SARA WARE BASSETT

THE STORY OF PORCELAIN

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The Story of Porcelain

by

Sara Ware Bassett

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PLEASE NOTE

These books were written about 100 years ago and show the way people talked, thought, and acted back then. They tell the story of how resources like cotton, lumber, leather, and gold were developed—a process that depended on the hard work of many people. Sometimes the work was done by those who made the profits, and other times it was done by people who were not free, including enslaved individuals.

We know that some parts of these stories include ideas that we now understand to be hurtful and unfair. Our aim in republishing these books is not to support those old views but to share our history so we can all learn from it. By looking at the past, including its mistakes, we hope to learn important lessons that will help us create a kinder and fairer future.

We invite you to read these stories with an awareness of their time and to think about how far we have come—and how much work there is still to do.

Contents

THE BOWL

Some master-craftsman, maker of porcelains,
to the Emperor, the Son of Heaven,
Having attained the paradise of artists, who mould in life and fire,
Fashioned this day:

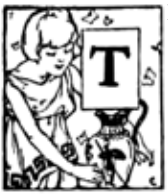
A bowl blue as the iris within the sacred gardens,
Based with a low design of brown bare hills,
A pine or two new-tipped with tender needles,
With oak buds, pink and saffron,
And birds red, brown, and blue.

Into this bowl, exquisite and perishable,
The Patron of all artists heaps light and more light;
Then holding high the brimming chalice, quaffs,
And folds it in his altar-cloth of stars.

Carl H. Grabo. (From the Nation.)

CHAPTER I

INTO THE WOODS



THEO Swift dropped into a chair before the blazing fire in the log cabin, and drew a long breath of delight. At last his dream had come true; he was in the heart of the Maine woods! It was a wonderful experience for a boy of his age to be his father's companion on a fishing trip. Each spring when Dr. Swift had packed his tackle for his annual vacation into the wilderness, and Theo had looked on with hungry eyes as the rods, flies, and tramping boots had been stowed away in the canvas grips, his father had said:

"Wait until you are a bit older, son, and you shall go with me."

And now that day had come, and here he was! It seemed too good to be true.

He glanced up to find his father smiling down at him.

"Well?" questioned the older man. "What do you think of the camp? Does it come up to your expectations?"

"I should say it did!" Theo managed to gasp. "It is great, Father!"

"Think you can be contented here for a month?"

"Contented!" laughed Theo.

"You won't be getting lonesome and wishing you were back in New York?"

"Not much."

"Well, I hope you'll have a good time. Certainly with plenty of fishing and tramping you should. You will find Manuel, our Indian guide, a never-ending source of entertainment; he can do everything from dressing a moose to building a canoe. There isn't a trail through these woods that he couldn't travel blindfolded. You will be perfectly safe with him; only you must do exactly as he says, no matter how silly his orders may seem. He knows the woods better than you do—or than I do, for that matter. Remember you are no longer on Fifth Avenue, where you can call a policeman or a taxicab if you get lost. This vast forest is an entirely different proposition."

Theo nodded.

"How still it is," he said softly.

"Yes," rejoined his father; "that is why it means to me something that no other place can. After the rush of the city, the jangle of telephones, the constant sight of sick people, there is nothing to compare with the restfulness of these woods."

The Doctor, who had been standing with his back to the fire, his hands clasped behind him, drew out his pipe, lighted it, and puffed a ring of smoke into the air.

"You have had a very busy year, Father."

"Yes, and I fancy there will be a still busier one ahead. Before I attack it I feel that it is my duty to get a good rest. In these war days a doctor never knows where he may be needed to serve. Thus far my place seems to have been at a home hos-

pital. With eight of our operating staff in France it has meant much extra work, too. Not that I am complaining of that. I am only too glad to do my bit wherever it is. But I had got to the point where I felt that the man who can give the best service is the man who does not allow himself to become too fagged. So I determined to take my usual vacation even though on the face of it it seemed a crime to devote myself to nothing but fishing for a whole month."

Theo glanced into the face of the big, earnest man before him; he felt suddenly very grown up. His father had seldom talked to him like this.

