

PIC ASCENDING

Geoffrey B. Riddehough

We three were holidaying — Dioris,
Tecla her friend, and I, Anaitis —
Out in the country. We had vowed to lay
For that one week all witcheries away:
No spell, no potion, and no incantation,
Nor even the most innocuous transformation.
We wished to seem, to all who saw us there,
Just three young things enjoying country air.
We managed to abstain from talking shop
And to look normal, but we had to stop
From persevering in our well-meant vow,
The day we came on Farmer Johnson's sow.

We saw her, as we passed along the lane
Close to her sty, and caught the look of pain
Twisting her face; and Tecla said, "I guess
Even a pig can feel unhappiness.
Why, tears are running down the poor thing's cheek!
— Well, back to magic! We just have to speak."
So she said, in the Witch-Tongue, "Madam Sow,
Can we assist you? You seem troubled now.
Are you enchanted, and desire escape
Back from porcinity to human shape?"

The poor beast, happy to have found a friend,
Said, "Thank you, dear, but I will not pretend
To human antecedents. I was born
Pig, common Pig, but somehow I am torn
Between my nature and a wish to rise
To something better. You may feel surprise
When I enumerate the things I hope
Someday to bring within my mental scope:
Etiquette, grammar, trigonometry,

And to play cello in the Symphony;
 The elements of logic, and no less
 Proficiency in checkers and in chess;
 And, though it may increase my load of cares,
 More than a smattering of World Affairs.
 I've been inspired, through the last year or so,
 By listening to the farmhouse radio.
 I cannot share the ancient prejudice
 That piglets are the one career there is.
 At least my children, if I were a man,
 Would not end, sizzling, in a frying-pan.
 — Is my ambition something to despise,
 Or does a pig possess the right to rise?"

We all felt sympathetic as we heard,
 But Dioris spoke the first constructive word:
 "I have a plan, though you may think it strange:
 Girls, can't we get our friend here to exchange
 Forms with some member of humanity
 Who merits higher status less than she?"

Splendid!" I commented. "And let me tell
 Who best could qualify: Professor L.
 Next week he's having some small operation,
 And anaesthetics do help transmigration
 Of soul to body. He'll regain his sense
 To find he has established residence
 Here in our friend's untenanted physique
 — Quite the ideal successor, so to speak."

The grateful Sow said, "Thanks, but first will you
 Brief me a bit on what I have to do
 When I'm a man? Remember, I know yet
 Barely the first thing about etiquette.
 My table-manners —"

I retorted, "Hell!
 Right now you could surpass Professor L.;"

I only wish I were more sure that he
Will fill your place as conscientiously.”

We are so proud to hear from all who've met her:
“How that man L. has changed — and for the better!
Even his lectures somehow seem to be
More what you'd look for from a Ph.D.”

. . . His sty-career may be less dull and narrow,
Now that he knows the day he's due to farrow.
He's had a message:

“Hope you come through well.
Just been promoted. Not returning.

L.”

Note: All persons and places named in the foregoing are purely fictitious, and any resemblance to persons living, dead, or moribund, is purely coincidental. The letter “L” is used for the sake of rhyme.