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Chosen Short Stories

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FOREWORD

This is not a mere anthology for readers. Out of thousands of short stories, we have chosen these few for class use according to their characteristics. Selection resulted from debates with several generations of students in our courses of studies of the English speaking cultures. As we found, these particular short stories had an impact on the way they viewed the meaning of their lives and somehow influenced their values education. When we meet those students again, sometimes many years after they were in our classes, they tell us of the fresh memories that they keep of those class experiences. Some say that it was while reading "The Lost Phoebe" or "The Law of Life" when they first thought of the limits and hence of the sense of life, that the things they learned in those debates helped them to be better sons or daughters, caring parents, more sensitive teachers, that what we shared in class helped them understand the importance of being decent.

The fruits of those experiences are in the choices of selections and in the exercises at the end of each short story, the architecture for which students should be ultimately credited. The values education situations that may develop around these texts can open spaces for the actualization of values that serve to satisfy radical needs. This can help the students in their quest for the meaning of life and thus contribute to their values education.

The short stories collected here are also precious jewels of literature in the English language from different cultural landscapes and are specially fruitful for the development of linguistic abilities, extensive reading in particular.

The teacher may use the exercises suggested at will, change and improve them in the dialectical atmosphere built by distinct students in the singular scenarios of particular values education situations. The incorporation of fresh short stories is a creative necessity in progress.

The editors

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To our students

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British Short Stories

The Pardoner's Tale

BY GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1340-1400)

Whilom there dwelt in Flanders a company of young folk who followed after folly, as riotous living and gaming in stews and taverns, where with harps, lutes and citterns they danced and played at dice day and night, and ate and drank inordinately. Thus they did service to the Devil in cursed fashion within those Devil's temples by abominable superfluity. Their oaths were so great and so damnable that it was grisly to hear them swear; they rent our blessed Lord's body in pieces anew (as if the Jews had not rent him enough!), and each laughed at the others' sins. And anon came dancing girls, graceful and slim young fruit-wenches, singers with harps, bawds and confectioners, who are all very officers of the Devil to kindle and blow that fire of lust that is near allied to gluttony. I take Holy Writ to witness that in wine and drunkenness are excess and lust. Lo, how drunken Lot sinned against nature, not knowing what he did; he was so drunk he knew not what he wrought. Herod (let anyone look up the history), when he was full of wine at his feast, gave command at his own table to slay the Baptist John, guiltless. Seneca also of a surety says a good word; he says he can find no difference betwixt a man that is out of his mind and him who is drunken, except that madness, when it attacks an ill-conditioned fellow, endures longer than drunkenness. Oh cursed gluttony, first cause of our undoing, origin of our damnation, until Christ redeemed us with His blood! Only think how dearly was this cursed sin paid for; this whole world was ruined by gluttony! Our father Adam and his wife in verity were driven from Paradise to labor and woe for that vice. For whilst Adam fasted I read that he was in Paradise, and when he ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree, he was cast out to woe and pain. O gluttony, well may we accuse thee! If a man but knew how many maladies follow from gluttony and excess, he would be more moderate of his diet as he sits at table. Alas! for the tender mouth and the short throat, east and west and south and north men labor in the earth and air and water to get dainty meat and drink for a glutton. On this, O Paul, well canst thou discourse. "Meat unto belly and belly unto meat, —God shall destroy both," as Paul says. Alas! Foul is it to say, by my faith, but fouler is the act, when a man drinks so of the white and red that he makes a jakes of his throat through this accursed excess. The apostle, weeping, says piteously, "There walk many of whom I have told you, and I say it now weeping and with a piteous voice, they are enemies of the cross of Christ, their end is death, their god is their belly." O belly, foul bag, full of corruption! What labor and cost to provide for thee! How these cooks pound and strain and grind, and turn substance into accident, to satisfy all thy greedy taste! Out of the hard bones they knock the marrow, and cast away naught that may go through the gullet soft and sweet. Of spicery and bark, root and leaf, is made the

glutton's delicious sauce, to get him ever a new appetite. But he that follows after such delights, certes, is dead whilst he lives in those vices.

Wine is a lecherous thing, and drunkenness is full of wretchedness and contention. O drunken man, thy face is disfigured, thy breath is sour, thou art foul to clasp in arms, and the sound through thy drunken nose seems as if thou saidest ever, "Sam-soun, Sam-soun!" And yet Samson drank never wine, God wot. Thou fallest like a stuck pig, thy tongue is lost and all thy care for honest things, for drunkenness is the very sepulchre of man's wit and discretion. He over whom drink has dominion can keep no counsel, of a surety. Now keep you from the wine white and red, and chiefly from the white wine of Lepe for sale in Fish Street, or Cheapside. This Spanish wine subtly creeps through other wines growing hard by, and such fumes arise therefrom that after two or three draughts, though a man deem himself to be at home in Cheapside, he is even at the town of Lepe in Spain, not at Rochelle nor at Bordeaux; and then he will say, *"Sam-soun, Sam-soun!"*

But hearken to one word, I pray you, lordings all; the supreme acts of victory in the Old Testament, I dare be bound, were done through the help of the true omnipotent God in prayer and abstinence. Look into the Bible and there you may see it. Look too at Attila, the great conqueror, who died in shame and disgrace, bleeding at his nose in a drunken sleep. A great captain should live soberly. And moreover, consider right carefully what was commanded to Lemuel, —not Samuel, I say, but Lemuel; read the Bible and find it expressly set down as to giving wine to tem that have oversight of justice. But no more now, for this may suffice.

Now that I have spoken of gluttony, I will forbid you gaming, which is the very mother of lies, deceit, and cursed forswearing, of blasphemy of Christ, manslaughter and waste of money and of time; and furthermore, it is a disgrace and against all honor to be known as a common gamester. And ever the higher a man's estate, the more abandoned he is held to be. If a prince practise hazard, by all temperance and public policy common opinion will hold him the lower in reputation. Stilbon, the wise ambassador, was sent to Corinth in great pomp from Lacedaemon to make an alliance; and when he came he chanced to find all the greatest men of that land playing at hazard. Wherefore, as soon as might be, he stole home again to his country and said, "I will not lose my good name there, nor will I take on me such a shame as to ally you to gamblers. Send other wise ambassadors: for by my troth I would rather die than ally you with gamesters. For you who be so glorious in honors shall not be allied with gamesters by I my will, or treaty of my making." Thus spake this wise philosopher. Look also how the king of the Parthians, as the book tells us, sent in scorn a set of golden dice to King Demetrius because he had practised gambling; wherefore he held at no value his glory and renown. Lords may find other kinds of virtuous diversion to pass the day with.

Now I will speak a word or two of false and great oaths that old books treat of. Violent swearing is an abominable thing, and false swearing is yet more to be blamed. The high God, as witness Matthew, forbade swearing at all; but especially the holy Jeremy says of swearing, "Thou shalt say thine oaths in sooth, and not lie, and swear in righteousness and judgment." But idle swearing is a cursedness. Behold how in the first table of the high God's glorious commandments the second commandment is, "Take not my name amiss or in vain." Lo, He forbids

such swearing earlier than He forbids homicide or many other cursed things. I say that it stands in this order, as anyone knows who knows the commandments, how that is the second commandment. And moreover I tell you flatly that vengeance will not depart from the house of him Who is too outrageous of his oaths. "By God's precious heart and by the nails of his cross, by the blood of Christ in the abbey of Hales, my chance is seven; yours is five and three. By God's arms, if you play falsely, this dagger shall go through your heart!" This is the fruit that comes of the two dice-bones, forswearing, ire, falseness, murder. Now for the love of Christ Who died for us, forsake your oaths, great and small. But, sirs, I now will tell on my tale.

These three rioters of whom I speak, long before any bell had rung for prime, were set down in a tavern to drink. And as they sat, they heard a bell tinkle that was carried before a corpse to his grave. One of them called to his boy, "Off with you, and ask straightway what, corpse it is passing by; and see you report his name aright."

"Sir," quoth the boy, "it needs not. It was told me two hours before you came here; he was an old fellow of yours, perdy, and he was slain suddenly in the night, as he sat very drunk on his bench. A privy thief men call Death, that slays all the people in this country-side, came with I his spear and smote his heart in two, and went his way without a word. He has slain a thousand in this pestilence; and master, ere you come before him, methinks you were best be warned of such an adversary. Be ready to meet him ever; thus my mother taught me, I can say no" more.

"The child speaks truth, by St. Mary," said the taverner, "for over a mile hence, in a large village, he has slain both woman, child, churl and knave. I trow his habitation be there. It were great wisdom, a man to be on his guard lest he do him a hurt."

"Yea, God's arms!" quoth this reveller, "is it such peril to meet with him? I vow to God's bones I will seek him in the highways and the byways. Hearken, fellows, we are all as one; let each of us hold up his hand and become the others' brother, and slay this false traitor Death. He shall be slain ere night that slays so many, by God's dignity!"

These three plighted their troth together, each to live and die for the rest as he were their sworn brother, and up they all started in this drunken fury, and forth they went toward that village of which the taverner had spoken; and many a grisly oath they swore, and Christ's blessed body they rent to pieces, —"Death shall be dead if they can but catch him."

When they had gone but a little way, even as they were treading over .a stile, an old man and poor met them, and greeted them full meekly, and said, "Now, lordings, God be with you!"

The proudest of these three revellers answered, "What, churl, bad luck to you! Why are you all wrapped up save your face? Why live you so long and so decrepit?"

This old man began to peer into his visage, and said, "Because I cannot find a man, though I walked from hence to India, in hamlet or in city, who will exchange his youth for mine age. And therefore I, must keep mine old age as long as it is God's will. Alas, death will not take me! Thus I walk, a restless caitiff, and thus morn and night I —" knock with my staff upon the ground, which is my mother's gate, and say, 'Dear mother, let me in. Lo, how I

vanish away, flesh and skin and blood! Alas, when shall my bones be at peace? Mother, I would exchange my chest with you, which has been long time in my chamber, yea, for an hair-cloth shroud to wrap me in!' But still she will not do me that favor; wherefore my face is full pale and withered. —But sirs, it is not a courteous thing to speak churlishly to an old man, unless he trespass in act or word. You may read yourselves in Holy Writ, 'Before an old hoary-head man ye shall arise;' wherefore I counsel you, do no harm now to an old man, no more than you would that it were done to you in your old age, if you abide so long. And now God be with you, wherever you go or be; I must go whither I have to go." "Nay, old churl, not so fast, by God," said this second gamester straightway. "By St. John, you part not so lightly You spoke even now of that traitor Death who slays all our friends in this country-side. By my troth, you are his spy! Tell where he is, or by God and the Holy Sacrament you shall pay for it. Truly you are of his consent to slay us young folk, false thief."

"Now sirs," quoth he, "if you are so fain to find Death, turn up this crooked path; for by my faith I left him in that grove under a tree, and there he will tarry, nor for all your bluster will he hide him. See you that oak? There you shall find him. May God, Who redeemed mankind, save you and amend you!" Thus spoke this old wight.

And each of these revellers ran till he came to that tree, and there they found wellnigh eight bushels, as it seemed to them, of florins coined of fine round gold: No longer sought them then after Death, but each was so glad at the sight of the precious hoard that they sat them down by the fair shining of florins. The worst of them spoke the first word. "Brethren," he said, heed what I say; though I jest oft and make sport, I have a pretty headpiece. Now Fortune has given us this treasure that we may live the rest of our lives in mirth and jollity, and lightly! As it comes, so we will spend it. Eh! God's precious dignity! Who would have weened to-day that we should have so fair a grace! Could this gold be but carried hence to my house or else to yours, —for you know well all; this gold is ours, —then were we in high felicity. But I truly it may not be done by day. Folk would call us sturdy thieves and hang us for our own treasure. It must be carried by night, as wisely and I slyly as may be. Therefore I advise that we draw cuts amongst us all, 1 and he that draws the shortest shall run with a blithe heart to the town and that forthwith, and privily bring us wine and bread. And two of us shall cunningly guard this treasure, and at night, if he delay us not, we will carry it where we all agree is safest."

One of them brought the cuts in his fist and bade them look where the lot should fall. It fell to the youngest of them and he straightway went forth toward the town. So soon as he was gone, the second said to the third, "You well know you are my sworn brother, and now I will tell you somewhat to your advantage. Here is gold great plenty, to divide amongst the three of us; and you know well our fellow is gone. Now if I can shape it so that it be divided amongst the two of us, had I not done you a friendly turn?"

"I wot not how that may be," the other answered, "he knows the gold is left with us two. What shall we do? What shall we say to him?" "Shall it be a secret?" said the first villain. "I shall tell you in few words what we shall do to bring it about."

"I assent," said the other, "not to betray you, by my troth."

‘‘Now,’’ quoth the first, ‘‘you know well we be two and that two shall be stronger than one. Look when he is set down; do you arise and scuffle with him as in sport, and I will rive him through the two sides, and look that you do the same with your dagger. And then shall all this gold be shared betwixt you and me, dear friend. Then may we both fulfill all our lusts, and play at dice at our own pleasure.’’ And thus were these two villains accorded to slay the third as I have said.

The youngest, going to the town, revolved full often in his heart the beauty of those bright new florins. ‘‘O Lord,’’ quoth he, ‘‘if so be I could have all this treasure to myself, no man living under God’s throne should live so merry as I!’’ And at last the fiend, our enemy, put it into his thought to buy poison with which to slay his two fellows; for the fiend found him in such a way of life that he had leave to bring him to perdition, for utterly his full purpose was to slay them both and never to repent. And forth he went without delay into the town to an, apothecary, and prayed him to sell him some poison that he might kill his rats; and eke there was a pole-cat in his yard, he said, which had killed his capons, and he would fain wreak him upon the vermin that ruined him by night. ‘‘And you shall have such a thing,’’ answered the apothecary, ‘‘that, so may God save my soul, no creature in all this world can eat or drink of this compound the amount of a grain of wheat, but he shall die anon. Yea, he shall die the death, and that in less time than you can walk a mile, this poison is so violent.’’

This cursed man gripped the box of poison in his hand, and then ran into the next street to a shop and borrowed three large bottles. Into two of them he poured his poison, but the third he kept clean for his own drink, for he planned to labor all night long carrying away the gold. And when this reveller, the Devil take him!, had filled his three great bottles with wine, he repaired again to his fellows. What need to discourse about it more ? For as they had planned his death, even so they slew him, and that anon. When this was done, one of the two said, ‘‘Now let us sit and drink and make merry, and then we will bury his body.’’ And with that word he chanced to take one of the bottles where the poison was, and he drank and gave his fellow to drink also. Wherefore anon they both died. And certes Avicenna wrote never in any canon or any chapter more wondrous signs of empoisoning than these two wretches showed ere they died. Thus ended these two murderers, and eke the false poisoner also

O cursed sin, full of cursedness! O treacherous homicide! O gluttony, lust and gaming! Thou blasphemer of Christ with insult and great oaths habitual and proud! Alas mankind, how may it be that to thy Creator Who made thee, and redeemed thee with His precious heart’s blood, thou art so false and unkind, alas!

Now, good men, God forgive you your trespasses and guard you from the sin of avarice. My holy pardon will cure you all, so you offer nobles c and other sterling coin, or else silver rings, brooches, spoons. Bow your heads, bow them under this holy bull! Come up, wives, offer of your yarn! See, I enter your name here in my roll; you shall enter into heaven’s bliss; I assoil you by mine high power, you that will make offerings, as clear and clean as when you were born—(lo sirs, thus I preach). And may Jesus Christ, our soul’s physician, grant you to receive His pardon; for that is better than mine, I will not deceive you.

But sirs, one word I have forgot to say. Here in my wallet I have relics and indulgences as fair as any man's in Britain, that were given me by the pope's own hand. If any of you of devotion will make an offering, and have mine absolution, come forth now and kneel down here and take meekly my pardon; or else take pardons all new and fresh as you go along, at every town's end, so you ever anew offer nobles and pence, which be good and sound. It is an honor to every wight here to have a competent pardoner to absolve you as you ride through the lonely country, in case of misadventure which might befall. Peradventure one or two may fall down off their horses and break their necks in two. Look what a security it is to you all that I fell into your company, who may assoil you all, high and low, when the soul shall pass from the body I counsel that our Host here be the first, for he is most enveloped in sin. Come forth, Sir Host, and offer first, and you shall kiss all the relics, yea, for a groat; straightway unbuckle your purse!