"This war," went on Dr. Swift thoughtfully, "is going to make demands on all of us—demands for money, work, and time. We should be proud to give these, for it is the first time our country has ever asked anything of our generation. We have taken unthinkingly all the benefits America has to offer—libraries; schools; well ordered cities to live in; the blessings of constant peace and prosperity. For it we have returned to the government only the slight taxes demanded for the up-keep of these things; and most of us, I blush to say, have grumbled a great deal about it, at that. As a nation we were becoming too comfortable, too rich, too selfish, too complacent. Now a crisis has arisen when the United States is asking more of us, as it has every right to do; and we should be eager to prove our gratitude for all we have so freely received. Only those who have traveled much can fully realize what a home and an education in a place like America mean. Never forget, son, that all we can do, even to the sacrifice of our lives, is none too high a price to pay for our beloved country."

"I wish I might have gone to France, Father," said Theo earnestly.

"A boy of fifteen is too young to go," returned Dr. Swift. "If you were older I should be the first to bid you Godspeed, for it is a great opportunity for service. Those who are not sharing it are missing one of life's richest experiences. It means danger, privation, perhaps death; but it means also the exercise of all that is finest in our natures—patriotism, heroism, the dedication of ourselves to a great cause. I should have been proud to have you in France, Theo. However, there is much a boy can do here and now. He can begin being a loyal unselfish citizen, and training himself to bear his part when he shall be older. Get your education first. Prepare yourself to be of value to humanity so that when your time to help comes it may find you useful and ready."

There was a moment of silence.

The great logs in the rough stone chimney crackled and snapped, and up the flue roared the blaze. Outside all was still save when the breeze stirred the giant pines causing them to give out a mighty whisper like the murmur of the sea.

It was a cozy interior over which the firelight flashed.

The log cabin had been sheathed to keep it warm and tight, and to conceal its barrenness on the walls had been tacked a few gaily colored prints. On one side of the room were several well-filled bookshelves, while on the opposite wall were racks for pipes and guns. From over the fireplace an elk's head peered forth, catching the scarlet glow from the fire on its mammoth antlers. Two small bedrooms which led out of this living-room completed the cabin. Outside

stood four others built exactly like this one, and in addition a dining-cabin, cook-house, and two cabins for the guides.

Aside from this tiny settlement on the lake's edge there was not a house for twenty miles. It was a wilderness indeed!

"Are there any other people staying here at the camp beside ourselves?" inquired Theo at last.

Dr. Swift, who had seated himself before the fire, nodded.

"Yes, there is a Mr. Croyden, from Trenton, New Jersey, whom I have met here before—a splendid man, whom you will like. He is a great fisherman—comes back every season just about this time. At present there is no one else, so you will not find the woods overcrowded."

Theo laughed at the bare suggestion, then yawned drowsily.

"Nor will you be troubled by not sleeping to-night, eh, son? You look about ready to hit the pillow this minute."

"I am," replied Theo. "I never was so sleepy in my life."

"That is the Maine air."

"Some of it is the effect of the corduroy road," the boy observed with a grin.

"It is a beastly road, that carry," agreed Dr. Swift. "It shakes every bone in your body. When you do manage to get here, however, it certainly is worth the trip. Do you feel as if you could worry down a little dinner?"

"Well, rather!"

The Doctor chuckled.

"So do I. It ought to be ready soon now, for it is nearly six."

Just at this moment the sound of a horn was heard.

Dr. Swift rose promptly.

"That is dinner," he said.

"I expected a bell," Theo answered, springing up.

"Waiting for a Japanese gong, are you? Well, you won't hear it here."

Clapping a hand affectionately on his son's shoulder the elder man led the way to the dining-cabin and pushed open the door.

Upon the hearth inside another bright fire glowed, and before it stood a long roughly made table covered with immaculate enamel cloth, on which was spread a smoking meal.

A man with a pair of merry brown eyes rose from his chair as the two travelers entered.

"I am glad to see you, Dr. Swift," he exclaimed heartily, putting out his hand. "So you are back to the fishing grounds once more!"

