

THE RACE

by Dee Groberg

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!"
They shout at me, and plead.
"There's just too much against you now,
This time you can't succeed."

And as I start to hang my head
In front of failure's face,
My downward fall is broken by
The memory of a race.

And hope refills my weakened will
As I recall that scene,
For, just the thought of that short race
Rejuvenates my being.

A children's race, young boys, young men.
Now, I remember well,
Excitement, sure! But also fear,
It wasn't hard to tell.

They all lined up so full of hope
Each thought to win that race.
Or, tie for first, or if not that,
At least take second place.

And fathers watched from off the side
Each cheering for his son.
And each boy hoped to show his dad,
That he would be the one.

The whistle blew, and off they went
Young hearts and hopes afire
To win, to be the hero there
Was each young boy's desire.

And one boy in particular,
Whose dad was in the crowd,
Was running near the lead, and thought:
"My dad will be so proud!"

But as they speeded down the field
Across a shallow dip
The little boy, who thought to win,
Lost his step, and slipped.

Trying hard to catch himself,
His hands flew out to brace,
And 'mid the laughter of the crowd,
He fell flat on his face.

So down he fell, and with him hope
--he couldn't win it now--
Embarrassed, sad, he only wished
To disappear somehow.

But, as he fell, his dad stood up,
And showed his anxious face,
Which to the boy so clearly said:
"Get up and win the race."

He quickly rose, no damage done,
--behind a bit, that's all--
And ran with all his mind and might
To make up for his fall.

So, anxious to restore himself
--to catch up and to win--
His mind went faster than his legs;
He slipped and fell again!

He wished, then, he had quit before
With only one disgrace.
"I'm hopeless as a runner now:
I shouldn't try to race."

But, in the laughing crowd he searched
And found his father's face.
That steady look that said again:
"Get up and win the race."

So, he jumped up to try again
--ten yards behind the last--
"If I'm to gain those yards," he thought
"I've got to move real fast."

Exceeding everything he had
He regained eight or ten
But trying so hard to catch the lead
He slipped and fell again!

Defeat! He lay there silently
--a tear dropped from his eye--
"There's no sense running any more;
Three strikes, I'm out, why try?"

The will to rise had disappeared
All hope had fled away
So far behind; so error prone
Closer all the way.

"I've lost, so what's the use," he thought
"I'll live with my disgrace."
But, then he thought about his dad,
Who, soon, he'd have to face.

"Get up!" an echo sounded low,
"Get up, and take your place.
You were not meant for failure here,
Get up, and win the race."

"With borrowed will get up," it said,
"You haven't lost at all.
For winning's nor more than this;
To rise each time you fall,"

So, up he rose to run once more,
And with a new commit
He resolved that win, or lose,
At least he wouldn't quit.

So far behind the others now
--the most he'd ever been--
Still, he gave it all he had
And ran as though to win.

Three times he'd fallen stumbling.
Three times he'd rose again
Too far behind to hope to win
He still ran to the end.

They cheered the winning runner,
As he crossed the line first place,
Head high, and proud, and happy.
No falling, no disgrace.

But, when the fallen youngster
Crossed the finish line last place,
The crowd gave him the greater cheer
For finishing the race.

And even though he came in last,
With head bowed low, unproud,
You would have thought he won the race
To listen to the crowd.

And to his dad, he sadly said,
"I didn't do so well."
"To me, you won!" his father said,
"You rose each time you fell."

And now, when things seem dark and hard,
And difficult to face.
The memory of that little boy
Helps me in my race.

For, all of life is like that race
With ups and downs and all,
And all you have to do to win,
Is rise each time you fall.

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!"
They still shout in my face
But, another voice, within me says:
"Get up and win the race!!"