"Nay, nay, may I have Christ's malison if I do," quoth he. "Let be; it shall not be, on my soul. You would make me kiss your old breech and swear it were a saint's relic, be it never so foul! But by the holy cross and St. Helen, I would I had your guts in my hand instead of relics or halidom; pull them out, I will help you carry them. They shall be shrined in a hog's belly!"

This Pardoner answered not a word; so wroth he was, he would not speak.

"Now," quoth our Host, "I will not talk with you longer, nor with any other angry man."

But anon when the worthy Knight saw all the people laughing, he said, "Enough, no more of this. Sir Pardoner, be of merry cheer, and I pray you, Sir Host, that are so dear to me, kiss the Pardoner. And Pardoner, I pray you draw near again, and let us laugh and make sport as we did before." And forthwith they kissed and rode on.

Here is the end of the Pardoner's Tale.

EXERCISES

1. The Pardoner begins by condemning gluttony, drinking, gambling and swearing. Which of his arguments are the strongest? Explain.
2. The Pardoner's tale follows a progressing sequence of incidents up to a dramatic ending. Select the main events and get ready to retell the story.
3. What's the moral of the Pardoner's tale?
4. After telling his story, the Pardoner invites his listeners to buy his pardons and his relics so as to be absolved for their sins and go to heaven. Read his invocation aloud. Try to provide the proper intonation and gestures. Why do you think the Host rebuffed his proposal so rudely?
5. The Pardoner went by the country telling this story and advertising his merchandise. Do you know anybody like the pardoner?
6. What's the moral of Chaucer's tale?
7. Have you ever met anybody who behaves like the Pardoner? Write briefly about it.

The Marvellous Adventure of the Sword

BY SIR THOMAS MALORY (1420-1471)

And at the vigil of Pentecost, when all the fellowship of the Round Table were come unto Camelot, and there heard their service, and the tables were set ready to the meat, right so entered into the hall a full fair gentlewoman on horseback, that had ridden full fast, for her horse was all besweat. Then she there alighted, and came before the King, and saluted him; and then he said, Damsel, God thee bless! Sir, said she, I pray you say me where Sir Launcelot is? Yonder ye may see him, said the King. Then she went unto Launcelot and said, Sir Launcelot, I salute you on King Pelles' behalf, and I require you to come on with me hereby into a forest. Then Sir Launcelot asked her with whom she dwelt. I dwell, said she, with King Pelles. What will ye with me? said Sir Launcelot. Ye shall know, said she, when ye come thither. Well, said he, I will gladly go with you. So Sir Launcelot bade his squire saddle his horse and bring his arms; and in all haste he did his commandment. Then came the Queen unto Launcelot and said, Will ye leave us at this high feast? Madam, said the gentlewoman, wit ye well he shall be with you tomorrow by dinner-time. If I wist, said the Queen, that he should not be with us here tomorrow morn, he should not go with you by my good will.

Right so departed Sir Launcelot with the gentlewoman, and rode until that he came into a forest, and into a great valley, where they saw an abbey of nuns; and there was a squire ready, and opened the gates; and so they entered, and descended off their horses, and there came a fair fellowship about Sir' Launcelot and welcomed him, and were passing glad of his coming. And then they led him into the Abbess's chamber, and unarmed him, and right so he was ware upon a bed lying two of his cousins, Sir Bars and Sir Lionel, and then he waked them, and when they saw him they made great joy. Sir, said Sir Bors unto Sir Launcelot, what adventure hath brought thee hither, for we thought to-morrow to have found you at Camelot? Truly, said Sir Launcelot, a gentlewoman brought me hither, but I know not the cause. In the meanwhile, as they stood thus talking together, there came twelve nuns which brought with them Galahad, the which passing fair and well made, that scarcely in the world men might not find his match; and all those ladies wept. Sir, said the ladies, we bring you here this child, the which we have nourished, and we pray you to make him a knight; for of a more worthier man's hand may he not receive the order of knighthood. Sir Launcelot beheld that young squire and saw him seemly and demure as a dove, with all manner of good features, that he thought of his age never to have seen so fair a man of form. Then said Sir Launcelot, Cometh this desire of himself? He and all they said, Yea. Then shall he, said Sir Launcelot, receive the high order of knighthood as to-morrow at the reverence of the feast. That night Sir Launcelot had passing good cheer, and on the morn at the hour of prime, at Galahad's desire, he made him knight, and said, God make him a good man. For beauty faileth you not as any that liveth.

Now, fair sir, said Sir Launcelot, will ye come with me unto the Court of King Arthur? Nay, said he, I will not go with you as at this time. Then he departed from them and took his two cousins with him, and so they came unto Camelot by the hour of undorne[1] on Whitsunday. By that time the King and the Queen were gone to the minister to head their service: then the King and the Queen were passing glad of Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, and so was all the fellowship. So when the King and all the knights were come from service, the barons espied in the sieges of the Round Table, all about written with gold letters. Here ought to sit he, and he ought to sit here. And thus they went so long until that they came to the siege perilous, where they found letters newly written of gold, that said: Four hundred winters and fifty accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled. Then all they said, This is a marvellous thing, an adventurous. In the name of God, said Sir Launcelot; and then he accounted the term of the writing, from the birth of our Lord unto that day. It seemeth me, said Sir Launcelot, this siege ought to be fulfilled this same day, for this is the feast of Pentecost after the four hundred and four and fifty year; and if it would please all parties, I would none of these letters were seen this day, till he be come that ought to achieve this adventure. Then made they to ordain a cloth of silk for to cover these letters in the siege perilous. Then the King bade haste unto dinner. Sir, said Sir Kay the steward, if ye go now unto your meat, ye shall break your old custom of your Court. For ye have not used on this day to sit at your meat or that ye have seen some adventure. Ye say sooth, said the King, but I had so great joy of Sir Launcelot and of his cousins, which be come to the Court whole and sound, that I bethought me not of my old custom. So as they stood speaking, in came a squire, and said unto the King, Sir, I bring unto you marvellous tidings. What be they? said the King. Sir, there is here beneath at the river a great stone, which I saw float above the water, and therein saw I sticking a sword. The King said, I will see that marvel. So all the knights went with him, and when they came unto the river, they found there a stone floating, as it were of red marble, and therein stuck a fair and rich sword, and in the pommel thereof were precious stones, wrought with subtle letters of gold. Then the barons read the letters, which said in this wise: Never shall man take me hence but only he by whose side I ought to hang, and he shall be the best knight of the world. When the King had seen these letters, he said unto Sir Launcelot, Fair sir, this sword ought to be yours, for I am sure ye be the best knight of the world. Then Sir Launcelot answered full soberly: Certes, sir, it is not my sword: also, sir, wit ye well I have no hardiness to set my hand to, for it longed not to hang at my side. Also who that assayeth to take that sword, and faileth of it, he shall receive a wound by that sword, that he shall not be whole long after. And I will that ye wit that this same day will the adventures of the Sancgreal, that is called the holy vessel, begin.

Now, fair nephew, said the King unto Sir Gawaine, assay ye for my love. Sir, he said, save your good grace, I shall not do that. Sir, said the King, assay to take the sword, and at my commandment. Sir, said Gawaine, your commandment I will obey. And therewith he took up the sword by the handles, but he might not stir it. I thank you, said the King to Sir Gawaine. My lord Sir Gawaine, said Sir Launcelot, now wit ye well, this sword shall touch you so sore that ye shall will ye had never set your hand thereto; for the best castle of this realm. Sir, he

[1] Nine in the morning.

said, I might not withsay mine uncle's will and commandment. But when the King heard this, he repented it much, and said unto Sir Percivale that he should assay for his love. And he said, Gladly, for to bear Sir Gawaine fellowship. And therewith he set his hand on the sword, and drew it strongly, but he might not move it. Then were there more that durst be so hardy to set their hands thereto. Now may ye go to your dinner, said Sir Kay unto the King, for a marvellous adventure have ye seen. So the King and all went unto the Court, and every knight knew his own place, and set him therein, and young men that were knights served them. So when they were served, and al sieges fulfilled, save only the siege perilous, anon there befell a marvellous adventure, that all the doors and the windows of the place shut by themselves. Not for then the hall was not greatly darkened, and therewith they abashed both one and other. Then King Arthur spake first, and said, Fair fellows and lords, we have seen this day great marvels, but or night I suppose we shall see greater marvels. In the meanwhile came in a good old man, and an ancient, clothed all in white, and there was no knight knew from whence he came. And with him he brought a young knight, both on foot, in red arms, without sword or shield, save a scabbard hanging by his side. And these words he said Peace be with you, fair lords. Then the old man said unto Arthur, Sit I bring here a young knight the which is of king's lineage, and of the kindred of Joseph of Arimathie, whereby the marvels of this Court and of strange realms shall be fully accomplished.

The King was right glad of his words, and said unto the good man Sir, ye be right welcome, and the young knight with you. Then the old man made the young man to unarm him; and he was in a coat o red sendel, and bare a mantle upon his shoulder that was furred with ermine, and put that upon him. And the old knight said unto the young knight, Sir, follow me. And anon he led him unto the siege perilous, where beside sat Sir Launcelot, and the good man lift up the cloth, and found there letters that said thus: This is the siege of Galahaj the haut prince. Sir, said the old knight, wit ye well that place is yours. And then he set him down surely in that siege. And then he said to the old man, Sir, ye may now go your way, for well have ye done that ye were commanded to do. And recommend me unto my grand sir King Pelles, and unto my lord Petchere, and say them on my behalf, I shall come and see them as soon as ever I may. So the good man departed, and there met him twenty noble squires, and so took their horses and went their way. Then all the knights of the Table Round marvelled them greatly of Sir Galahad, that he durst sit there in that siege perilous, and was so tender of age, and wist not from whence he came, but all only by God, and said, This is he by whom the Sancgreal shall be achieved, for there sat never none but he, but he were mischieved. The Sir Launcelot beheld his son, and had great joy of him. Then Sir Bors told his fellows, Upon pain of my life this young knight shall come unto great worship. This noise was great in all the Court, so that it cam to the Queen. Then she had marvel what knight it might be that durst adventure him to sit in the siege perilous. Many said unto the Queen, he resembled much unto Sir Launcelot. I may well suppose, said the queen, that he is son of Sir Launcelot and King Pelles' daughter, and his name is Galahad. I would fain see him, said the Queen, for he must needs be a noble man, for so is his father; I report me unto all the Table Round. So when the meat was done, that the King and all were risen, the King went unto the siege perilous, and lift up the cloth, and found there the name of Galahad, and then he showed it unto Sir

Gawaine, and said, Fair nephew, now have we among us Sir Galahad the good knight, that shall worship us all, and upon pain of my life he shall achieve the Sancgreal, right so as Sir Launcelot hath done us to unserstand. Then came King Arthur unto Galahad, and said, Sir, ye be welcome, for ye shall move many good knights to the quest of the Sancgreal, and ye shall achieve that never knights might bring to an end. Then the King took him by the hand, and went down from the palace to show Galahad the adventures of the stone.

The Queen heard thereof, and came after with many ladies, and showed them the stone where it hoved on the water. Sir, said the King unto Sir Galahad, here is a great marvel as ever I saw, and right good knights have assayed and failed. Sir, said Galahad, that is no marvel, for this adventure is not theirs, but mine, and for the surety of this sword I brought none with me; for here by my side hangeth the scabbard. And anon he laid his hand on the sword, and lightly drew it out of the stone, and put in the sheath, and said unto the King, Now it goeth better than it did aforehand.

EXERCISES

1. King Arthur's legends constitute a fundamental source of traditional British culture. Find information on King Arthur, Queen Guenevere, and Sir Launcelot and share it with your classmates.
2. What was the Siege Perilous?
3. What was the Sancgreal?
4. In line with medieval conceptions of the world, the story depicts a series of events in which individuals are controlled by some destiny or higher power and led to perform certain roles. Could you provide some examples from the story in which this is seen?
5. This story takes place in a magic world of wonder where the most extraordinary events seem possible and natural. Could you provide some example? Could you illustrate that example with a drawing?

The Vision of Mirzah

BY JOSEPH ADDISON (1672-1719)

When I was at Grand Cairo, I picked up several Oriental manuscripts, which I have still by me. Among others I met with one entitled, *The Visions of Mirzah*, which I have read over with great pleasure. I intend to give it to the public when I have no other entertainment for them; and shall begin with the first vision, which I have translated word for word as follows:

"On the fifth day of the moon, which according to the custom of my forefathers I always keep holy, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hills of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer. As I was here airing myself on the tops of the mountains, I fell into a

profound contemplation on the vanity of human life; and passing from one thought to another, surely, said I, man is but a shadow and life a dream. Whilst I was thus musing, I cast my eyes towards the summit of a rock that was not far from me, where I discovered one in the habit of a shepherd, with a little musical instrument in his hand. As I looked upon him he applied it to his lips, and began to play upon it. The sound of it was exceeding sweet, and wrought into a variety of tunes that were inexpressibly melodious, and altogether different from anything I had ever heard: they put me in mind of those heavenly airs that are played to the departed souls of good men upon their first arrival in Paradise, to wear out the impressions of their last agonies, and qualify them for the pleasures of that happy place. My heart melted away in secret raptures.

"I had been often told that the rock before me was the haunt of a Genius; and that several had been entertained with music who had passed by it, but never heard that the musician had before made himself visible. When he had raised my thoughts by those transporting airs which he played, to taste the pleasures of his conversation, as I looked upon him like one astonished, he beckoned to me, and by the waving of his hand directed me to approach the place where he sat. I drew near with that reverence which is due to a superior nature; and as my heart was entirely subdued by the captivating strains I had heard, I fell down at his feet and wept. The Genius smiled upon me with a look of com- passion and affability that familiarised him to my imagination, and at once dispelled all the fears and apprehensions with which I approached him. He lifted me from the ground, and taking me by the hand, Mirzah, said he, I have heard thee in thy soliloquies; follow me.

"He then led me to the highest pinnacle of the rock, and placed me on the top of it. Cast thy eyes eastward, said he, and tell me what thou seest. I see, said I, a huge valley, and a prodigious tide of water rolling through it. The valley that thou seest, said he, is the vale of misery, and the tide of water that thou seest is part of the great tide of eternity. What is the reason, said I, that the tide I see rises out of a thick mist at one end, and again loses itself in a thick mist at the other? What thou seest, said he, is that portion of eternity which is called time, measured out by the sun, and reaching from the beginning of the world to its consummation. Examine now, said he, this sea that is bounded with darkness at both ends, and tell me what thou discoverest in it. I see a bridge, said I, standing in the midst of the tide. The bridge thou seest, said he, is human life, consider it attentively. Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it consisted of threescore and ten entire arches, with several broken arches, which added to those that were entire, made up the number about a hundred. As I was counting the arches, the Genius told me that this bridge consisted at first of a thousand arches; but that a great flood swept away the rest, and left the bridge ill the ruinous condition I now beheld it: But tell me further, said he, what thou discoverest on it. I see multitudes of people passing over it, said I, and a black cloud hanging on each end of it. As I looked more attentively, I saw several of the passengers dropping through the bridge, into the great tide that flowed underneath it: and upon further examination, perceived there were innumerable trap-doors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sooner trod upon, but they fell through them into the tide and immediately disappeared. These hidden pitfalls were set very thick at the entrance of the bridge, so that the

throngs of people no sooner broke through the cloud, but many of them fell into them. They grew thinner towards the middle, but multiplied and lay closer together towards the end of the arches that were entire.

"There were indeed some persons, but their number was very small, that continued a kind of hobbling march on the broken arches, but fell through one after another, being quite tired and spent after so long a walk.

