IN THE VANGUARD

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In the Vanguard by Katrina Trask

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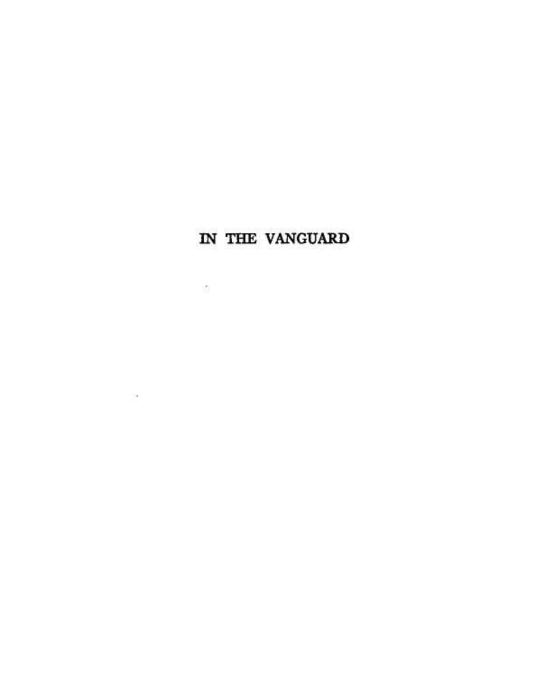
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KATRINA TRASK

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BY KATRINA TRASK

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ACT I

SCENE I

MAY DAY

The Village Green

Many large trees stand upon the Common. Flowering shrubs grow in profusion upon the turf. To the East, picturesque houses are seen through the trees; to the West, the distant hills. Here, the Common is more open; there are no trees. In the open space, several girls are gaily dancing; their light draperies are blown by the wind. Dancing, they wind in and out of a long garland woven of flowers, and as they dance, they sing.

THE GIRLS

Singing.

Merrily dawns the month of May! Primroses pink and white, The golden sun is glad to-day: The stars will laugh to-night. Weave, weave the garland gay, To greet the month of May! 4

O happy are the song-birds now, May's plumage on their breasts! Secure within the blossoming bough They build their hidden nests. Weave, weave the garland gay, To greet the month of May!

FIRST GIRL

Eagerly, stopping the dance.

There comes Elsa!

SECOND GIRL

Disdainfully.

Bah! I hate her proud ways.

FIRST GIRL

Indignantly.

Proud? — Elsa? — How absurd! Elsa is adorable!

SECOND GIRL

Not proud? Look at the way she carries her head! She looks as though she thought we were the dust under her feet.

FIRST GIRL

She can't help the way her head is set on her shoulders! She walks like that in her bath-room. The Girls laugh.

She does! I was there the other day — She was washing her hands — and she looked like one of the statues in the new Museum that Mr. Greart gave to the town; that one where the goddess is standing before the altar; Elsa looked as though she were performing a religious rite.

THIRD GIRL

What a goose you are, Molly! Elsa is awfully nice, but she isn't much like a goddess; she wears too good clothes.

SECOND GIRL

She is too top-lofty for me; I don't like her!

MINNIE

Sarcastically.

Poor Elsa! How can she possibly bear it!

ONE OF THE YOUNGER GIRLS

Impetuously.

I love her! What do you think, Minnie? Do you think she looks like a goddess?

MINNIE

I think she is herself — that makes her a goddess!

TEIRD GIRL

You always talk such conundrums, Minnie. How could she be anyone but herself?

MINNIE

Easily — we none of us are.

THIRD GIRL

Are what?

MINNIE

Ourselves.

THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER

Who inherits her Father's lack of humour.

Who are we then?

MINNIE

I am my Father in second edition, Lizzie is her Mother in abstract; you are —

THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER

Well, what am I?

MINNIE

O never mind!

FIRST GIRL

Here comes Elsa!

Between the trees, at the East end of the Common, a young girl enters; her swift step gives the suggestion of winged feet. She bears herself proudly, and yet with a gracious directness and simplicity; she is tall, lithe, beautiful; she is dressed in unrelieved white; she carries an open book; this is Elsa.

THE GIRLS

Come, Elsa! Come, join our May-dance! The Girls hold out the garland to Elsa and begin to sing again.

THE GIRLS

Singing.

"Weave, weave the garland gay" -

ELSA

O stop dancing — Girls. Sit down — listen — I have something to read to you! I have found the most delicious thing! It is a picture of what we all feel these days — these stirring days, when war is in the air.

Elsa sits upon the turf. The girls throw down the garland and seat themselves around her.

THE RECTOR'S DAUGHTER

Elsa, did you know Jack is going to the war?