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A Rare Story for Children by James B. McLachlan Floors That Have Talked to Me David Frank. Biographer: J.B. McLachlan started in the Lanarkshire coal mines at the age of ten; in Nova Scotia he became one of the founders of District 26, United Mine Workers of America in 1909 and was the champion of the coal miners in many struggles; by the 1930s he was acknowledged as one of the "grand old men" of Canadian labour radicalism. "Floors That Have Talked to Me" was originally published in 1934, in the pages of a magazine called Always Ready, which described itself as "A Magazine for Canadian Workers' and Farmers' Boys and Girls,"

FLOORS CAN DO STRANGE THINGS to a person if only you have ears to hear them talk, and eyes to see them. I have seen floors some of which gave me a glad feeling I have never forgotten, and others that roused me to hate and fury. When I was a boy of eight years I got my first holiday and trip away from home. My grandmother lived in a village called Ecclefechan in the south of Scotland. A trip of sixty miles brought me there. What a nice woman my Granny was! Tall and straight as could be. She wore a long cotton dress right down to her clogs. Clogs are just boots with wooden soles. When she was out of doors she always wore a tartan shawl over her head. I used to think she looked just fine. She tried to make me happy during my visit, and would slip me little extras when the others weren't looking. Sometimes an apple, but mostly a whole oat-meal cake and a hunk of cheese. I wanted to return her favors and asked her how I could help her. "You brae the sand for the floor, Jimmie," she would say. "Braing the sand" consisted of going to the brook which was close by, and looking for a lot of soft yellow sandstone; then with a hammer breaking that down until it was almost as fine as brown sugar. When Granny had swept her floor clean, she sprinkled the fresh sand on the floor. It was a "mud" floor. Sometimes it wore into a hole at the door, or where people walked on it, then I would go out on the roadway if it had rained enough and gather a few shovelfuls of mud and patch the floor. The floor in this hotel seemed to jeer and natch the floor laugh at me as I walked over it." That floor at that time made me feel happy when it had been patched and sanded by Granny and I. Could I have listened to it talk, it would have said: "Floors have always been mud-patched and sanded, and always will be." I GREW UP AND GOT MARRIED, and we had a sweet little baby girl. The house we lived in had a brick floor. One did not need to mud-patch it. The bricks were yellow and ten inches square. My wife used to wash it every day and with soft chalk make nice little, what I called "whklie- jigs" around the edge of each brick. All the wives in that miners' row did this. We were very happy, my wife and baby and I. But at night when we would sit by the fire, just the three of us, my happy feeling would go smash looking at the damned floor of yellow bricks and scores of white "whirlie-jigs." Why could I not get something better for those I loved? Granny's floor had made me happy and had said to me, "Don't struggle." Now this brick floor was



an agitator. It said to me, "Look at your girl wife, pretty as a picture, kind beyond com- "Floors..." continues on page 75 James B. McLachlan: I believe in education for action. I believe in telling children the truth about the history of the world, that it does not consist of the history of kings, or lords or cabinets. It consists of the history of the mass of the workers, a thing that is not taught in the schools. I believe in telling children how to measure value, a thing that is not taught in any school.

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