"I passed some time in the contemplation of this wonderful structure, and the great variety of objects which it presented. My heart was filled with a deep melancholy to see several dropping unexpectedly in the midst of mirth and jollity, and catching at everything that stood by them to save themselves. Some were looking up towards the heavens in a thoughtful posture, and in the midst of a speculation stumbled and fell out of sight. Multitudes were very busy in the pursuit of bubbles that glittered in their eyes and danced before them; but often when they thought themselves within the reach of them their footing failed and down they sunk. In this confusion of objects, I observed some with scimitars in their hands, who ran to and fro upon the bridge, thrusting several persons on trap-doors which did not seem to lie in their way, and which they might have escaped, had they not been thus forced upon them.

"The Genius seeing me indulge myself in this melancholy prospect, told me I had dwelt long enough upon it: Take thine eyes off the bridge, said he, and tell me if thou yet seest anything thou dost not comprehend. Upon looking up, What mean, said I, those great flights of birds that are perpetually hovering about the bridge, and settling upon it from time to time? I see vultures, harpies, ravens, cormorants, and among many other feathered creatures several little winged boys, that perch in great numbers upon the middle arches. These, said the Genius, are Envy, Avarice, Superstition, Despair, Love, with the like cares and passions that infest human life.

"I here fetched a deep sigh; Alas, said I, man was made in vain! How is he given away to misery and mortality! tortured in life, and swallowed up in death! The Genius, being moved with compassion towards me, bid me quit so uncomfortable a prospect; Look no more, said he, on man in the first stage of his existence, in his setting out for eternity; but cast thine eye on that thick mist into which the tide bears the several generations of mortals that fall into it. I directed my sight as I was ordered, and (whether or no the good Genius strengthened it with any supernatural force, or dissipated part of the mist that was before too thick for the eye to penetrate) I saw the valley opening it the farther end, and spreading forth into an immense ocean, that had a huge rock of adamant running through the midst of it, and dividing it into two equal parts. The clouds still rested on one half of it, insomuch that I could discover nothing in it: but the other appeared to me a vast ocean planted with innumerable islands, that were covered with fruits and flowers, and interwoven with a thousand little shining seas that ran among them. I could see persons dressed in glorious habits with garlands upon their heads, passing among the trees, lying down by the sides of fountains, or resting on beds of flowers; and could hear a confused harmony of singing birds, falling waters, human voices, and musical instruments. Gladness grew in me upon the discovery of so delightful a scene. I wished for the wings of an eagle, that I might fly away to those happy seats; but the Genius told me there was no passage to them, except through the gates of death that I saw opening every moment upon the bridge. The islands, said he, that lie so fresh and green before thee, and with which the whole

face of the ocean appears spotted as far as thou canst see, are more in number than the sands on the sea-shore; there are myriads of islands behind those which thou here discoverest, reaching farther than thine eye, or even thine imagination can extend itself. These are the mansions of good men after death, who, according to the degree and kinds of virtue in which they excelled, are distributed among these several islands, which abound with pleasures of different kinds and degrees, suitable to the relishes and perfections of those who are settled in them; every island is a paradise accommodated to its respective inhabitants. Are not these, O Mirzah, habitations worth contending for? Does life appear miserable, that gives thee opportunities of earning such a reward? Is death to be feared, that will convey thee to so happy an existence? Think not man was made in vain, who has such an eternity reserved for him. I gazed with inexpressible pleasure on these happy islands. At length, said I, show me now, I beseech thee, the secrets that lie hid under those dark clouds which cover the ocean on the other side of the rock of adamant. The Genius making me no answer, I turned about to address myself to him a second time, but I found that he had left me; I then turned again to the vision which I had been so long contemplating; but instead of the rolling tide, the arched bridge, and the happy islands, I saw nothing but the long hollow valley of Bagdat, with oxen, sheep, and camels grazing upon the sides of it.''

EXERCISES

1. Metaphors are comparisons of things that seem unlike. The realization of the hidden connection brings about a more profound understanding of the object. What metaphors would you suggest to stand for "life" and for "death"? Read the story and then compare your constructions with those offered by Addison.
2. Addison locates his storyteller in Cairo to build a setting away from West European Jewish-Christian tradition or to give it a romantic Oriental flavor, or for another reason. Which do you think was the Addison's purpose? Explain.
3. What characteristics of the tide and the bridge make them proper for a figurative comparison with time and human life? What might be the flood that destroyed much of the one thousand arches bridge? Could you find better metaphors for these things?
4. What do you think of the irregular distribution of the trap doors concealed in the bridge? Is that symbolism accurate? Could you find a better one? Write it down for class debate.
5. What may be the bubbles multitudes run in pursuit? And the men with the scimitars?
6. Contrast the vision of Mirzah of life after death with that of the Jewish-Christian tradition. Provide your personal opinion on the matter.

Con Cregan's Legacy

BY CHARLES LEVER (1806-1872)

I was born in a little cabin on the borders of Meath and King's County; it stood on a small triangular bit of ground, beside a cross-road; and although the place was surveyed every ten years or so, they were never able to say to which county we belonged; there being just the same number of arguments for one side as for the other—a circumstance, many believed, that decided my father in his original choice of the residence; for while, under the "disputed boundary question," he paid no rates or county cess, he always made a point of voting at both county elections. This may seem to indicate that my parent was of a naturally acute habit; and, indeed, the way he became possessed of the bit of ground will confirm that impression.

There was nobody of the rank of gentry in the parish, not even "squireen"; the richest being a farmer, a snug old fellow, one Harry McCabe, that had two sons, who were always fighting between themselves which was to have the old man's money. Peter, the elder, doing everything to injure Mat, and Mat never backward in paying off the obligation. At last Mat, tired out in the struggle, resolved he would bear no more. He took leave of his father one night, and next day set off for Dublin, and listed in the "Buffs." Three weeks after he sailed for India; and the old man, overwhelmed by grief, took to his bed, and never arose from it after. Not that his death was in any way sudden, for he lingered on for months long; Peter always teasing him to make his will, and be revenged on "the dirty spalpeen" that disgraced the family, but old Harry as stoutly resisting, and declaring that whatever he owned should be fairly divided between them. These disputes between them were well known ill the neighbourhood. Few of the country people passing the house at night but had overheard the old man's weak, reedy voice, and Peter's deep hoarse one, in altercation. When, at last —it was on a Sunday night—all was still and quiet in the house; not a word, not a footstep could be heard, no more than if it were uninhabited, the neighbours looked knowingly at each other, and wondered if the old man was worse if he were dead!

It was a little after midnight that a knock came to the door of our cabin. I heard it first, for I used to sleep in a little snug basket near the fire; but I didn't speak, for I was frightened. It was repeated still louder, and then came a cry—

"Con Cregan! Con, I say! open the door! I want you."

I knew the voice well, it was Peter McCabe's; but I pretended to be fast asleep, and snored loudly. At last my father unbolted the door, and I heard him say—

"Oh, Mr. Peter, what's the matter? is the ould man worse?"

"Faix! that's what he is, for he's dead!"

"Glory be his bed! when did it happen?"

"About an hour ago," said Peter, in a voice that even I from my corner could perceive was greatly agitated. "He died like an ould haythen, Con, and never made a will!"

‘‘That’s bad,’’ said my father; for he was always a polite man, and said whatever was pleasing to the company.

‘‘It is bad,’’ said Peter; ‘‘but it would be worse if we couldn’t help it. Listen to me now, Conny, I want ye to help me in this business; and here’s five guineas in goold, if ye do what I bid ye. You know that ye were always reckoned the image of my father, and before he took ill ye were mistaken for each other everyday of the week.’’

‘‘Anan!’’ said my father; for he was getting frightened at the notion, without well knowing why.

‘‘Well, what I want is, for ye to come over to the house and get into the bed.’’

‘‘Not beside the corpse?’’ said my father, trembling.

‘‘By no means; but by yourself; and you’re to pretend to be my father, and that ye want to make yer will before ye die; and then I’ll send for the neighbours, and Billy Scanlan the schoolmaster, and ye’ll tell him what to write, laving all the farm and everything to me—ye understand. And as the neighbours will see ye and hear yer voice, it will never be believed but it was himself that did it.’’

‘‘The room must be very dark,’’ says my father .

‘‘To be sure it will, but have no fear! Nobody will dare to come nigh the bed; and ye’ll only have to make a cross with your pen under the name.’’

‘‘And the priest?’’ said my father.

‘‘My father quarrelled with him last week about the Easter dues, and Father Tom said he’d not give him the ‘rites’; and that’s lucky now! Come along now, quick, for we’ve no time to lose; it must be all finished before the day breaks.’’

My father did not lose much time at his toilet, for he just wrapped his big coat ’round him, and slipping on his brogues, left the house, I sat up in the basket and listened till they were gone some minutes; and then, in a costume light as my parent’s, set out after them, to watch the course of the adventure, I thought to take a short cut and be before them; but by bad luck I fell into a bog-hole, and only escaped being drowned by a chance. As it was, when I reached the house the performance had already begun, I think I see the whole scene this instant before my eyes, as I sat on a little window with one pane, and that a broken one, and surveyed the proceeding. It was a large room, at one end of which was a bed, and beside it a table, with physic-bottles, and spoons, and tea-cups; a little farther off was another table, at ,which sat Billy Scanlan, with all manner of writing materials before him, The country people sat two, sometimes three deep round the walls, all intently eager and anxious for the coming event. Peter himself went from place to place, trying to smother his grief, and occasionally helping the company to whisky—which was supplied with more than accustomed liberality, All my consciousness of the deceit and trickery could not deprive the scene of a certain solemnity. The misty distance of the half-lighted room; the highly-wrought expression of the country people’s faces, never more intensely excited than at some moment of this kind; the low, deep-drawn breathings, unbroken save by a sigh or a sob—the tribute of some affectionate sorrow to some lost friend, whose memory was thus forcibly brought back; these, I repeat it, were all so real that, as I looked, a thrilling sense of awe stole over me, and I actually shook with fear.

A low, faint cough, from the dark corner where the bed stood, seemed to cause even a deeper stillness; and then in a silence where the buzzing of a fly would have been heard, my father said—

"Where's Billy Scanlan? I want to make my will!" "He's here, father!" said Peter, taking Billy by the hand and leading him to the bedside.

"Write what I bid ye, Billy, and be quick, for I haven't a long time before me here. I die a good Catholic, though Father O'Rafferty won't give me the 'rites'!"

A general chorus of "Oh, musha, musha," was now heard through the room; but whether in grief over the sad fate of the dying man or the unflinching severity of the priest, is hard to say.

"I die in peace with all my neighbours and all mankind!" Another chorus of the company seemed to approve these charitable expressions.

"I bequeath unto my son, Peter—and never was there a better son, or a decenter boy! —have you that down? I bequeath unto my son, Peter, the whole of my two farms of Killimundoonery and Knocksheboorn, with the fallow meadows behind Lynch's house; the forge, and the right of turf on the Dooran bog. I give him, and much good may it do him, Lanty Cassarn's acre, and the Luary field, with the limekiln—and that reminds me that my mouth is just as dry; let me taste what ye have in the jug."

Here the dying man took a very hearty pull, and seemed considerably refreshed by it.

"Where was I, Billy Scanlan?" says he; "oh, I remember, at the limekiln; I leave him—that's Peter, I mean—the two potato-gardens at Noonan's Well; and it is the elegant fine crops grows there."

"An't you get tin' wake, father, darlin'?" says Peter, who began to be afraid of my father's loquaciousness; for, to say the truth, the punch got into his head, and he was greatly disposed to talk.

"I am, Peter, my son," says he, "I am getting wake; just touch my lips again with the jug. Ah, Peter, Peter, you watered the drink!"

"No, indeed, father, but it's the taste is leavin' you," says Peter; and again a low chorus of compassionate pity murmured through the cabin.

"Well, I'm nearly done now," says my father; "there's only one little plot of ground remaining, and I put it on you, Peter—as ye wish to live a good man, and die with the same easy heart I do now—that ye mind my last words to ye here. Are ye listening? Are the neighbours listening? Is Billy Scanlan listening?"

"Yes, sir. Yes, father. We're all minding," chorused the audience. "Well, then, it's my last will and testament, and may—give me over the jug" —here he took along drink—"and may that blessed liquor be poison to me if I'm not as eager about this as every other part of my will; I say, then, I bequeath the little plot at the cross-roads to poor Con Cregan; for he has a heavy charge, and is as honest and as hard-working a man as ever I knew. Be a friend to him, Peter dear; never let him want while ye have it yerself; think of me on my deathbed whenever he asks ye for any trifle. Is it down, Billy Scanlan? the two acres at the cross to Con Cregan and his heirs, in secla seclorum. Ah, blessed be the saints! but I feel my heart lighter after that," says he; "a good work makes an easy conscience; and now I'll drink all the company's good health, and many happy returns—"

What he was going to add there's no saying; but Peter, who was now terribly frightened at the lively tone the sick man was assuming, hurried all the people away into another room, to let his father die in peace. When they were all gone Peter slipped back to my father, who was putting on his brogues in a corner.

"Con," says he, "ye did it all well; but sure that was a joke about the two acres at the cross."

"Of course it was," says he; "sure it was all a joke for the matter of that; won't I make the neighbours laugh hearty to-morrow when I tell them all about it!"

"You wouldn't be mean enough to betray me?" says Peter, trembling with fright.

"Sure ye wouldn't be mean enough to go against yer father's dying words?" says my father; "the last sentence ever he spoke;" and here he gave a low, wicked laugh that made me shake with fear.

"Very well, Con!" says Peter, holding out his hand; "a bargain's a bargain; yer a deep fellow, that's all!" and so it ended; and my father slipped quietly home over the bog, mighty well satisfied with the legacy he left himself. And thus we became the owners of the little spot known to this day as Con's Acre.

EXERCISES

1. In the first two paragraphs, Lever sets the stage for the coming drama or comedy. Who are the characters? What relationship is there among them?
2. The performance is humorous, comical. Which are the best passages?
3. The storyteller refers to the intrigue as "deceit" and "trickery". Do you agree with those epithets?
4. What do you think of Peter McCabe's behavior? What about Con Cregan's? Whose action do you consider wicked? Be ready to state your reasons.
5. Would you ever behave like Peter McCabe? Like Con Cregan? Why or why not?

Sire de Maletroit's Door

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850-1894)

Denis de Beaulieu was not yet two-and-twenty but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough, warfaring epoch; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honourable fashion, and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind, went out to pay a visit in the grey of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding on the young man's part. He would have done better

to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England under a mixed command; and though Denis was there on safe-conduct, his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September, 1429; the weather had fallen sharp; a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind. The night fell swiftly; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire-top, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds—a black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose, and began to hoot under arch ways and roar amid the tree-tops in the valley below the town.

Denis de Beaulieu walked fast and was soon knocking at his friend's door; but though he promised himself to stay only a little while and make an early return, his welcome was so pleasant, and he found so much to delay him, that it was already long past midnight before he said good-bye upon the threshold. The wind had fallen again in the meanwhile; the night was as black as the grave; not a star, nor a glimmer of moonshine, slipped through the canopy of cloud. Denis was ill-acquainted with the intricate lanes of Chateau Landon; even by daylight he had found some trouble in picking his way, and in this absolute darkness he soon lost it altogether. He was certain of one thing only—to keep mounting the hill; for his friend's house lay at the lower end, or tail, of Chateau Landon, while the inn was up at the head, under the great church spire. With this clue to go upon he stumbled and groped forward, now breathing more freely in open places where there was a good slice of sky overhead, now feeling along the wall in stifling closes. It is an eerie and mysterious position to be thus submerged in opaque blackness in an almost unknown town. The silence is terrifying in its possibilities. The touch of cold window bars to the exploring hand startles the man like the touch of a toad, the inequalities of the pavement shake his heart into his mouth; a piece of denser darkness threatens an ambuscade or a chasm in the pathway, and where the air is brighter, the houses put on strange and bewildering appearances, as if to lead him farther from his way For Denis, who had to regain his inn without attracting notice, there was real danger as well as mere discomfort in the walk; and he went warily and boldly at once, and at every corner paused to make an observation.