"I certainly am, Mr. Croyden, and thankful enough to be here. I've brought my boy, Theodore, with me this time; Theo, we call him."

Mr. Croyden took the lad's hand cordially.

"I'm glad to see you, youngster," he said. "If you prove half as good a fisherman as your father the two of you won't leave a trout or salmon in these waters."

"But I'm not a fisherman at all," Theo confessed. "I never cast a fly in my life."

"You certainly have come to the right place to learn, then. Your father has been neglecting your education, I fear. I see there is something we can teach you."

"I'm afraid there are a good many things," replied Theo modestly.

Mr. Croyden regarded him approvingly.

"That's right, boy," he said kindly. "Never be afraid to learn. We all are still learning, at least I am; and I will wager your father is, too."

"A doctor is always learning," assented Theo's father.

"And a business man as well," put in Mr. Croyden. "When we no longer need to learn we can be pretty sure we are near the end of our usefulness in this world. Now suppose we begin your education, Theo, by teaching you the proper way to eat a brook trout. How would that lesson please you?"

There was a twinkle in the stranger's eye.

"Very much indeed."

"I rather thought so," was the laughing answer. "Here, Franz, help Dr. Swift and his son to some of the fish I caught to-day. They are the first of the season, Doctor, with my compliments." He made a courtly gesture with his hand. "Remember, Theo," he added, "always to open a fish up the back. In that way you can take the backbone out whole and save yourself a deal of trouble."

Theo nodded his thanks for the suggestion.

What a dinner it was!

The trout were fried to a rich bronze, and the crisp potatoes were discs of golden brown; in addition there were baked beans, smoking brown-bread, slices of creamy cheese, and a pyramid of doughnuts. At the conclusion of the meal Franz came running from the cook-house with a covered dish heaped high with pancakes.

It was only when the three campers were unable to crowd down another mouthful that they rose from the table.

"Don't you and Theo want to come into my cabin and enjoy my fire for a while?" asked Mr. Croyden.

"Why, thank you, Croyden," answered Dr. Swift; "we might make you a short call. We are off to bed early, however, so we must not stay long."

Mr. Croyden's cabin proved to be a replica of the Swifts' own cozy one, except that it was more sumptuously furnished; for Mr. Croyden, who was a hunter as well as a fisherman, had adorned both couch and floors with great bearskins, trophies of his luck.

As his guests entered he hurried forward to put another four-foot log on the fire, after which he dragged out three steamer-chairs and placed them before the blaze.

"All the comforts of home, you see," he said gaily.

"More comforts than some of us get at home," smiled Dr. Swift. "There is nothing to equal this in New York."

For a moment none of them spoke; they were watching the scarlet rise and fall of the flame.

"What a lot of company a fire is!" mused Dr. Swift.

"I know it," came from Mr. Croyden. "And did you ever think how easily we can produce it? Within the space of a second we can start a blaze. A fire was quite another problem for our forefathers who lived long before matches were invented. Think back to the time when people rubbed dried sticks together to make a spark; or later when they were forced to use flint and matchlock. It meant no end of work to capture that first light, and even then it frequently went out. How housewives struggled to keep the embers on the hearth always glowing that a new fire might be built without so much trouble; and how men carried from place to place coals enough to kindle other fires! When we strike a match and so quickly get our response of flame we do not half appreciate how fortunate we are."

"I never thought what it would mean to have no matches," reflected Theo.

"Man's discovery of the use of fire was one of the first steps in his civilization," Dr. Swift put in. "It meant that henceforth instead of eating raw food as did the other animals he could have it cooked. For man, you must remember, is the only animal who cooks his food."

"And hand in hand with the cooking came the need of dishes in which to prepare it," rejoined Mr. Croyden. "Meats could, of course, be broiled over the fire on a forked stick; but no stews or soups could be had until man invented some utensil which would contain liquid and at the same time withstand the heat of the blaze. That problem was the one that confronted all primitive races, and set them to fashioning pottery. The history of their first attempts is most interesting. Probably chance led people to the discovery that they could mix clay with water, and that it would harden in the sun. They may have seen a print of their own feet immortalized in the sun-baked mud, and caught at the idea of taking the clay for more useful purposes. Nobody knows where they got their first inspiration. But every race that has existed has had its crude receptacles for food and water.

