

period is hard to know. While Susan was busy with pots and pans, Mary was up a tree picking apples, or off in the woods gathering maple sap—just as busy as Susan, but busy in uncommon ways about uncommon things. The truth is, Mary was a hoyden, a wit, an inimitable mimic, one to whom conformity came hard. Years later when, grandmothers both, they visited back and forth across the width of the continent, it was still Mary's delight to split in fragments Susan's armour of reserve, sending her off into fits of uncontrollable, whooping laughter. Very unladylike!

Susan kept her Diary for sixty years. A farmer's daughter, she in turn became a farmer's wife and the mother of farmer sons. As such, she had a sturdy faith, and was finely attuned to cosmic stirrings—weather, the changing seasons, the surge of growing things, the cycle of death and renewal. But in her Diary she chose to record the timeless trivia of a woman's days, in volume after volume after volume . . . There came the day when mind and fingers failed her in the middle of a word. And Susan's pen, out of control at last, went off in a meaningless squiggle. *Requiescat.*

## PUBLIC APPEARANCE

*Sara Van Alstyne Allen*

When a poem has been printed on the white page,  
 Passing successfully through trial by secretary,  
 Editor and proof-readers, it emerges from the copy-room  
 Like a child torn from the complacent womb.  
 Stark, alone, offering itself to a critical world.  
 No glitter of fame, no comfortable place in the rostrum  
 Of letters can give it protection. It will be scratched perhaps  
 By dirty nails, spat upon by vacant mouths, smoothed by  
 Elegant, deceitful fingers, viewed by the terrible  
 Impartial Mind, gigantic and sometimes silent.

But there is a chance that what the poem says  
 Will be remembered, a phrase or two quoted  
 Under an adolescent tree or whispered in an old room  
 Or shouted from a tall hill on a rude autumn day!  
 Have courage then, but consider the perils before you  
 Take the quiet loom and begin to weave.