He had been for some time threading a lane so narrow that he could touch a wall with either hand, when it began to open out and go sharply downward. Plainly this lay no longer in the direction of his inn, but the hope of a little more light tempted him forward to reconnoitre. The lane ended in a terrace with a bartizan wall, which gave an outlook between high houses, as out of an embrasure, into the valley lying dark and formless several hundred feet below. Denis looked down, and could discern a few tree-tops waving and a single speck of brightness where the river ran across a weir. The weather was clearing up, and the sky had lightened, so as to show the outline of the heavier clouds and the dark margin of the hills. By the uncertain glimmer, the house on his left hand should be a place of some pretensions; it was surmounted by several pinnacles and turret-tops; the

round stern of a chapel, with a fringe of flying buttresses, projected boldly from the main block; and the door was sheltered under a deep porch carved with figures and overhung by two long gargoyles. The windows of the chapel gleamed through their intricate tracery with a light as of many tapers, and threw out the buttresses and the peaked roof in a more intense blackness against the sky. It was plainly the hotel of some great family of the neighbourhood; and as it reminded Denis of a town house of his own at Bourges, he stood for some time gazing up at it and mentally gauging the skill of the architects and the consideration of the two families.

There seemed to be no issue to the terrace but the lane by which he had reached it; he could only retrace his steps, but he had gained some notion of his whereabouts, and hoped by this means to hit the main thoroughfare and speedily regain the inn. He was reckoning without that chapter of accidents which was to make this night memorable above all others in his career; for he had not gone back above a hundred yards before he saw a light coming to meet him, and heard loud voices speaking together in the echoing narrows of the lane. It was a party of men-at-arms going the night round with torches. Denis assured himself that they had all been making free with the wine-bowl, and were in no mood to be particular about safe-conducts or the niceties of chivalrous war. It was as like as not that they would kill him like a dog and leave him where he fell. The situation was inspiriting but nervous. Their own torches would conceal him from sight, he reflected; and he hoped that they would drown the noise of his footsteps with their own empty voices. If he were but fleet and silent, he might evade their notice altogether.

Unfortunately, as he turned to beat a retreat, his foot rolled upon a pebble; he fell against the wall with an ejaculation, and his sword rang loudly on the stones. Two or three voices demanded who went there —some in French, some in English; but Denis made no reply, and ran faster down the lane. Once upon the terrace, he paused to look back. They still kept calling after him, and just then began to double the pace in pursuit, with a considerable clank of armour, and great tossing of the torchlight to and fro in the narrow jaws of the passage.

Denis cast a look around and darted into the porch. There he might escape observation, or—if that were too much to expect—was in a capital posture whether for parley or defense. So thinking, he drew his sword and tried to set his back against the door. To his surprise, it yielded behind his weight; and though he turned in a moment, continued to swing back on oiled and noiseless hinges, until it stood wide open on a black interior. When things fallout opportunely for the person concerned, he is not apt to be critical about the how or why, his own immediate personal convenience seeming a sufficient reason for the strangest oddities and revolutions in our sublunary things; and so Denis, without a moment's hesitation, stepped within and partly closed the door behind him to conceal his place of refuge. Nothing was further from his thoughts than to close it altogether; but for some inexplicable reason—perhaps by a spring or a weight—the ponderous mass of oak whipped itself out of his fingers and clanked to, with a formidable rumble and a noise like the falling of an automatic bar.

The round, at that very moment, debouched upon the terrace and proceeded to summon him with shouts and curses. He heard them ferreting in the dark corners; the stock of a lance even rattled along the outer surface of the door behind which he stood; but these gentlemen were in too high a humour to be long delayed, and soon

made on down a corkscrew pathway which had escaped Denis' observation, and passed out of sight and hearing along the battlements of the town.

Denis breathed again. He gave them a few minutes' grace for fear of accidents, and then groped about for some means of opening the door and slipping forth again. The inner surface was quite smooth, not a handle, not a moulding, not a projection of any sort. He got his finger-nails round the edges and pulled, but the mass was immovable. He shook it, it was as firm as a rock. Denis de Beaulieu frowned and gave vent to a little noiseless whistle. What ailed the door? he wondered. Why was it open? How came it to shut so easily and so effectually after him? There was something obscure and underhand about all this, that was little to the young man's fancy. It looked like a snare; and yet who could suppose a snare in such a quiet by-street and in a house of so prosperous and even noble an exterior? And yet—snare or no snare, intentionally or unintentionally—here he was, prettily trapped; and for the life of him he could see no way out of it again. The darkness began to weigh upon him. He gave ear; all was silent without, but within and close by he seemed to catch a faint sighing, a faint sobbing rustle, a little stealthy creak-as though many persons were at his side, holding themselves quite still, and governing even their respiration with the extreme of slyness. The idea went to his vitals with a shock, and he faced about suddenly as if to defend his life. Then, for the first time, he became aware of a light about the level of his eyes and at some distance in the interior of the house—a vertical thread of light, widening towards the bottom, such as might escape between two wings of arras over a doorway. To see anything was a relief to Denis; it was like a piece of solid ground to a man labouring in a morass; his mind seized upon it with avidity; and he stood staring at it and trying to piece together some logical conception of his surroundings. Plainly there was a flight of steps ascending from his own level to that of the illuminated doorway; and indeed he thought he could make out another thread of light, as fine as a needle and as faint as phosphorescence, which might very well be reflected along the polished wood of a handrail. Since he had begun to suspect that he was not alone, his heart had continued to beat with smothering violence, and an intolerable desire for action of any sort had possessed itself of his spirit. He was in deadly peril, he believed. What could be more natural than to mount the staircase, lift the curtain, and confront his difficulty at once? At least he would be dealing with something tangible; at least he would be no longer in the dark. He stepped slowly forward with outstretched hands, until his foot struck the bottom step; then he rapidly scaled the stairs, stood for a moment to compose his expression, lifted the arras and went in.

He found himself in a large apartment of polished stone. There were three doors; one on each of three sides; all similarly curtained with tapestry. The fourth side was occupied by two large windows and a great stone chimney-piece, carved with the arms of the Maletroits. Denis recognized the bearings, and was gratified to find himself in such good hands. The room was strongly illuminated; but it contained little furniture except a heavy table and a chair or two, the hearth was innocent of fire, and the pavement was but sparsely strewn with rushes clearly many days old.

On a high chair beside the chimney, and directly facing Denis as he entered, sat a little old gentleman in a fur tippet. He sat with his legs crossed and his hands folded, and a cup of spiced wine stood by his elbow on a bracket on the wall. His countenance had a strongly masculine cast; not properly human, but such as we see in the bull, the goat, or the domestic boar, something equivocal and wheedling, something greedy, brutal, and dangerous. The upper lip was inordinately full, as though swollen by a blow or a toothache; and the smile, the peaked eyebrows, and the small, strong eyes were quaintly and almost comically evil in expression. Beautiful white hair hung straight all round his head, like a saint's, and fell in a single curl upon the tippet. His beard and moustache were the pink of venerable sweetness. Age, probably in consequence of inordinate precautions, had left no mark upon his hands; and the Maletroit hand was famous. It would be difficult to imagine anything at once so fleshy and so delicate in design; the taper, sensual fingers were like those of one of Leonardo's women; the fork of the thumb made a dimpled protuberance when closed; the nails were perfectly shaped, and of a dead, surprising whiteness. It rendered his aspect tenfold more redoubtable, that a man with hands like these should keep them devoutly folded in his lap like a virgin martyr—that a man with so intense and startling an expression of face should sit patiently on his seat and contemplate people with an unwinking stare, like a god, or a god's statue. His quiescence seemed ironical and treacherous, it fitted so poorly with his looks.

Such was Alain, Sire de Maletroit. Denis and he looked silently at each other for a second or two.

"Pray step in," said the Sire de Maletroit. "I have been expecting you all the evening."

He had not risen, but he accompanied his words with a smile and a slight but courteous inclination of the head. Partly from the smile, partly from the strange musical murmur with which the Sire prefaced his observation, Denis felt a strong shudder of disgust go through his marrow. And what with disgust and honest confusion of mind, he could scarcely get words together in reply.

"I fear," he said, "that this is a double accident. I am not the person you suppose me. It seems you were looking for a visit; but for my part, nothing was further from my thoughts—nothing could be more contrary to my wishes—than this intrusion."

"Well, well," replied the old gentleman indulgently, "here you are, which is the main point. Seat yourself, my friend, and put yourself entirely at your ease. We shall arrange our little affairs presently."

Denis perceived that the matter was still complicated with some misconception, and he hastened to continue his explanation.

"Your door. .." he began. "About my door?" asked the other, raising his peaked eyebrows. "A little piece of ingenuity." And he shrugged his shoulders. "A hospitable fancy! By your own account, you were not desirous of making my acquaintance. We old people look for such reluctance now and then; and when it touches our honours, we cast about until we find some way of overcoming it. You arrive uninvited, but believe me, very welcome."

"You persist in error, sir," said Denis. "There can be no question between you and me. I am a stranger in this countryside. My name is Denis, damoiseau de Beaulieu. If you see me in your house, it is only—."

“My found friend,” interrupted the other, “you will permit me to have my own ideas on that subject. They probably differ from yours at the present moment,” he added with a leer, “but time will show which of us is in the right.”

Denis was convinced he had to do with a lunatic. He seated himself with a shrug, content to wait the upshot; and a pause ensued, during which he thought he could distinguish a hurried gabbling as of prayer from behind the arras immediately opposite him. Sometimes there seemed to be but one person engaged, sometimes two; and the vehemence of the voice, low as it was, seemed to indicate either great haste or an agony of spirit. It occurred to him that this piece of tapestry covered the entrance to the chapel he had noticed from without.

The old gentleman meanwhile surveyed Denis from head to foot with a smile, and from time to time emitted little noises like a bird or a mouse, which seemed to indicate a high degree of satisfaction. This state of matters became rapidly insupportable; and Denis, to put an end to it, remarked politely that the wind had gone down.

The old gentleman fell into a fit of silent laughter, so prolonged and violent that he became quite red in the face. Denis got upon his feet at once, and put on his hat with a flourish.

“Sir,” he said, “if you are in your wits, you have affronted me grossly. If you are out of them, I flatter myself I can find better employment for my brains than to talk with lunatics. My conscience is clear; you have made a fool of me from the first moment; you have refused to hear my explanations; and now there is no power under God will make me stay here any longer; and if I cannot make my way out in a more decent fashion, I will hack your door in pieces with my sword.”

The Sire de Maletroit raised his right hand and wagged it at Denis with the fore and little fingers extended. “My dear nephew,” he said, “sit down.” “Nephew!” retorted Denis, “you lie in your throat”; and he snapped his fingers in his face.

“Sit down, you rogue!” cried the old gentleman, in a sudden, harsh voice, like the barking of a dog. “Do you fancy,” he went on, “that when I had made my little contrivance for the door I had stopped short with that? 1f you prefer to be bound hand and foot till your bones ache, rise and try to go away. If you choose to remain a free young buck, agreeably conversing with an old gentleman—why, sit where you are in peace, and God be with you.”

“Do you mean I am a prisoner?” demanded Denis. “I state the facts,” replied the other. “I would rather leave the conclusion to yourself.”

Denis sat down again. Externally he managed to keep pretty calm; but within, he was now boiling with anger, now chilled with apprehension. He no longer felt convinced that he was dealing with a madman. And if the old gentleman was sane, what, in God’s name, had he to look for? What absurd or tragical adventure had befallen him? What countenance was he to assume?

While he was thus unpleasantly reflecting, the arras that overhung the chapel door was raised, and a tall priest in his robes came forth and, giving a long, keen stare at Denis, said something in an undertone to Sire de Maletroit.

“She is in a better frame of spirit?” asked the latter. “She is more resigned, messire,” replied the priest.

“Now the Lord help her, she is hard to please!” sneered the old gentleman. “A likely stripling—not ill-born—and of her own choosing, too? Why, what more would the jade have?”

“The situation is not usual for a young damsel,” said the other, “and somewhat trying to her blushes.”

“She should have thought of that before she began the dance. It was none of my choosing, God knows that: but since she is in it, by our Lady, she shall carry it to the end.” And then addressing Denis, “Monsieur de Beaulieu,” he asked, “may I present you to my niece? she has been waiting your arrival, I may say, with even greater impatience than myself.”

Denis had resigned himself with a good grace—all he desired was to know the worst of it as speedily as possible; so he rose at once, and bowed in acquiescence. The Sire de Maletroit followed his example and limped, with the assistance of the chaplain’s arm, towards the chapel door. The priest pulled aside the arras, and all three entered. The building had considerable architectural pretensions. A light groining sprang from six stout columns, and hung down in two rich pendants from the centre of the vault. The place terminated behind the altar in a round end, embossed and honeycombed with a superfluity of ornament in relief, and pierced by many little windows shaped like stars, trefoils, or wheels. These windows were imperfectly glazed, so that the night air circulated freely in the chapel. The tapers, of which there must have been half a hundred burning on the altar, were unmercifully blown about; and the light went through many different phases of brilliancy and semi-eclipse. On the steps in front of the altar knelt a young girl richly attired as a bride. A chill settled over Denis as he observed her costume; he fought with desperate energy against the conclusion that was being thrust upon his mind; it could not—it should not—be as he feared.

“Blanche,” said the Sire, in his most flute-like tones, “I have brought a friend to see you, my little girl; turn round and give him your pretty hand. It is good to be devout; but it is necessary to be polite, my niece.”

The girl rose to her feet and turned towards the newcomer. She moved all of a piece; and shame and exhaustion were expressed in every line of her fresh young body; and she held her head down and kept her eyes upon the pavement, as she came slowly forward. In the course of her advance, her eyes fell upon Denis de Beaulieu’s feet—feet of “which he was justly vain, be it remarked, and wore in the most elegant accoutrement even while traveling. She paused—started, as if his yellow boots had conveyed some shocking meaning—and glanced suddenly up into the wearer’s countenance. Their eyes met; shame gave place to horror and terror in her looks; the blood left her lips; with a piercing scream she covered her face with her hands and sank upon the chapel floor.

“That is not the man!” she cried. “My uncle, that is not the man!”

The Sire de Maletroit chirped agreeably. “Of course not,” he said; “I expected as much. It was so unfortunate you could not remember his name.”

“Indeed,” she cried, “indeed, I have never seen this person till this moment—I have never so much as set eyes upon him—I never wish to see him again. Sir,” she said, turning to Denis, “if you are a gentleman, you will bear me out. Have I ever seen you—have you ever seen me—before this accursed hour?”

‘‘To speak for myself, I have never had that pleasure,’’ answered the young man. ‘‘This is the first time, messire, that I have met with your engaging niece.’’

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders. ‘‘I am distressed to hear it,’’ he said. ‘‘But it is never too late to begin. I had little more acquaintance with my own late lady ere I married her; which proves,’’ he added with a grimace, ‘‘that these impromptu marriages may often produce an excellent understanding in the long-run. As the bridegroom is to have a voice in the matter, I will give him two hours to make up for lost time before we proceed with the ceremony.’’ And he turned towards the door, followed by the clergyman.

The girl was on her feet in a moment. ‘‘My uncle, you cannot be in earnest,’’ she said. ‘‘I declare before God I will stab myself rather than be forced on that young man. The heart rises at it; God forbids such marriages; you dishonour your white hair. Oh, my uncle, pity me! There is not a woman in all the world but would prefer death to such a nuptial. Is it possible,’’ she added, faltering—’’is it possible that you do not believe me—that you still think this’’ —and she pointed at Denis with a tremor of anger and contempt—’’that you still think this to be the man?’’

‘‘Frankly,’’ said the old gentleman, pausing on the threshold, ‘‘I do. But let me explain to you once for all, Blanche de Maletroit, my way of thinking about this affair. When you took it into your head to dishonour my family and the name that I have borne, in peace and war, for more than three-score years, you forfeited, not only the right to question my designs, but that of looking me in the face. If your father had been alive, he would have spat on you and turned you out of doors. His was the hand of iron. You may bless your God you have only to deal with the hand of velvet, mademoiselle. It was my duty to get you married without delay. Out of pure goodwill, I have tried to find your own gallant for you. And I believe I have succeeded. But before God and all the holy angels, Blanche de Maletroit, if I have not, I care not one jack-straw. So let me recommend you to be polite to our young friend; for upon my word, your next groom may be les appetizing.’’