Theo was not sleepy now; he was far too interested to think of sleep.

"Even in the Stone Age, when men lived in caves and great creatures now extinct roamed the earth, men made bowls, pots, and vases, some of which are in existence in our museums of to-day," continued Mr. Croyden. "We have, too, a few specimens of clumsy vessels made from grayish black clay which are relics of the Lake Dwellers, who fashioned their houses on piles, and set them in the middle of small lakes as a protection against wild animals and rival races of savages.

Then followed what is known as the Bronze Age, and we find that the people of this era also worked with clay. Their designs showed a decided advance, too, even some simple decoration being attempted."

"All that was in Europe, I suppose," Theo ventured shyly.

"By no means," replied Mr. Croyden. "On the contrary, we have found in our own hemisphere specimens of this prehistoric pottery. In some cases baskets of twigs were woven and lined with clay, after which they were baked in the fire and the twigs burned off. Other pieces were built up from coils of clay wound round and round, and when partly hardened these were worked together with a tool in order that the cracks might be filled. All through the western part of our country have been found clay relics of various early tribes of Indians; and in some places are giant mounds in which have been buried all sorts of crude clay jugs and bowls. Since these primal peoples used for materials the natural clays and earths they succeeded in producing some excellent colors, too."

Mr. Croyden paused.

"Was the potter's wheel in use then?" questioned Dr. Swift.

"Probably not. There is no trace of it in this early work. It is not until the historic age that we have the potter's wheel, the oldest and first mechanical device mentioned in history. Mexicans, Peruvians, Egyptians, Greeks, Assyrians, Romans, Gauls, Teutons all used it."

"I have seen some of the old Mexican or Aztec pottery," declared Dr. Swift, "and it was very interesting. It was of reddish clay, and I was told it was much like the variety made in Peru. Not only were there roughly modeled dishes and jars in the collection, but also all sorts of strange clay

idols. You see, instead of worshipping the gods of goodness, Theo, these early peoples thought they could propitiate the gods of evil if they worshipped them instead; accordingly they made all sorts of grotesque images, some of them very hideous. None of this clay work was glazed, of course, for at that time men had not yet discovered that they could put a glaze over the surface of objects and thus protect them and render them water-tight. It was a great pity that Cortez and his followers destroyed this early Mexican civilization, which was surprisingly advanced.

"I suppose the Peruvians had also gone quite as far if not further than the Aztecs when in 1531 Pizarro invaded South America," rejoined Mr. Croyden. "They were making some very good pottery decorated in red, black, and brown; and they must have known how to bake it, or the colors in the design would not have lasted until now."

Mr. Croyden rose to stamp out a spark that had snapped from the fireplace onto the fur rug at his feet.

"Strange, isn't it, how much of our knowledge of the ancient races has come down to us through their clay work?" he reflected. "What should we have known of these western civilizations save through their handiwork? And when we travel across seas it is the same. Much of our acquaintance with Egyptian, Greek, and Roman life has been handed down to posterity through tiles and pottery which have served to record nations' customs and advancement. The march of the invading Roman armies, for example, can be traced by the fragments of pottery left behind them. These relics have been found in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, and prove that very early the Romans made use of clay utensils

for cooking their food. Even beneath the city of London old Roman furnaces for firing dishes have been discovered; and moreover, some of the very dishes themselves."

Theo seemed astonished.

"Later the Romans made much beautiful pottery; but it was never as beautiful as that of the Greeks. Sometime, however, Theo, you should go to one of our museums and see some Samian ware, the finest of Roman clay work. The red in it is almost as vivid as sealing-wax, and it has a wonderful polish not unlike that on modern Egyptian ware. No one has ever been able to discover from what clay this marvelous pottery was made. Some historians think the ware was first made by wandering Greek artisans. The Romans also made a very beautiful black ware now known as Upchurch pottery because of the location in England in which it was found. This black color, scientists have decided, was not produced by mixing a pigment with the clay as did the Greeks, but resulted from an ingenious use of oxide of iron which, when burned by a reducing fire, turned black; the Romans also gave us Castor ware, a pottery moulded from a dark clay and having on it figures traced in a lighter color."

