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THE human creature who brings a buoyant soul into the world brings a gift of a value not to be computed in ordinary terms of calculation. It is indeed the gift of being a *giver*, — with full hands and resources inexhaustible, — and it is the most wondrous thing in life to be born a “giver.” When such a creature, bringing also a delicious imagination, a sense of humor which is in itself delight, combined with an exquisite freedom in the use of words, reveals the power to write stories, there must inevitably be set free in the world a flight of birds to whose songs one stands and listens — and passing on one’s way does not forget. Kate Douglas Wiggin brought the buoyant soul and she chose — or Life chose for her — that she should set free the flight of birds which have flown far and wide to strange countries as well as to home forests and playgrounds, singing as they went and wheresoever they rested. They have always sung, and what one has always heard in their singing has been the note of the buoyant soul and the giver of gifts. They are stories of children, or very young things at least. The first and simplest ones were written merely as the generous effort of a girl to add to the lim-

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ited resources of a poor little kindergarten for San Francisco street children. The later stories were the inevitable result of the first. Such a fountain having begun to flow must continue and throw higher into the air its dance and sparkle of spray. There is always dance and sparkle in what Kate Douglas Wiggin writes. Her power to make one laugh — suddenly and involuntarily — is one of the jewels of her crown. One is so glad when one is made to laugh — because one cannot help it — by mere bright wit and a sly delicious swiftness, to see the humor of things as they pass.

The first two or three stories were small human documentary records of kindergarten days, but in the later ones, and despite her unconsciousness of the fact, it is almost impossible not to see her who writes in more than one of the valiant little beings who bring the buoyant soul into the story. She is to be seen with great clearness in Polly Oliver, of the warm and courageous young heart, who, with the red in her hair and the twinkle in her eye, touches us immensely without being the least aware of it. She is pure Kate Douglas Wiggin when she keeps the accounts of the poor little household by dividing the money and putting it in a cigar-box with three partitions, an old sugar-bowl, and a Japanese ginger-jar with cover. The results are indeed well worth quoting: —

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“November 9. . . . This first week has been discouraging, and I have had to borrow enough from compartment two, cigar-box, to pay debts incurred by compartment one, cigar-box.”

“November 15. The first compartment, cigar-box, could n't pay back the money it borrowed from the second compartment, and so this in turn had to borrow from the third compartment. I could have made everything straight, I think, if we had n't bought a feather duster and a gallon of kerosene . . . so it is n't fair to call compartment number two extravagant.”

“November 24. . . . The water, it seems, was not included in the thirty dollars for the rent, and compartment three had to pay two dollars for that purpose when compartment two was still deeply in its debt. If compartment two had only met its rightful obligations, compartment three need n't have 'failed up' . . . ; but as it is, poor compartment four is entirely bankrupt, and will have to borrow of the sugar-bowl or the ginger-jar. As these banks are not at all in the same line of business, they ought not to be drawn into the complications of the cigar-box.”

“December 2. . . . I suffered so with the debts, losses, business embarrassments, and failures of the four compartments that when I found I was only four dollars behind on the whole month's expenses, I knocked out all the

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compartments, and am not going to keep things in weeks. . . .

“I have given the ginger-jar a note of hand for two dollars from the cigar-box, and it has resumed business at the old stand. Compartment four, cigar-box, which is perfectly innocent, as it was borrowed out of house and home by compartment three, also had to give a note to the sugar-bowl. . . .

“Whether all these obligations will be met without lawsuits, I cannot tell; but I know by the masterly manner in which I have fought my way through these intricate affairs with the loss of only four dollars in four weeks, that I possess decided business ability, and this gives me courage to struggle on.”

Combine laughter like this with tender insight into deeper things never touched with the less delicate hand, which would have made them seem less young and human, and there is no difficulty in recognizing the power of the charm.

In the enchanting picture of Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm we have pure Kate Douglas Wiggin at her highest mark of magic perception and delight in things delightful. From the moment Rebecca seats herself in the stage-coach, “so slender and stiffly starched that she slid from space to space on the leather cushions,” her chief responsibility the small pink parasol

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which was the "dearest thing in life" to her, we are brought under her enduring spell. It is the strangest and most subtle of spells — that woven by a creature with the genius for living and an utter unconsciousness of her power and charm, or of anything, indeed, but the immense fascination of being alive and launched on the entranced exploration of mere existence day by day.

Rebecca is the buoyant soul itself, and the perpetual and always unknowing giver of gifts — of laughter, of belief in the absolute reality of unalloyed pleasure continually at hand.

There has surely never been any young thing more real, more affection- and laughter-inspiring, or better for one's inner being, than Rebecca. The fine honor and spirited uprightness of her are qualities to salute standing; the absolutely natural beneficence of her child impulses, wheresoever they lead her, fill one with glee and emotion at one and the same moment. The unmitigatedly delightful episode of Mr. Aladdin, managed with such exquisite skill, fills one, in the midst of one's amusement, with admiration for the finished delicacy of the artist's touch. It would have been so easy to have left an impression less fresh, to have brushed off a little of the bloom from the perfect candidness of Rebecca's child-girlhood. But one closes the book with the clear, lovely sense of the morn-

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ing. This is perhaps the most radiant of the flight of birds. They have sung for years — freshly always. Others will be let free and they will sing also and always of the buoyant soul.

To these, which so many already know and love, farther flight and wider — and God speed!

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.