And with that he went out; with the chaplain at his heels; and the arras fell behind the pair.

The girl turned upon Denis with flashing eyes. ‘‘And what, sir,’’ she demanded, ‘‘may be the meaning of all this?’’

‘‘God knows,’’ returned Denis gloomily. ‘‘I am a prisoner in this house, which seems full of mad people. More I know not; and nothing do I understand.’’

‘‘And pray how came you here?’’ she asked. He told her as briefly as he could. ‘‘For the rest,’’ he added, ‘‘perhaps you will follow my example, and tell me the answer to all these riddles, and what, in God’s name, is like to be the end of it.’’

She stood silent for a little, and he could see her lips tremble and her tearless eyes burn with a feverish lustre. Then she pressed her forehead in both hands.

‘‘Alas, how my head aches!’’ she said wearily—’’to say nothing of my poor heart! But it is due to you to know my story, unmaidenly as it must seem. I am called Blanche de Maletroit; I have been without father or mother for—oh! for as long as I can recollect, and indeed I have been most unhappy all my life. Three months ago a young captain began to stand near me every day in church. I could see that I pleased him; I am much to blame, but I was so glad that anyone should love me; and when he passed me a letter, I took it home with me and read it

with great pleasure. Since that time he has written many. He was so anxious to speak with me, poor fellow! and kept asking me to leave the door open some evening that we might have two words upon the stair. For he knew how much my uncle trusted me.'' She gave something like a sob at that, and it was a moment before she could go on. ''My uncle is a hard man, but he is very shrewd,'' she said at last. ''He has performed many feats in war, and was a great person at court, and much trusted by Queen Isabeau in old days. How he came to suspect me I cannot tell; but it is hard to keep anything from his knowledge; and this morning, as we came from mass, he took my hand in his, forced it open, and read my little billet, walking by my side all the while. When he had finished, he gave it back to me with great politeness. It contained another request to have the door left open; and this has been the ruin of us all. My uncle kept me strictly in my room until evening, and then ordered me to dress myself as you see me—a hard mockery for a young girl, do you not think so? I suppose, when he could not prevail with me to tell him the young captain's name, he must have laid a trap for him: into which, alas! you have fallen in the anger of God. I looked for much confusion; for how could I tell whether he was willing to take me for his wife on these sharp terms? He might have been trifling with me from the first; or I might have made myself too cheap in his eyes. But truly I had not looked for such a shameful punishment as this. I could not think that God would let a girl be so disgraced before a young man. And now I have told you all; and I can scarcely hope that you will not despise me.''

Denis made her a respectful inclination.

''Madam,'' he said, ''you have honoured me by your confidence. It remains for me to prove that I am not unworthy of the honour. Is Messire de Maletroit at hand?''

''I believe he is writing in the salle without,'' she answered.

''May I lead you thither, madam?'' asked Denis, offering his hand with his most courtly bearing.

She accepted it; and the pair passed out of the chapel, Blanche in a very drooping and shamefaced condition, but Denis strutting and ruffling in the consciousness of a mission, and the boyish certainty of accomplishing it with honour.

The Sire de Maletroit rose to meet them with an ironical obeisance. ''Sir,'' said Denis, with the grandest possible air, ''I believe I am to have some say in the matter of this marriage; and let me tell you at once, I will be no party to forcing the inclination of this young lady. Had it been freely offered to me, I should have been proud to accept her hand, for I perceive she is as good as she is beautiful; but as things are, I have now the honour, messire, of refusing.''

Blanche looked at him with gratitude in her eyes; but the old gentleman only smiled and smiled, until his smile grew positively sickening to Denis.

''I am afraid,'' he said, ''Monsieur de Beaulieu, that you do not perfectly understand the choice I have to offer you. Follow me, I beseech you, to this window.'' And he led the way to one of the large windows which stood open on the night. ''You observe,'' he went on, ''there is an iron ring in the upper masonry, and reeved through that, a very efficacious rope. Now, mark my words: if you should find your disinclination to my niece's person

insurmountable, I shall have you hanged out of this window before sunrise. I shall only proceed to such an extremity with the greatest regret, you may believe me. For it is not at all your death that I desire, but my niece's establishment in life. At the same time, it must come to that if you prove obstinate. Your family, Monsieur de Beaulieu, is very well in its way; but if you sprang from Charlemagne, you should not refuse the hand of a Maletroit with impunity—not if she had been as common as the Paris road—not if she were as hideous as the gargoyle over my door. Neither my niece nor you, nor my own private feelings, move me at all in this matter. The honour of my house has been compromised; I believe you to be the guilty person; at least you are now in the secret; and you can hardly wonder if I request you to wipe out the stain. If you will not, your blood be on your own head! It will be no great satisfaction to me to have your interesting relics kicking their heels in the breeze below my windows; but half a loaf is better than no bread, and if I cannot cure the dishonour, I shall at least stop the scandal."

There was a pause.

"I believe there are other ways of settling such imbroglios among gentlemen," said Denis. "You wear a sword, and I hear you have used it with distinction."

The Sire de Maletroit made a signal to the chaplain, who crossed the room with long silent strides and raised the arras over the third of the three doors. It was only a moment before he let it fall again; but Denis had time to see a dusky passage full of armed men.

"When I was a little younger, I should have been delighted to honour you, Monsieur de Beaulieu," said Sire Alain; "but I am now too old. Faithful retainers are the sinews of age, and I must employ the strength I have. This is one of the hardest things to swallow as a man grows up in years; but with a little patience, even this becomes habitual. You and the lady seem to prefer the salle for what remains of your two hours; and as I have no desire to cross your preference, I shall resign it to your use with all the pleasure in the world. No haste!" he added, holding up his hand, as he saw a dangerous look come into Denis de Beaulieu's face. "If your mind revolts against hanging, it will be time enough two hours hence to throw yourself out of the window or upon the pikes of my retainers. Two hours of life are always two hours. A great many things may turn up in even as little a while as that. And besides, if I understand her appearance, my niece has still something to say to you. You will not disfigure your last hours by a want of politeness to a lady?"

Denis looked at Blanche, and she made him an imploring gesture.

It is likely that the old gentleman was hugely pleased at this symptom of an understanding; for he smiled on both, and added sweetly: "If you will give me your word of honour, Monsieur de Beaulieu, to await my return at the end of the two hours before attempting anything desperate, I shall withdraw my retainers, and let you speak in greater privacy with mademoiselle."

Denis again glanced at the girl, who seemed to beseech him to agree. "I give you my word of honour," he said.

Messire de Maletroit bowed, and proceeded to limp about the apartment, clearing his throat the while with that odd musical chirp which had already grown so irritating in the ears of Denis de Beaulieu. He first possessed

himself of some papers which lay upon the table; then he went to the mouth of the passage and appeared to give an order to the men behind the arras; and lastly he hobbled out through the door by which Denis had come in, turning upon the threshold to address a last smiling bow to the young couple, and followed by the chaplain with a hand-lamp.

No sooner were they alone than Blanche advanced towards Denis with her hands extended. Her face was flushed and excited, and her eyes shone with tears.

"You shall not die!" she cried, "you shall marry me after all." "You seem to think, madam," replied Denis, "that I stand much in fear of death."

"Oh, no, no," she said, "I see you are no poltroon. It is for my own sake—I could not bear to have you slain for such a scruple."

"I am afraid," returned Denis, "that you underrate the difficulty, madam. What you may be too generous to refuse, I may be too proud to accept. In a moment of noble feeling towards me, you forget what you perhaps owe to others."

He had the decency to keep his eyes upon the floor as he said this, and after he had finished, so as not to spy upon her confusion. She stood silent for a moment, then walked suddenly away, and failing on her uncle's chair, fairly burst out sobbing. Denis was in the acme of embarrassment. He looked round, as if to seek for inspiration, and seeing a stool, plumped down upon it for something to do. There he sat, playing with the guard of his rapier, and wishing himself dead a thousand times over, and buried in the nastiest kitchen-heap in France. His eyes wandered round the apartment but found nothing to arrest them. There were such wide spaces between the furniture, the light fell so badly and cheerlessly over all, the dark outside air looked in so coldly through the windows, that he thought he had never seen a church so vast, nor a tomb so melancholy. The regular sobs of Blanche de Maletroit measured out the time like the ticking of a clock. He read the device upon the shield over and over again, until his eyes became obscured; he stared into shadowy corners until he imagined they were swarming with horrible animals; and every now and again he awoke with a start, to remember that his last two hours were running and death was on the march.

Oftener and oftener, as the time went on, did his glance settle on the girl herself. Her face was bowed forward and covered with her hands, and she was shaken at intervals by the convulsive hiccup of grief. Even thus she was not an unpleasant object to dwell upon, So plump and yet so fine, with a warm brown skin, and the most beautiful hair, Denis thought, in the whole world of womankind. Her hands were like her uncle's; but they were more in place at the end of her young arms, and looked infinitely soft and caressing. He remembered how her blue eyes had shone upon him, full of anger, pity, and innocence. And the more he dwelt on her perfections, the uglier death looked, and the more deeply was he smitten with penitence at her continued tears. Now he felt that no man could have the courage to leave a world which contained so beautiful a creature; and now he would have given forty minutes of his last hour to have unsaid his cruel speech.

Suddenly a hoarse and ragged peal of cockcrow rose to their ears from the dark valley below the windows. And this shattering noise in the silence all around was like a light in a dark place, and shook them both out of their reflections.

"Alas, can I do nothing to help you?" she said, looking up. "Madam," replied Denis, with a fine irrelevancy, "if I have said anything to wound you, believe me, it was for your own sake and not for mine."

She thanked him with a tearful look. "I feel your position cruelly," he went on. "The world has been bitter hard on you. Your uncle is a disgrace to mankind. Believe me, madam, there is no young gentleman in all France but would be glad of my opportunity, to die in doing you a momentary service."

"I know already that you can be very brave and generous," she answered. "What I want to know is whether I can serve you—now or afterwards," she added, with a quaver.

"Most certainly," he answered with a smile. "Let me sit beside you as if I were a friend, instead of a foolish intruder; try to forget how awkwardly we are placed to one another; make my last moments go pleasantly; and you will do me the chief service possible."

"You are very gallant," she added, with a yet deeper sadness… "very gallant… and it somehow pains me. But draw nearer, if you please, and if you find anything to say to me, you will at least make certain of a very friendly listener. Ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu, how can I look you in the face?" And she fell to weeping again with a renewed effusion.

"Madam," said Denis, taking her hand in both of his, "reflect on the little time I have before me, and the great bitterness into which I am cast by the sight of your distress. Spare me, in my last moments, the spectacle of what I cannot cure even with the sacrifice of my life."

"I am very selfish," answered Blanche. "I will be braver, Monsieur de Beaulieu, for your sake. But think if I can do you no kindness in the future—if you have no friends to whom I could carry your adieux. Charge me as heavily as you can; every burden will lighten, by so little, the invaluable gratitude I owe you. Put it in my power to do something more for you than weep."

"My mother is married again, and has a young family to care for. My brother Guichard will inherit my fiefs; and if I am not in error, that will content him amply for my death. Life is a little vapour that passeth away, as we are told by those in holy orders. When a man is in a fair way and sees all life open in front of him, he seems to himself to make a very important figure in the world. His horse whinnies to him; the trumpets blow and the girls look out of windows as he rides into town before his company; he receives many assurances of trust and regard—sometimes by express in a letter—sometimes face to face, with persons of great consequence falling on his neck. It is not wonderful if his head is turned for a time. But once he is dead, were he as brave as Hercules or as wise as Solomon, he is soon forgotten. It is not ten years since my father fell, with many other knights around him, in a very fierce encounter, and I do not think that anyone of them, nor so much as the name of the fight, is now remembered. No, no, madam, the nearer you come to it, you see that death is a dark and dusty corner,

where a man gets into his tomb and has the door shut after him till the judgment day. I have few friends just now, and once I am dead I shall have none.''

''Ah, Monsieur de Beaulieu! ''she exclaimed, ''you forget Blanche de Maletroit ''You have a sweet nature, madam, and you are pleased to estimate a little service far beyond its worth.''

''It is not that,'' she answered. ''You mistake me if you think I am so easily touched by my own concerns. I say so, because you are the noblest man I have ever met; because I recognise in you a spirit that would have made even a common person famous in the land.''

''And yet here I die in a mouse-trap—with no more noise about it than ''my own speaking,'' answered he.

A look of pain crossed her face, and she was silent for a little while. Then a light came into her eyes, and with a smile she spoke again.

''I cannot have my champion think meanly of himself. Anyone who gives his life for another will be met in Paradise by all the heralds and angels of the Lord God. And you have no such cause to hang your head. For… Pray, do you think me beautiful?'' she asked, with a deep flush.

''Indeed, madam, I do,'' he said. ''I am glad of that,'' she answered, heartily. ''Do you think there are many men in France who have been asked in marriage by a beautiful maiden—with her own lips—and who have refused her to her face ? I know you men would half despise such a triumph; but believe me, we women know more of what is precious in love. There is nothing that should set a person higher in his own esteem; and we women would prize nothing more dearly.''

''You are very good,'' he said; ''but you cannot make me forget that I was asked in pity and not for love.''

''I am not so sure of that,'' she replied, holding down her head. ''Hear me to an end, Monsieur de Beaulieu. I know how you must despise me; I feel you are right to do so; I am too poor a creature to occupy one thought of your mind, although, alas! you must die for me this morning. But when I asked you to marry me, indeed, and indeed, it was because I respected and admired you, and loved you with my whole soul, from the very moment that you took my part against my uncle. If you had seen yourself, and how noble you looked, you would pity rather than despise me. And now,'' she went on, hurriedly checking him with her hand, ''although I have laid aside all reserve and told you so much, remember that I know your sentiments towards me already. I would not, believe me, being nobly born, weary you with importunities into consent. I too have a pride of my own: and I declare before the holy mother of God, if you should now go back from your word already given, I would no more marry you than I would marry my uncle's groom.''

Denis smiled a little bitterly. ''It is a small love,'' he said, ''that shies at a little pride.'' She made no answer, although she probably had her own thought. ''Come hither to the window,'' he said, with a sigh. ''Here is the dawn.''

And indeed the dawn was already beginning. The hollow of the sky was full of essential daylight, colourless and clean; and the valley underneath was flooded with a grey reflection. A few thin vapours clung in the coves of the forest or lay along the winding course of the river. The scene disengaged a surprising effect of stillness, which

was hardly interrupted when the cocks began once more to crow among the steadings. Perhaps the same fellow who had made so horrid a clangour in the darkness not half an hour before, now sent up the merriest cheer to greet the coming day. A little wind went bustling and eddying among the tree-tops underneath the windows. And still the daylight kept flooding insensibly out of the east, which was soon to grow incandescent and cast up that red-hot cannon-ball, the rising sun.

Denis looked out over all this with a bit of a shiver. He had taken her hand and retained it in his almost unconsciously.

"Has the day begun already?" she said; and then, illogically enough: "the night has been so long! Alas! what shall we say to my uncle when he returns?"

"What you will," said Denis, and he pressed her fingers in his. She was silent.

"Blanche," he said, with a swift, uncertain, passionate utterance, "you have seen whether I fear death. You must know well enough that I would as gladly leap out of the window into the empty air as to lay a finger on you without your free and full consent. But if you care for me at all do not let me lose my life in a misapprehension; for I love you better than the whole world; and though I will die for you blithely, it would be like all the joys of Paradise to live on and spend my life in your service."

As he stopped speaking, a bell began to ring loudly in the interior of the house, and a clatter of armour in the corridor showed that the retainers were returning to their post, and the two hours were at an end.

"After all that you have heard? "she whispered, leaning towards him with her lips and eyes.

"I have heard nothing," he replied.

"The captain's name was Florimond de Champdivers," she said in his ear.

"I did not hear it," he answered, taking her supple body in his arms and covering her wet face with kisses.

A melodious chirping was audible behind, followed by a beautiful chuckle, and the voice of Messire de Maletroit wished his new nephew a good morning.

