys," he called. "Which one of you will press the button?"

"Let Davie!" said Joe.

"All right, David, press here!"

David pressed the button. Two lights flashed on in the street below. Two more followed farther on. On, on, on, flashed the lights until they seemed to reach far out into the night. People cheered. Cannons boomed. The band struck up a march and the autos honked their horns as they swept out upon a road of light.

The Lieutenant gave the boys a ride home in his car.



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“How bright the stars are to-night,” he remarked.

“There are more stars in the sky than there are in the American flag,” said Joe. “Ever so many more.”

“It looks,” said David, “as though God had made a great flag to cover the whole world with stars for our country and stars for all the other countries in the world.”

“France and Belgium and England,” cried Peter.

“And Japan and China,” said Andy.

“It does look so,” returned their friend, as he gazed up into the sky. “There are many who believe that some time all countries will see the flag in the Heavens and follow it. Then there will be peace everywhere.”



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“I’m going to build roads when I get big,” said Peter.

“And I’ll build houses along the road,” said David, “with parks and playgrounds.”

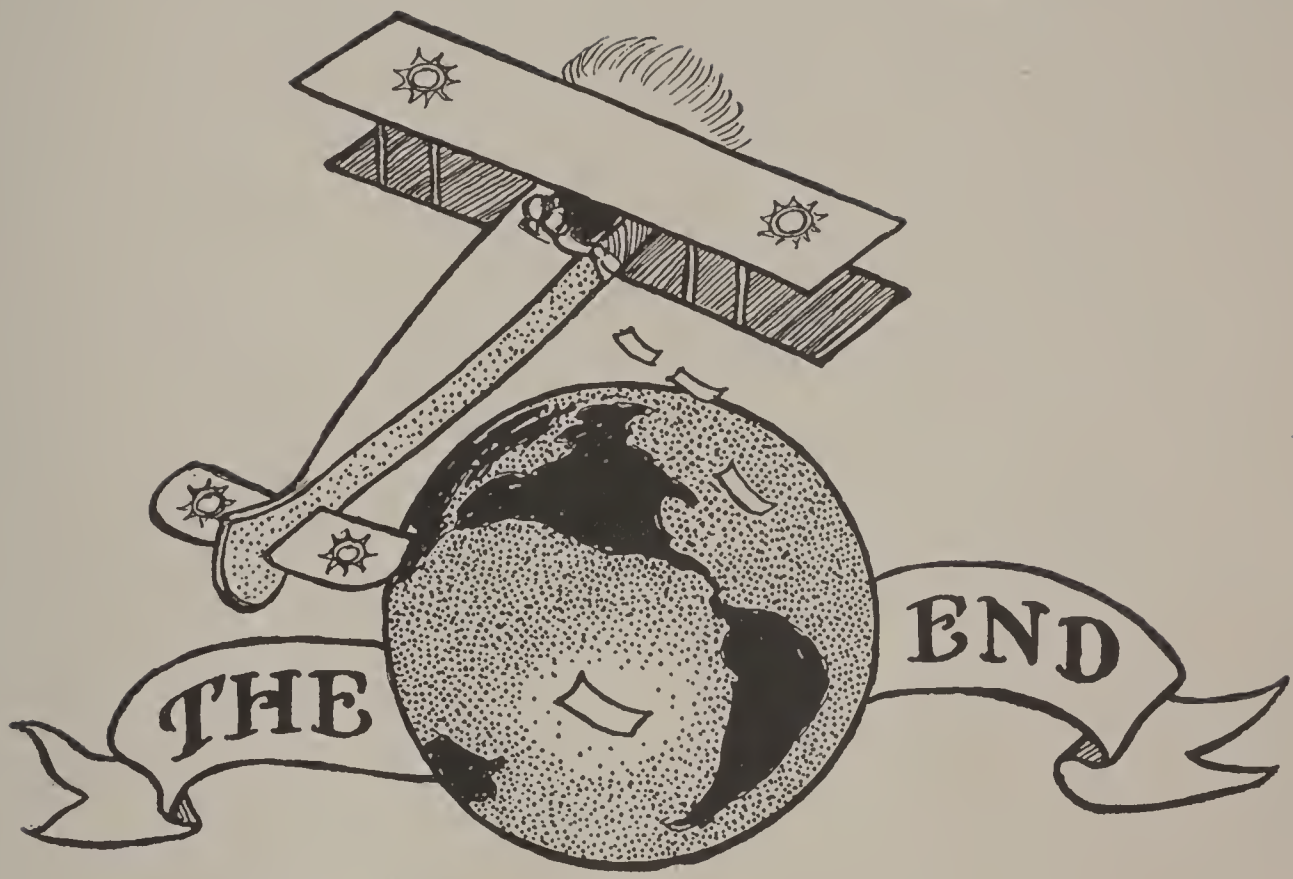
“I’ll build tall towers,” said Andy.

“I will build airplanes,” said Joe, “and fly across the ocean, and go to all the countries in the world!”

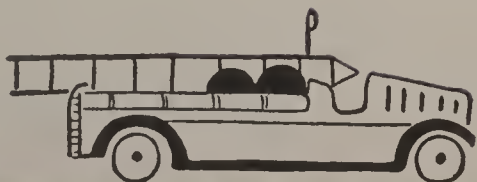
“We’ll all go with you!” chorused the others.

“And we’ll carry good news everywhere,” said David. “People will be glad to see us coming! That’s what we’ll do when we get big.”

They all went into the house to tell Aunt Josephine about the opening of the road and what they planned to do when they grew up.







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