"Did anybody else in Europe make as beautiful pottery as the Greeks and Romans?" inquired Theo.

"Perhaps not so beautiful," answered Mr. Croyden. "Yet before we hear either of Greek or Roman we find the Egyptians and Assyrians, nations famous for their skill in the arts as well as their prowess in war, making pottery and tiles. These have been preserved to us in tombs and pyramids, for these races, you know, were accustomed to pay great honor to their dead. It was a fortunate custom, too, since by

"I Had Forgotten All About Bed"

means of it much history has come down to us which would otherwise have been destroyed. Unquestionably the Saxons, Scandinavians, Gauls, and Teutons also made pottery, but their attempts were of a cruder sort. Dishes, vases, toys have been exhumed in their countries, all displaying characteristic clay designs. But no country in the world has ever equaled the pottery of the Greeks."

"Did the Greeks——" began Theo; but his father cut him short.

"See here, young man," he declared, drawing out his watch, "this is no time of night for you to be setting forth on a history of Greek pottery. You are going to bed.

Theo rose with a laugh.

"I had forgotten all about bed," he said.

"That speaks pretty well for your charm as an historian, Croyden," observed Dr. Swift. "The boy could scarcely keep his eyes open at dinner."

"Can't you tell me about Greek pottery some other time, sir?" asked Theo.

"I'd be glad to, sonny," Mr. Croyden returned. "I never dreamed a boy would be interested in such a dull subject."

"It isn't dull when you tell it," came naively from Theo.

"That is the biggest compliment I ever had in my life," exclaimed the fisherman with pleasure. "You shall hear more of Greek pottery to-morrow if by that time you still want to. Good-night. The most beautiful thing I can wish you is that you dream of Greek vases all night long."

CHAPTER II

MR. CROYDEN KEEPS HIS PROMISE

HEN Theo awoke the next day the novelty of his surroundings drove every thought of Greek pottery from his mind. As he peeped out of his window he could see slanting rifts of early sunlight flecking with gold the trunks of the great pines. From the chimney of the cookhouse a spiral of blue smoke was ascending and as it rose it carried into the air with it a pleasant odor of burning wood and frying bacon.

Theo did not dally with his dressing, you may be sure; he was far too hungry, and too eager to attack the program for the day.

"Put on thick boots, son," called Dr. Swift from his room. "The weather is fine. It is an ideal morning to tramp across Owl's Nest Carry and fish in the lake beyond there."

"What time is it, Father?" inquired Theo. "I forgot to wind my watch last night."

"Six o'clock. We shall have a three mile walk, and plenty of time to get in some fishing before the sun is high. Then we

can paddle up-stream to the camp at the farther end of Owl Lake and cook our lunch. How does that plan please you?"

"Hurrah!" cried Theo. "Is there a camp like this over there?"

"Oh, no. Just a lean-to which serves as a shelter, if people want to spend the night and be on hand for early morning fishing. Sometimes, too, I have gone over in the late afternoon and fished until dark, afterward turning in on the pine boughs for the night. It is only a crude little camp, but it is perfectly comfortable. You will like Owl Lake. It is smaller than this one, but it has a very pretty shore bordered with a stretch of white sandy beach.

"It must be a great place for swimming."

"It is. Just now, however, the water is too cold. Later in the season when things get warmed up it is the finest bathing place imaginable. Are you ready for breakfast now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you'd better run along. I will join you in a few moments. I must go first and see Manuel about the lunch."

"All right, sir."

Through the crisp morning air Theo bounded across to the dining-cabin, where he found Mr. Croyden.

A bright fire burned on the hearth and the table with its heaping plates of hot johnny-cake looked most inviting.

"Hello, youngster!" called the older man, glancing up with a smile. "How do you find yourself to-day? All lamed up after your jolt over the carry?"

"Not a bit, Mr. Croyden," laughed Theo. "I'm not lame at all. I'm just hungry."