EXERCISES

1. Open a space for a characterization of Denis Beaulieu. As you read the story, add adjectives and descriptions of the young man.
2. What circumstances led Denis Beaulieu to Sire de Maletroit's door?
3. How did he come into the house?
4. What had happened to Blanche de Maletroit that led to the ongoing confusion?
5. What choice was Denis Beaulieu offered by Sire de Maletroit? What do you think of Sire the Maletroit's stance?
6. At first, Denis de Beaulieu chose death. Judge his choice. Would you have done the same?

7. What do you think of Blanche's position?
8. Could it be love what produced the happy ending? Write briefly about that.

The Celestial Omnibus

BY E. M. FORSTER (1879-1970)

The boy who resided at Agathox Lodge, 28, Buckingham Park Road, Surbiton, had often been puzzled by the old sign-post that stood almost opposite. He asked his mother about it, and she replied that it was a joke, and not a very nice one, which had been made many years back by some naughty young men, and that the police ought to remove it. Far there were two strange things about this sign-post: firstly, it pointed up a blank alley and, secondly, it had painted on it, in faded characters, the words, "To Heaven."

"What kind of young men were they?" he asked.

"I think your father told me that one of them wrote verses, and was expelled from the University and came to grief in other ways. Still, it was a long time ago. You must ask your father about it. He will say the same as I do, that it was put up as a joke."

"So it doesn't mean anything at all?"

She sent him up-stairs to put on his best things, for the Bonses were coming to tea, and he was to hand the cake-stand.

It struck him, as he wrenched on his tightening trousers, that he might do worse than ask Mr. Bons about the sign-post. His father, though very kind, always laughed at him—shrieked with laughter whenever he or any other child asked a question or spoke. But Mr. Bons was serious, as well as kind. He had a beautiful house and lent one books, he was a churchwarden, and a candidate for the County Council; he had donated to the Free Library enormously, he presided over the Literary Society, and had Members of Parliament to stop with him—in short, he was probably the wisest person alive.

Yet even Mr. Bons could only say that the sign-post was a joke—the joke of a person named Shelley.

"Of course!" cried the mother; "I told you so, dear. That wasthe

name."

"Had you never heard of Shelley?" asked Mr. Bons.

"No," said the boy, and hung his head.

"But is there no Shelley in the house?"

"Why, yes!" exclaimed the lady, in much agitation. "Dear Mr. Bons, we aren't such Philistines as that. Two at the least. One a wedding present, and the other, smaller print, in one of the spare rooms."

"I believe we have seven Shelleys," said Mr. Bons, with a slow smile.

Then he brushed the cake crumbs off his stomach, and together with his daughter, rose to go.

The boy, obeying a wink from his mother, saw them all the way to the garden gate, and when they had gone he did not at once return to the house, but gazed for a little up and down Buckingham Park Road.

His parents lived at the right end of it. After No. 39 the quality of the houses dropped very suddenly, and 64 had not even a separate servants' entrance. But at the present moment the whole road looked rather pretty, for the sun had just set in splendour, and the inequalities of rent were drowned in a saffron afterglow. Small birds twittered, and the breadwinners' train shrieked musically down through the cutting—that wonderful cutting which has drawn to itself the whole beauty out of Surbiton, and clad itself, like any Alpine valley, with the glory of the fir and the silver birch and the primrose. It was this cutting that had first stirred desires within the boy—desires for something just a little different, he knew not what, desires that would return whenever things were sunlit, as they were this evening, running up and down inside him, up and down, up and down, till he would feel quite unusual all over, and as likely as not would want to cry This evening he was even sillier for he slipped across the road towards the sign-post and began to run up the blank alley.

The alley runs between high walls—the walls of the gardens of "Ivanhoe" and "Belle Vista" respectively. It smells a little all the way, and is scarcely twenty yards long, including the turn at the end. So not unnaturally the boy soon came to a standstill. "I'd like to kick that Shelley," he exclaimed, and glanced idly at a piece of paper which was pasted on the wall. Rather an odd piece of paper, and he read it carefully before he turned back. This is what he read:

S. AND C. R. C. C.

Alteration in Service

Owing to lack of patronage the Company are regretfully compelled to suspend the hourly service, and to retain only the

Sunrise and Sunset Omnibuses,

which will run as usual. It is to be hoped that the public will patronize an arrangement which is intended for their convenience. As an extra inducement, the Company will, for the first time, now issue

Return Tickets!

(Available one day only), which may be obtained of the driver. Passengers are again reminded that no tickets are issued at the other end, and that no complaints in this connection will receive consideration from the Company. Nor will the Company be responsible for any negligence or stupidity on the part of Passengers, nor for Hailstorm, lightning, Loss of Tickets, nor for any Act of God.

§ *For the Direction.*

Now he had never seen this notice before, nor could he imagine where the omnibus went to. S. of course was for Surbiton, and R.C.C. meant Road Car Company. But what was the meaning of the other C.? Coombe and Maiden, perhaps, or possibly "City." Yet it could not hope to compete with the South-Western. The whole thing, the boy reflected, was run on hopelessly unbusiness-like lines. Why not tickets from the other end? And what an hour to start! Then he realized that unless the notice was a hoax, an omnibus must have been starting just as he was wishing the Bonses good-bye. He peered at the ground through the gathering dusk, and there he saw what might or might not be the marks of wheels. Yet nothing had come out of the alley. And he had never seen an

omnibus at any time in the Buckingham Park Road. No: it must be a hoax, like the sign-posts, like the fairy tales, like the dreams upon which he would wake suddenly in the night. And with a sigh he stepped from the alley—right into the arms of his father.

Oh, how his father laughed! "Poor, poor Popsey!" he cried. "Diddums! Diddums! Diddums think he'd walky-palky up to Evvink!" And his mother, also convulsed with laughter, appeared on the steps of Agathox Lodge. "Don't, Bob!" she gasped. "Don't be so naughty! Oh, you'll kill me! Oh, leave the boy alone!"

But all that evening the joke was kept up. The father implored to be taken too. Was it a very tiring walk? Need one wipe one's shoes on the door-mat? And the boy went to bed feeling-faint and sore, and thankful for only o thing—that he had not said a word about the omnibus. It was a hoax, yet through his dreams it grew more and more real, and the streets of Surbiton, through which he saw it driving, seemed instead to become hoaxes and shadows. And very early in the morning he woke with a cry, for he had had a glimpse of its destination.

He struck a match, and its light fell not only on his watch but also on his calendar, so that he knew it to be half-an-hour to sunrise. It was pitch dark, for the fog had come down from London in the night, and all Surbiton was wrapped in its embrace. Yet he sprang out and dressed himself, for he was determined to settle once for all which was real: the omnibus or the streets. "I shall be a fool one way or the other," he thought, "until I know." Soon he was shivering in the road under the gas lamp that guarded the entrance to the alley.

To enter the alley itself required some courage. Not only was it horribly dark, but he now realized that it was an impossible terminus for an omnibus. If it had not been for a policeman, whom he heard approaching through the fog, he would never have made the attempt. The next moment he had made the attempt and failed. Nothing. Noting but a blank alley and a very silly boy gaping at its dirty floor. It was a hoax. "I'll tell papa and mamma," he decided. "I deserve it. I deserve that they should know. I am too silly to be alive." And he went back to the gate of Agathox Lodge.

There he remembered that his watch was fast. The sun was not risen; it would not rise for two minutes. "Give the bus every chance," he thought cynically, and returned into the alley.

But the omnibus was there.

It had two horses, whose sides were still smoking from their journey, and its two great lamps shone through the fog against the alley's walls, changing their cobwebs and moss into tissues of fairyland. The driver was huddled up in a cape. He faced the blank wall, and how he had managed to drive in so neatly and so silently was one of the many things that the boy never discovered. Nor could he imagine how ever he would drive out.

'Please his voice quavered through the foul brown air, "Please, is that an omnibus?"

"Omnibus est," said the driver, without turning round. There was a moment's silnce. The policeman passed, coughing, by the entrance of the alley. The boy crouched in the shadow, for he did not want to be found out. He was pretty sure, too, that it was a Pirate; nothing else, he reasoned, would go from such odd places and at such odd hours.

"About when do you start?" He tried to sound nonchalant.

“At sunrise.”

“How far do you go?”

“The whole way.”

“And can I have a return ticket which will bring me all the way back?”

“You can.”

“Do you know, I half think I’ll come.” The driver made no answer. The sun must have risen, for he unhitched the brake. And scarcely had the boy jumped in before the omnibus was off.

How? Did it turn? There was no room. Did it go forward? There was a blank wall. Yet it was moving—moving at a stately pace through the fog, which had turned from brown to yellow. The thought of warm bed and warmer breakfast made the boy feel faint. He wished he had not come. His parents would not have approved. He would have gone back to them if the weather had not made it impossible. The solitude was terrible; he was the only passenger. And the omnibus, though well-built, was cold and somewhat musty. He drew his coat round him, and in so doing chanced to feel his pocket. It was empty. He had forgotten his purse.

“Stop!” he shouted. “Stop!” And then, being of a polite disposition, he glanced up at the painted notice-board so that he might call the driver by name. “Mr. Browne! stop; o, do please stop!”

Mr. Browne did not stop, but he opened a little window and looked in at the boy. His face was a surprise, so kind it and modest.

“Mr. Browne, I’ve left my purse behind. I’ve not got a penny. I can’t pay for the ticket. Will you take my watch, please? I am in the most awful hole.”

“Tickets on this line,” said the driver, “whether single or return, can be purchased by coinage from no terrene mint. And a chronometer, though it had solaced the vigils of Charlemagne, or measured the slumbers of Laura, can acquire by no mutation the double-cake that charms the fangless Cerberus of Heaven!” So saying, he handed in the necessary ticket, and, while the boy said “Thank you,” continued: “Titular pretensions, I know it well, are vanity. Yet they merit no censure when uttered on a laughing lip, and in an homonymous world are in some sort useful, since they do serve to distinguish one Jack from his fellow. Remember me, therefore, as Sir Thomas Browne.”

“Are you a Sir? Oh, sorry!” He had heard of these gentlemen drivers. “It is good of you about the ticket. But if you go on at this rate, however does your bus pay?”

“It does not pay. It was not intended to pay. Many are the faults of my equipage; it is compounded too curiously of foreign woods; its cushions tickle erudition rather than promote repose; and my horses are nourished not on the evergreen pastures of the moment, but on the dried bents and dovers of Latinity. But that it pays!—that error at all events was never intended and never attained.”

“Sorry again,” said the boy rather hopelessly. Sir Thomas looked sad, fearing that, even for a moment, he had been the cause of sadness. He invited the boy to come up and sit beside him on the box, and together they

journeyed on through the fog, which was now changing from yellow to white. There were no houses by the road; so it must be either Putney Heath or Wimbledon Common.

"Have you been a driver always?"

"I was a physician once."

"But why did you stop? Weren't you good?"

"As a healer of bodies I had scant success, and several score of my patients preceded me. But as a healer of the spirit I have succeeded beyond my hopes and my deserts. For though my draughts were not better nor subtler than those of other men, yet, by reason of the cunning goblets wherein I offered them, the queasy soul was ofttimes tempted to sip and be refreshed."

"The queasy soul," he murmured; "if the sun sets with trees in front of it, and you suddenly come strange all over, is that a queasy soul?"

"Have you felt that?"

"Why yes."

After a pause he told the boy a little, a very little, about the journey's end. But they did not chatter much, for the boy, when he liked a person, would as soon sit silent in his company as speak, and this, he discovered, was also the mind of Sir Thomas Browne and of many others with whom he was to be acquainted. He heard, however, about the young man Shelley, who was now quite a famous person, with a carriage of his own, and about some of the other drivers who are in the service of the Company. Meanwhile the light grew stronger, though the fog did not disperse. It was now more like mist than fog, and at times would travel quickly across them, as if it was part of a cloud. They had been ascending, too, in a most puzzling way; for over two hours the horses had been pulling against the collar, and even if it were Richmond Hill they ought to have been at the top long ago. Perhaps it was Epsom, or even the North Downs; yet the air seemed keener than that which blows on either. And as to the name of their destination, Sir Thomas Browne was silent.

Crash!

"Thunder, by Jove!" said the boy, "and not so far off either. Listen to the echoes! It's more like mountains."

He thought, not very vividly, of his father and mother. He saw them sitting down to sausages and listening to the storm. He saw his own empty place. Then there would be questions, alarms, theories, jokes, consolations. They would expect him back at lunch. To lunch he would not come, nor to tea, but he would be in for dinner, and so his day's truancy would be over. If he had had his purse he would have bought them presents—not that he should have known what to get them.

Crash!

The peal and the lightening came together. The cloud quivered as if it were alive, and torn streamers of mist rushed past. "Are you afraid?" asked Sir Thomas Browne.

"What is there to be afraid of? Is it much farther?"

The horses of the omnibus stopped just as a ball of fire burst up and exploded with a ringing noise that was deafening but clear, like the noise of a blacksmith's forge. All the cloud was shattered.

"Oh, listen, Sir Thomas Browne! No, I mean look; we shall get a view at last. No, I mean listen; that sounds like a rainbow!"

The noise had died into the faintest murmur, beneath which another murmur grew, spreading stealthily, steadily, in a curve that widened but did not vary. And in widening curves a rainbow was spreading from the horses' feet into the dissolving mists.

"But how beautiful! What colours! Where will it stop? It is more like the rainbows you can tread on. More like dreams."

The colour and the sound grew together. The rainbow spanned an enormous gulf. Clouds rushed under it and were pierced by it, and still it grew, reaching forward, conquering the darkness, until it touched something that seemed more solid than a cloud.

The boy stood up. "What is that out there?" he called. "What does it rest on, out at that other end?"

In the morning sunshine a precipice shone forth beyond the gulf. A precipice—or was it a castle? The horses moved. They set their feet upon the rainbow.

"Oh, look!" the boy shouted. "Oh, listen! Those caves—or are they gateways? Oh, look between those cliffs at those ledges. I see people! I see trees!"

"Look also below," whispered Sir Thomas. "Neglect not the diviner Acheron."

The boy looked below, past the flames of the rainbow that licked against their wheels. The gulf also had cleared, and in its depths there flowed an everlasting river. One sunbeam entered and struck a green pool, and as they passed over he saw three maidens rise to the surface of the pool, singing, and playing with something that glistened like a ring.

"You down in the water—" he called.

They answered, "You up on the bridge—" There was a burst of music. "You up on the bridge, good luck to you. Truth in the depth, truth on the height."

"You down in the water, what are you doing?"

Sir Thomas Browne replied: "They sport in the mancipiary possession of their gold"; and the omnibus arrived.

The boy was in disgrace. He sat locked up in the nursery of Agathox Lodge, learning poetry for a punishment. His father had said, "My boy! I can pardon anything but untruthfulness," and bad caned him, saying at each stroke, "There is no omnibus, no driver, no bridge, no mountain; you are a truant, a guttersnipe, a liar." His father could be very stern at times. His mother had begged him to say he was sorry. But he could not say that it was the greatest day of his life, in spite of the caning and the poetry at the end of it.

He had returned punctually at sunset—driven not by Sir Thomas Browne, but by a maiden lady who was full of quiet fun. They had talked of omnibuses and also of barouche landaus. How far away her gentle voice seemed now! Yet it was scarcely three hours since he had left her up the alley.

His mother called through the door. "Dear, you are to come down and to bring your poetry with you."

He came down, and found that Mr. Bons was in the smoking-room with his father. It had been a dinner party.

"Here is the great traveller!" said his father grimly. "Here is the young gentleman who drives in an omnibus over rainbows, while young ladies sing to him." Pleased with his wit, he laughed.

"After all," said Mr. Bons, smiling, "there is something a little like it in Wagner. It is odd how, in quite illiterate minds, you will find glimmers of Artistic Truth. The case interests me. Let me plead for the culprit. We have all romanced in our time, haven't we?"

"Hear how kind Mr. Bons is," said his mother, while his father said, "Very well. Let him say his poem, and that will do. He is going away to my sister on Tuesday, and *she* will cure him of this alley-slopering." (Laughter.) "Say your poem."

The boy began. ""Standing aloof in giant ignorance.""

His father laughed again—roared. "One for you, my son! 'Standing aloof in giant ignorance!' I never knew these poets talked sense. Just describes you. Here, Bons, you go in for poetry. Put him through it, will you, while I fetch up the whisky?"

