

ALEXANDER'S BRIDGE

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Alexander's bridge by Willa Cather

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**ALEXANDER'S
BRIDGE**

BOOKS BY WILLA CATHER

ALEXANDER'S BRIDGE

- O PIONEERS!

- THE SONG OF THE LARK

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ONE OF OURS

- A LOST LADY

APRIL TWILIGHTS

- THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE

MY MORTAL ENEMY

- DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP

- SHADOWS ON THE ROCK

OBSCURE DESTINIES

- Over Forty

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BY

WILLA CATHER

NEW EDITION WITH A PREFACE



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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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P R E F A C E

It is difficult to comply with the publisher's request that I write a preface for this new edition of an early book. "Alexander's Bridge" was my first novel, and does not deal with the kind of subject-matter in which I now find myself most at home. The people and the places of the story interested me intensely at the time when it was written, because they were new to me and were in themselves attractive. "Alexander's Bridge" was written in 1911, and "O Pioneers!" the following year. The difference in quality in the two books is an illustration of the fact that it is not always easy for the inexperienced writer to distinguish between his own material and that which he would like to make his own. Everything is new to the young writer, and everything seems equally personal. That which is outside his

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P R E F A C E

deepest experience, which he observes and studies, often seems more vital than that which he knows well, because he regards it with all the excitement of discovery. The things he knows best he takes for granted, since he is not continually thrilled by new discoveries about them. They lie at the bottom of his consciousness, whether he is aware of it or no, and they continue to feed him, but they do not stimulate him.

There is a time in a writer's development when his "life line" and the line of his personal endeavor meet. This may come early or late, but after it occurs his work is never quite the same. After he has once or twice done a story that formed itself, inevitably, in his mind, he will not often turn back to the building of external stories again. The inner feeling produces for him a deeper excitement than the thrill of novelty or the glitter of the passing show.

The writer, at the beginning of his career, is often more interested in his discoveries about