"A perfectly normal condition. So long as you can eat I guess there is not much the matter with you."

"Oh, I can always eat," grinned Theo. "Mother says my appetite never goes back on me."

"Well, fall to. It looks as if Franz had prepared for the worst," chuckled Mr. Croyden. "What are you and your dad up to to-day?"

"We are going to Owl Lake to fish."

"That isn't a bad beginning. It is not a long tramp, and the fish are biting well over there. I have tried it several times and had excellent luck. You are wise to start in gradually and not attempt too long a jaunt at first. There is everything in getting into training, as your father well knows."

There was a bang of the door, and Dr. Swift entered.

"Good-morning, Doctor," said Mr. Croyden. "So you and your son are to try your skill at Owl to-day?"

"Yes. That seemed to be a good starter."

"An excellent one."

"Why don't you come along with us?"

"I?

"Yes; that is, unless you have other plans. We should be glad to have you. The more the merrier."

"I wish you would come, Mr. Croyden," urged Theo.

"That is very kind of you," returned Mr. Croyden, hesitating a little. "I had not planned my day. Are you sure you want so many?"

"Three is not many. Come along, by all means," declared Dr. Swift. "Manuel says the lake has not yet been fished much and that the trout are biting well. Get Tony, your guide, to pack up your tackle and bring some lunch. I am afraid we have not enough for all hands."

Mr. Croyden sprang to his feet.

"I'll do that," he replied. "What time are you starting?"

"Just as soon as I have succeeded in getting Theo to take a little nourishment," returned the Doctor.

This task Dr. Swift evidently did not find difficult, for within a half hour the party were setting forth through the woods.

The luncheon, tackle, and sweaters had been put into a canoe, which Tony and Manuel raised to their shoulders as if it were a feather.

"There is a punt over at Owl that we can use, so we shall need only one canoe," explained Manuel as he strode along.

The carry was not a rough one, but to Theo, accustomed to the smoothness of city pavements, it seemed very rough indeed. He was continually stepping into holes or climbing over fallen tree-trunks, and although a good walker, the pace the guides set made him pant. Even Dr. Swift was forced to confess that he was out of breath and was obliged now and then to stop and rest. Mr. Croyden, on the contrary, swung along the narrow trail with the ease of an Indian.

"You will get into trim in a few days," he observed encouragingly to Theo. "I myself am always stiff and slow until I get limbered up."

When, however, Owl Lake finally came into sight both Theo and his father instantly forgot their fatigue.

There stretched the tiny sheet of water, a gem of flashing blue whose calm surface mirrored the pines and delicate birches bordering its margin.

The punt and canoe were launched, the tackle unpacked, and amid a silence broken only by the dip of oar and paddle the fishermen drifted out into the stillness.

Ah, it was a day never to be forgotten! Certainly Theo would never forget it, for it was during the first half-hour of this Arabian Night's dream that he proudly landed a beautiful lake trout, the first one he had ever caught.

From the moment he felt the tug at his line until his catch was safely in the bottom of the boat his excitement was tremendous. How the little creature pulled! How it swept away with the bait into deep water! With Manuel, Dr. Swift, Tony, and Mr. Croyden all coaching him, and almost as frenzied as he, poor Theo hardly knew where he was. But he obeyed the insistent command of: "*Play him! Play him!*" and play him he did. Even with the captive's final leap into the air the trout did not succeed in freeing itself from the hook. Keeping his prize well away from the boat that the line might not slacken Theo at last reeled in his victim.

He gasped when the feat was accomplished.

The second time he knew better what to do; and before the sun was high and the fish had ceased to bite he landed five beauties.

In the meantime both his father and Mr. Croyden had been so absorbed in watching his pleasure that they had almost forgotten their own lines, and it was not until a big land-loch struck that the Doctor remembered he, too, was fishing. When finally a lull in the sport came and the party pulled up-stream toward the lean-to, there were a dozen good-sized trout in Mr. Croyden's basket and as many more in the Doctor's.

Then came the disembarking at the upper end of the lake, and the building of the fire. Dry wood was taken from the shelter of the house, and in the clearing before the camp, on