"Yes, give me the Keats," said Mr. Bons. 'Let him say his Keats to me."

So for a few moments the wise man and the ignorant boy were left alone in the smoking-room.

""Standing aloof in giant ignorance, of thee I dream and of the Cyclades, as one who sits ashore and longs perchance to visit—""

Quite right. To visit what?"

""To visit dolphin coral in deep seas," said the boy, and burst into tears.

"Come, come! why do you cry?"

"Because—because all these words that only rhymed before, now that I've come back they're me."

Mr. Bons laid the Keats down. The case was more interesting than he had expected. "*You*?" he exclaimed. "This sonnet, *you*?"

"Yes—and look further on: 'Aye, on the shores of darkness there is light, and precipices show untrodden green.' It *is so*, sir. All these things are true."

"I never doubted it," said Mr. Bons, with closed eyes.

"You—then you believe me? You believe in the omnibus and the driver and the storm and that return ticket I got for nothing and—"

"Tut, tut! No more of your yarns, my boy. I meant that I never doubted the essential truth of poetry. Some day, when you have read more, you will understand what I mean."

"But Mr. Buns, it *is* so. There *is* light upon the shores of darkness. I have seen it coming. Light and a wind."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Bons.

"If I had stopped! They tempted me. They told me to give up my ticket—for you cannot come back if you lose your ticket. They called from the river for it, and indeed I was tempted, for I have never been so happy as among

those precipices. But I thought of my mother and father, and that I must fetch them. Yet they will not come, though the road starts opposite our house. It has all happened as the people up there warned me, and Mr. Bons has disbelieved me like every one else. I have been caned. I shall never see that mountain again.''

''What's that about me?'' said Mr. Bons, sitting up in his chair very suddenly.

''I told them about you, and how clever you were, and how many books you had, and they said, 'Mr. Bons will certainly disbelieve you.''

''Stuff and nonsense, my young friend. You grow impertinent. I— well—I will settle the matter. Not a word to your father. I will cure you. Tomorrow evening I will myself call here to take you for a walk, and at sunset we will go up this alley opposite, and hunt for your omnibus, you silly little boy.''

His face grew serious, for the boy was not disconcerted, 'but leapt about the room singing, ''Joy! joy! I told them you would believe me. We will drive together over the rainbow. I told them that you would come.'' After all, could there be anything in the story? Wagner? Keats? Shelley? Sir Thomas Browne? Certainly the case was interesting.

And on the morrow evening, though it was pouring with rain, Mr. Bons did not omit to call at Agathox Lodge.

The boy was ready, bubbling with excitement, and skipping about in a way that rather vexed the President of the Literary Society They took a turn down Buckingbam Park Road and then—having seen that no one was watching them—slipped up the alley Naturally enough (for the sun was setting) they ran straight against the omnibus ''Good heavens!'' exclaimed Mr Boos ''Good gracious heavens!''

It was not the omnibus in which the boy had driven first, nor yet that in which lie had returned. There were three horses—black, gray, and white, the gray being the finest. The driver, who turned round at the mention of goodness and of heaven, was a sallow man with terrifying jaws and sunken eyes. Mr. Bons, on seeing him, gave a cry as if of recognition, and began to tremble violently

The boy jumped in.

''Is it possible?'' cried Mr Bons. Is the impossible possible?''

''Sir; come in, sir. It is such a fine omnibus. Oh, here is his name—Dan some one.''

Mr. Bons sprang in too. A blast of wind immediately slammed the omnibus door, and the shock jerked down all the omnibus blinds, which were very weak on their springs.

''Dan… Show me. Good gracious heavens! we're moving''

''Hooray!'' said the boy.

Mr Bons became flustered. He bad not intended to be kidnapped. He could not find the door-handle, nor push up the blinds The omnibus was quite dark, and by the time he had struck a match, night had come on outside also. They were moving rapidly.

''A strange, a memorable adventure,'' he said, surveying the interior of the omnibus, which was large, roomy, and constructed with extreme regularity, every part exactly answering to every other part the door (the handle of which was outside) was written, *Lasciate ogni baldanza voi che entrate*—at least, that was what was written, but Mr

Bons said that it was Lashy arty something, and that *baldanza* was a mistake for speranza His voice sounded as if he was in church. Meanwhile, the boy called to the cadaverous driver for two return tickets. They were handed in without a word. Mr Bons covered his face with his hand and again trembled "Do you know who that is!" he whispered, when the little window had shut upon them. "It is the impossible."

"Well, I don't like him as much as Sir Thomas Browne, though I shouldn't be surprised if he had even more in him."

"More in him?" He stamped irritably "By accident you have made the greatest discovery of the century, and all you can say is that there is more in this man. Do you remember those vellum books in my library, stamped with red lilies? This—sit still, I bring you stupendous news!—*this is the man who wrote them*."

The boy sat quite still. "I wonder if we shall see Mrs. Gamp?" he asked, after a civil pause.

Mrs.—?

"Mrs. Gamp and Mrs. Harris. I like Mrs. Harris. I came upon them quite suddenly. Mrs. Gamp's bandboxes have moved over the rainbow so badly. All the bottoms have fallen out, and two of the pippins off her bedstead tumbled into the stream."

"Out there sifts the man who wrote my vellum books!" thundered Mr. Bons, "and you talk to me of Dickens and of Mrs. Gamp?"

"I know Mrs. Gamp so well," he apologized. "I could not help being glad to see her. I recognized her voice. She was telling Mrs. Harris about Mrs. Prig."

"Did you spend the whole day in her elevating company?"

"Oh, no. I raced. I met a man who took me out beyond to a race course. You run, and there are dolphins out at sea."

"Indeed. Do you remember the man's name?"

"Achilles. No; he was later. Tom Jones."

Mr. Bons sighed heavily. "Well, my lad, you have made a miserable mess of it. Think of a cultured person with your opportunities! A cultured person would have known all these characters and known what to have said to each. He would not have wasted his time with a Mrs. Gamp or a Tom Jones. The creations of Homer, of Shakespeare, and of Him who drives us now, would alone have contented him. He would it not, have raced. He would have asked intelligent questions."

"But; Mr. Bons," said the boy humbly, you will be a cultured person.

I told them so."

"True, true, and I beg you not to disgrace me when we arrive. No gossiping. No running. Keep close to my side, and never speak to these Immortals unless they speak to you. Yes, and give me the return tickets. You will be losing them."

The boy surrendered the tickets, but felt a little sore. After all, he had found the way to this place. It was hard first to be disbelieved and then to be lectured. Meanwhile, the rain had stopped, and moonlight crept into the omnibus through the cracks in the blinds.

"But how is there to be a rainbow?" cried the boy.

"You distract me," snapped Mr. Bons. "I wish to meditate on beauty. I wish to goodness I was with a reverent and sympathetic person."

The lad bit his lip. He made a hundred good resolutions. He would imitate Mr. Bons all the visit. He would not laugh, or run, or sing, or do any of the vulgar things that must have disgusted his new friends last time. He would be very careful to pronounce their names properly, and to remember who knew whom. Achilles did not know Tom Jones— at least, so Mr. Bons said. The Duchess of Malfi was older than Mrs. Gamp—at least, so Mr. Bons said. He would be self-conscious, reticent, and prim. He would never say he liked any one. Yet, when the blind flew up at a chance touch of his head, all these good resolutions went to the winds, for the omnibus had reached the summit of a moonlit hill, and there was the chasm, and there, across it, stood the old precipices, dreaming, with their feet in the everlasting river. He exclaimed, "The mountain! Listen to the new tune in the water! Look at the camp fires in the ravines," and Mr. Bons, after a hasty glance, retorted, "Water? Camp fires? Ridiculous rubbish. Hold your tongue. There is nothing at all."

Yet, under his eyes, a rainbow formed, compounded not of sunlight and storm, but of moonlight and the spray of the river. The three horses put their feet upon it. He thought it the finest rainbow he had seen, but did not dare to say so, since Mr. Bons said that nothing was there. He leant out—the window had opened—and sang the tune that rose from the sleeping waters.

"The prelude to *Rhinegold*?" said Mr. Bons suddenly. "Who taught you these kit motifs?" He, too, looked out of the window. Then he behaved very oddly. He gave a choking cry, and fell back on to the omnibus floor. He writhed and kicked. His face was green.

"Does the bridge make you dizzy?" the boy asked.

"Dizzy!" gasped Mr. Bons. "I want to go back. Tell the driver."

But the driver shook his head.

"We a nearly there," said the boy. "They are asleep. Shall I call? They will be so pleased to see you, for I have prepared them."

Mr. Bons moaned. They moved over the lunar rainbow, which ever and ever broke away behind their wheels. How still the night was! Who would be sentry at the Gate?

"I am coming," he shouted, again forgetting the hundred resolutions. "I am returning—I, the boy."

"The boy is returning," cried a voice to other voices, who repeated, "The boy is returning."

"I am bringing Mr. Bons with me."

Silence.

"I should have said Mr. Bons is bringing me with him."

Profound silence.

"Who stands sentry?"

"Achilles."

And on the rocky causeway, close to the springing of the rainbow bridge, he saw a young man who carried a wonderful shield.

"Mr. Boos, it is Achilles, armed."

"I want to go back," said Mr. Bons.

The last fragment of the rainbow melted, the wheels sang upon the living rock, the door of the omnibus burst open. Out leapt the boy—he could not resist—and sprang to meet the warrior, who, stooping suddenly, caught him on his shield.

"Achilles!" he cried, "let me get down, for I am ignorant and vulgar, and I must wait for that. Mr. Bons of whom I told you yesterday."

But Achilles raised him aloft. He crouched on the wonderful shield, on heroes and burning cities, on vineyards graven in gold, on every dear passion, every joy, on the entire image of the Mountain that he had discovered, encircled, like it, with an everlasting stream. "No, no," he protested, "I am not worthy. It is Mr. Bons who must be up here."

But Mr. Boos was whimpering, and Achilles trumpeted and cried, "Stand upright upon my shield!"

"Sir, I did not mean to stand! something made me stand. Sir, why do you delay? Here is only the great Achilles, whom you knew."

Mr. Bons screamed, "I see no one. I see nothing. I want to go back." Then he cried to the driver, "Save me! Let me stop in your chariot. I have honoured you. I have quoted you. I have bound you in vellum. Take me back to my world."

The driver replied, "I am the means and not the end. I am the food and not the life. Stand by yourself, as that boy has stood. I cannot save you. For poetry is a spirit; and they that would worship it must worship in spirit and in truth."

Mr. Bons—he could not resist—crawled out of the beautiful omnibus. His face appeared, gaping horribly. His hands followed, one gripping the step the other beating the air. Now his shoulders emerged, his chest, his stomach. With a shriek of "I see London," he fell—fell against the hard, moonlit rock, fell into it as if it were water, fell through it, vanished, and was seen by the boy no more.

"Where have you fallen to, Mr. Bons? Here is a procession arriving to honour you with music and torches. Here come the men and women whose names you know. The mountain is awake, the river is awake, over the race-course the sea is awaking those dolphins, and it is all for you. They want you—"

There was the touch of fresh leaves on his forehead. Some one had crowned him.

ΤΕΔΟΣ

From the *Kingston Gazette, Surbiton Times*, and *Raynes Park Observer*.

The body of Mr. Septimus Bons has been found in a shockingly mutilated condition in the vicinity of the Bermondsey gas-works. The deceased's pockets contained a sovereign-purse, a silver cigar-case, a bijou pronouncing dictionary, and a couple of omnibus tickets. The unfortunate gentleman had apparently been hurled from a considerable height. Foul play is suspected, and a thorough investigation is pending by the authorities.

EXERCISES

1. What did the signpost read? What did the paper posted on the wall of the alley read? Why did the adults consider it a joke?
2. What did the boy do to satisfy his curiosity? Narrate what he did that day since sunrise to sunset.
3. Why did the boy's parents punish him?
4. When the boy told poetry to Mr. Bons, on what did they disagree?
5. How did Mr. Bons join the boy in his second trip?
6. While riding in the omnibus, Mr. Bons and the boy differed in opinions again. What was the object of their dissent?
7. Describe in details the events of the arrival.
8. Mr. Bons could see the omnibus and the driver but he could not see the destination. Why? Scrutinize the words of the driver for an answer.
9. What made the boy a seer? Why was he crowned with leaves?

Life of Ma Park

BY KATHERINE MANSFIELD (1888-1923)

When the literary gentleman, whose flat old Ma Parker cleaned every Tuesday, opened the door to her that morning, he asked after her grandson. Ma Parker stood on the doormat inside the dark little hail, and she stretched out her hand to help her gentleman shut the door before she replied. "We buried 'im yesterday, sir," she said quietly.

"Oh, dear me! I'm sorry to hear that," said the literary gentleman in a shocked tone. He was in the middle of his breakfast. He wore a very shabby dressing-gown and carried a crumpled newspaper in one hand But he felt awkward. He could hardly go back to the warm sitting-room with saying something—something more. Then because these people set such store by funerals he said kindly, "I hope the funeral went off all right."

"Beg parding, sir?" said old Ma Parker huskily.

Poor old bird! She did look dashed. "I hope the funeral was a—a—success," said he. Ma Parker gave no answer. She bent her head and hobbled off to the kitchen, clasping the old fish bag that held her cleaning things and an apron and a pair of felt shoes. The literary gentleman raised his eyebrows and went back to his breakfast.

"Overcome, I suppose," he said aloud, helping himself to the marmalade.

Ma Parker drew the two jetty spears out of her toque and hung it be hind the door. She unhooked her worn jacket and hung that up too. Then she tied her apron and sat down to take off her boots. To take off her boots or to put them on was an agony to her, but it had been an agony for years. In fact, she was so accustomed to the pain that her face was drawn and screwed up ready for the twinge before she'd so much as untied the laces. That over, she sat back with a sigh and softly rubbed her knees….

"Gran! Gran!" Her little grandson stood on her lap in his button boots. He'd just come in from playing in the street.

"Look what a state you've made your gran's skirt into—you wicked boy!"

But he put his arms round her neck and rubbed his cheek against hers "Gran, gi' us a penny!" he coaxed.

"Be off with you; Gran ain't got no pennies."

"Yes, you 'ave."

":No, I ain't."

"Yes, you 'ave Gi' us one!"

Already she was feeling for the old, squashed, black leather purse.

"Well, what'll you give your gran?"

He gave a shy little laugh and pressed closer. She felt his eyelid quivering against her cheek. "I ain't got nothing," he murmured.

The old woman sprang up, seized the iron kettle off the gas stove and took it over to the sink. The noise of the water drumming in the kettle deadened her pain, it seemed. She filled the pail, too, and the washing-up bowl.

It would take a whole book to describe the state of that kitchen. During the week the literary gentleman "did" for himself. That is to say, he emptied the tea leaves now and again into a jam jar set aside for that purpose and if he ran out of, clean forks he wiped over one or two on the roller towel. Otherwise, as he explained to his friends, his "system" was quite simple, and he couldn't understand why people make all this fuss about housekeeping.

"You simply dirty everything you've got, get a hag in once a week to dean up, and the thing's done."

The result looked like a gigantic dustbin. Even the floor was littered with toast crusts, envelopes, cigarette ends. But Ma Parker bore him no grudge. She pitied the poor young gentleman for having no one to look after him. Out of the smudgy little window you could see an immense expanse of sad-looking sky, and whenever there were clouds they looked very worn, old clouds, frayed at the edges, with holes in them, or dark stains like tea.

While the water was heating, Ma Parker began sweeping the floor. "Yes," she thought, as the broom knocked, "what with one thing and another I've had my share. I've had a hard life."

Even the neighbours said that of her. Many a time, hobbling home with her fish bag she heard them, waiting at the corner, or leaning over the area railings, say among themselves, "She's had a hard life, has Ma Parker." And it was so true she wasn't in the least proud of it. It was just as if you were to say she lived in the basement-back at Number 27. A hard life…

At sixteen she'd left Stratford and come up to London as kitching-maid. Yes, she was born in Stratford-on-Avon. Shakespeare, sir? No, people were always asking her about him. But she'd never heard his name until she saw it on the theatres.

Nothing remained of Stratford except that "sitting in the fireplace of a evening you could see the stars through the chimley," and "Mother always 'ad 'er side of bacon 'anging from the ceiling." And there was something—a bush, there was—at the front door, that smelt ever so nice. But the bush was very vague. She'd only remembered it once or twice in the hospital, when she'd been taken bad.

That was a dreadful place—her first place. She was never allowed out. She never went upstairs except for prayers morning and evening. It was a fair cellar. And the cook was a cruel woman. She used to snatch away her letters from home before she'd read them, and throw them in the range because they made her dreamy…. And the beedles! Would you believe it?—until she came to London she'd never seen a black beedle. Here Ma always gave a little laugh, as though—not to have seen a black beedle! Well! It was as if to say you'd never seen your own feet.

When that family was sold up she went as "help" to a doctor's house, and after two years there, on the run from morning till night, she married her husband. He was a baker.

"A baker, Mrs. Parker!" the literary gentleman would say. For occasionally he laid aside his tomes and lent an ear, at least, to this product called Life. "It must be rather nice to be married to a baker!"

Mrs. Parker didn't look so sure.

"Such a clean trade," said the gentleman.

Mrs. Parker didn't look convinced.

"And didn't you like handing the new loaves to the customers?"

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Parker, "I wasn't in the shop above a great deal. We had thirteen little ones and buried seven of them. If it wasn't the 'ospital it was the infirmary, you might say!"

"You might, *indeed*, Mrs. Parker!" said the gentleman, shuddering, and taking up his pen again.

Yes, seven had gone, and while the six were still small her husband was taken ill with consumption. It was flour on the lungs, the doctor told her at the time…. Her husband sat up in bed with his shirt pulled over his head, and the doctor's finger drew a circle on his back.

"Now, if we were to cut him open here, Mrs. Parker," said the doctor, "you'd find his lungs, chock-a-block with white powder. Breathe, my good fellow!" And Mrs. Parker never knew for certain whether she saw or whether she fancied she saw a great fan of white dust come out of her poor dead husband's lips….

But the struggle she'd had to bring up those six little children and keep herself to herself. Terrible it had been! Then, just when they were old enough to go to school, her husband's sister came to stop with them to help things along, and she hadn't been there more than two months when she fell down a flight of steps and hurt her spine. And for five years Ma Parker had another baby—and such a one for crying!—to look after. Then young Maudie went wrong and took her sister Alice with her; the two boys emigrimated, and young Jim went to India with the army, and Ethel, the youngest, married a good-for-nothing little waiter who died of ulcers the year little Lennie was born. And now little Lennie—my grandson….

The piles of dirty cups, dirty dishes, were washed and dried. The ink- black knives were cleaned with a piece of potato and finished off with a piece of cork. The table was scrubbed, and the dresser and the sink that had sardine tails swimming in it….

He'd never been a strong child—never from the first life'd been one of those fair babies that everybody took for a girl. Silvery, fair curls he had, blue eyes, and a little freckle like a diamond on one side of his nose. The trouble she and Ethel had had to rear that child! The things out of the newspapers they tried him with! Every Sunday morning Ethel would read aloud while Ma Parker did her washing.

"Dear Sir,.—Just a line to let you know my little Myrtil was laid out for dead…. After four bottils . . .gained 8 lbs. in 9 weeks, *and is still putting it on*."

And then the egg-cup of ink would come off the dresser and the letter would be written, and Ma would buy a postal order on her way to work next morning. But it was no use. Nothing. made little Lennie put it on. Taking him to the cemetery, even, never gave him a colour; a nice shake-up in the bus never improved his appetite.

But he was gran's boy from the first….

"Whose boy are you?" said old Ma Parker, straightening up from the stove and going over to the smudgy window. And a little voice, so warm, so close, it half stifled her—it seemed to be in her breast under her heart—laughed out, and said, "I'm gran's boy!"

At that moment there was a sound of steps, and the literary gentleman appeared, dressed for walking.

"Oh, Mrs. Parker, I'm going out."

"Very 'good, sir."

"And you'll fix your half-crown in the tray of the ink-stand."

'Thank you, sir."

"Oh, by the way, Mrs. Parker," said the literary gentleman quickly, "you didn't throw away any cocoa last time you were here—did you?"

"No, sir."

"Very strange. I could have sworn I left a teaspoonful of cocoa in the tin." He broke off. He said softly and firmly, "You'll always tell me when you throw things away—won't you, Mrs. Parker?" And he walked off very well pleased with himself, convinced, in fact, he'd shown Mrs. Parker that under his apparent carelessness he was as vigilant as a woman.

The door banged. She took her brushes and cloths into the bedroom. But when she began to make the bed, smoothing, tucking, patting, the thought of little Lennie was unbearable. Why did he have to suffer so? That's what she couldn't understand. Why should a little angel child have to ask for his breath and fight for it? There was no sense in making a child suffer like that.

From Lennie's little box of a chest there came a sound as though something was boiling. There was a great lump of something bubbling in his chest that he couldn't get rid of. When he coughed the sweat sprang out on his head; his eyes bulged, his hands waved; and the great lump bubbled as a potato knocks in a saucepan. But what was more awful than all was when he didn't cough he sat against the pillow and never spoke or answered, or even made as if he heard. Only he looked offended.

"It's not your poor old gran's doing it, my lovely said old Ma Parker, patting back the damp hair from his little scarlet ears. But Lennie moved his head and edged away. Dreadfully offended with her he looked—and solemn. He bent his head and looked at her sideways as though he couldn't have believed it of his gran.

But at the last … Ma Parker threw the counterpane over the bed. No, she simply couldn't think about it. It was too much—she'd had too much in her life to bear. She'd borne it up till now, she'd kept herself to herself, and never once had she been seen to cry. Never by a living soul. Not even her own children had seen Ma break down. She'd kept a proud face always. But now! Lennie gone—what had she? She had nothing. He was all she'd got from life, and now he was took too. Why must it all have happened to me? she wondered. "What have I done?" said old Ma Parker. "What have I done?"

As she said those words she suddenly let fall her brush. She found herself in the kitchen. Her misery was so terrible that she pinned on her hat, put on her jacket and walked out of the flat like a person in a dream. She did not know what she was doing. She was like a person so dazed by the horror of what has happened that he walks away—anywhere, as though by walking away he could escape.

It was cold in the street. There was a wind like ice. People went flitting by, very fast; the men walked like scissors; the women trod like cats. And nobody knew—nobody cared. Even if she broke down, if at last, after all these years, she were to cry, she'd find herself in the lock up as like as not.

But at the thought of crying it was as though little Lennie leapt in his gran's arms. Ah, that's what she wants to do, my dove. Gran wants to cry. If she could only cry now, cry for a long time, over everything, beginning with her first place and the cruel cook, going on to the doctor's, and then the seven little ones, death of her husband, the children's leaving her, and all the years of misery that led up to Lennie. But to have a proper cry over all these things would take a long time. All the same, the time for it had come. She must do it. She couldn't put it off any longer; she couldn't wait any more…. Where could she go?

"She's had a hard life, has Ma Parker." Yes, a hard life, indeed! Her chin began to tremble; there was no time to lose. But where? Where?

She couldn't go home; Ethel was there. It would frighten Ethel out of her life. She couldn't sit on a bench anywhere, people would come asking her questions She couldn't possibly go back to the gentleman's flat, she had no right to cry in strangers' houses. If she sat on some steps a policeman would speak to her.

Oh, wasn't there anywhere where she could hide and keep herself to herself and stay as long as she liked, not disturbing anybody, and no body worrying her? Wasn't there anywhere in the world where she could have her cry out—at last?

Ma Parker stood, looking up and down. The icy wind blew out her apron into a balloon. And now it began to rain. There was nowhere.

EXERCISES

1. Study the behavior of the literary man, his questions and orders to Ma Parker for a characterization of the man.
2. Read the scene when Ma Parker's grandson asked for a penny. Describe the events minutely, in your own words. What does their speech tell you about their social position? What physical contacts does the writer mention? Why, do you think, she does that?
3. Ma Parker's life had been hard. Make a list of the worst moments she had lived through. Which seems to you most painful?
4. In which ways did Lennie make himself special for Ma Parker? Do you know of any relationship as tender as this one? Write briefly about it.
5. Ma Parker wonders, "why did he have to suffer so?" Reflect on your life experience and think of an answer to that question.
6. She thought that the most awful moments of Lennie's sickness were those when he looked offended. Can you explain that?
7. Ma Parker could not cry. Why not?

The Monkey's Paw

BY W. W. JACOBS (Jacob's biography missing)

Without, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlor of Lakesnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.

"Hark at the wind," said Mr. White, who, having seen a fatal mistake after it was too late, was amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it.

"I'm listening," said the latter, grimly surveying the board as he stretched out his hand. "Check."

"I should hardly think that he'd come tonight," said his father, with his hand poised over the board.

"Mate," replied the son. "That's the worst of living so far out," bawled Mr. White, with sudden and unlooked-for violence; "of all the beastly, slushy, out-of-the- way places to live in, this is the worst. Pathway's a bog, and the road's a torrent. I don't know what people are thinking about. I suppose because only two houses on the road are let, they think it doesn't matter."

"Never mind, dear," said his wife soothingly; "perhaps you'll win the next one."

Mr. White looked up sharply, just in time to intercept a knowing glance between mother and son. The words died away on his lips, and he hid a guilty grin in his thin gray beard.

"There he is," said Herbert White, as the gate banged to loudly and heavy footsteps came toward the door.

The old man rose with hospitable haste, and opening the door, was heard condoling with the new arrival. The new arrival also condoled with himself, so that Mrs. White said, "Tut, tut!" and coughed gently as her husband entered the room, followed by a tall burly man, beady of eye and rubicund of visage.

"Sergeant-Major Morris," he said, introducing him. The sergeant-major shook hands, and taking the proffered seat by the fire, watched contentedly while his host got out whisky and tumblers and stood a small copper kettle on the fire.

At the third glass his eyes got brighter, and he began to talk, the little family circle regarding with eager interest this visitor from distant parts, as he squared his broad shoulders in the chair and spoke of strange scenes and doughty deeds, of wars and plagues and strange peoples.

"Twenty-one years of it," said Mr. White, nodding at his wife and son. "When he went away he was a slip of a youth in the warehouse. Now look at him."

"He don't look to have taken much harm," said Mrs. White politely. "I'd like to go to India myself," said the old man, "just to look round a bit, you know." "Better where you are," said the sergeant-major, shaking his head. He put down the empty glass and, sighing softly, shook it again.

"I should like to see those old temples and fakirs and jugglers," said the old man. "What was that you started telling me the other day about a monkey's paw or something, Morris?"

"Nothing," said the soldier hastily. "Leastways, nothing worth hearing."

"Monkey's paw?" said Mrs. White curiously.

"Well, it's just a bit of what you might call magic, perhaps," said the sergeant-major off-handedly.

His three listeners leaned forward eagerly. The visitor absent-mindedly put his empty glass to his lips and then set it down again. His host filled it for him.

"To look at," said the sergeant-major, fumbling in his pocket, "it's just an ordinary little paw, dried to a mummy."

He took something out of his pocket and proffered it. Mrs. White drew back with a grimace, but her son, taking it, examined it curiously.

"And what is there special about it? "inquired Mr. White, as he took it from his son and, having examined it, placed it upon the table.

"It had a spell put on it by an old fakir," said the sergeant-major, "a very holy man. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three separate men could each have three wishes from it."

His manner was so impressive that his hearers were conscious that their light laughter jarred somewhat.

"Well, why don't you have three, sir?" said Herbert White cleverly. The soldier regarded him in the way that middle age is wont to regard presumptuous youth. "I have," he said quietly, and his blotchy face whitened.

"And did you really have the three wishes granted?" asked Mr. White.

"I did," said the sergeant-major, and his glass tapped against his strong teeth.

"And has anybody else wished?" inquired the old lady.

"The first man had his three wishes, yes," was the reply. "I don't know what the first two were, but the third was for death. That's how I got the paw."

His tones were so grave that a hush fell upon the group.

I "If you've had your three wishes, it's no good to you now, then, Morris," said the old man at last. "What do you keep it for?"

The soldier shook his head. "Fancy, I suppose," he said slowly. "I did have some idea of selling it, but I don't think I will. It has caused enough mischief already. Besides, people won't buy. They think it's a fairy tale, some of them, and those who do think anything of it want to try it first and pay me afterward."

"If you could have another three wishes," said the old man, eyeing him keenly, "would you have them?"

"I don't know," said the other. "I don't know."

He took the paw, and dangling it between his front finger and thumb, suddenly threw it upon the fire. White, with a slight cry, stooped down and snatched it off. ,

"Better let it burn," said the soldier solemnly.

"If you don't want it, Morris," said the old man, "give it to me."

"I won't," said his friend doggedly. "I threw it on the fire. If you. keep it, don't blame me for what happens. Pitch it on the fire again, like a sensible man."

The other shook his head and examined his new possession closely. "How do you do it?" he inquired.

"Hold it up in your right hand and wish aloud," said the sergeant- major, "but I warn you of the consequences."

"Sounds like the Arabian Nights," said Mrs. White, as she rose and began to set the supper. "Don't you think you might wish for four pairs of hands for me?"

Her husband drew the talisman from his pocket and then all three burst into laughter as the sergeant-major, with a look of alarm on his face, caught him by the arm.

"If you must wish," he said gruffly, "wish for something sensible." Mr. White dropped it back into his pocket, and placing chairs, motioned his friend to the table. In the business of supper the talisman was partly forgotten, and

afterward the three sat listening in an enthralled fashion to a second installment of the soldier's adventures in India.

"If the tale about the monkey paw is not more truthful than those he has been telling us," said Herbert, as the door closed behind their guest, just in time for him to catch the last train, "we shan't make much out of it."

"Did you give him anything for it, father?" inquired Mrs. White, regarding her husband closely.

"A trifle," said he, coloring slightly. "He didn't want it, but I made him take it. And he pressed me again to throw it away."

"Likely," said Herbert, with pretended horror. "Why, we're going to be rich, and famous, and happy. Wish to be an emperor, father, to begin with; then you can't be henpecked."

He darted round the table, pursued by the maligned Mrs. White armed with an antimacassar.

Mr. White took the paw from his pocket and eyed it dubiously. "I don't know what to wish for, and that's a fact," he said slowly. "It seems to me I've got all I want."

"If you only cleared the house, you'd be quite happy, wouldn't you?" said Herbert, with his hand on his shoulder. "Well, wish for two hundred pounds, then; that'll just do it."

His father, smiling shamefacedly at his own credulity, held up the talisman, as his son, with a solemn face somewhat marred by a wink at his mother, sat down at the piano and struck a few impressive chords.

"I wish for two hundred pounds," said the old man distinctly. A fine crash from the piano greeted the words, interrupted by a shuddering cry from the old man. His wife and son ran toward him.

"It moved," he cried, with a glance of disgust at the object as it lay on the floor. "As I wished it twisted in my hands like a snake."

"Well, I don't see the money," said his son, as he picked it up and placed it on the table, "and I bet I never shall."

"It must have been your fancy, father," said his wife, regarding him anxiously.

He shook his head. "Never mind, though; there's no harm done, but it gave me a shock all the same."

They sat down by the fire again while the two men finished their pipes. Outside, the wind was higher than ever, and the old man started nervously the sound of a door banging upstairs. A silence unusual and depressing settled upon all three, which lasted until the old couple rose to retire for the night.

"I expect you'll find the cash tied up in a big bag in the middle of your bed," said Herbert, as he bade them good night, "and something horrible squatting up on top of the wardrobe watching you as you pocket your ill-gotten gains."

II

In the brightness of the wintry sun next morning as it streamed over the breakfast table Herbert laughed at his fears. There was an air of prosaic wholesomeness about the room which it had lacked on the previous night,

and the dirty, shriveled little paw was pitched on the sideboard with a carelessness which betokened no great belief in its virtues.

"I suppose all old soldiers are the same," said Mrs. White. "The idea of our listening to such nonsense! How could wishes be granted in these days? And if they could, how could two hundred pounds hurt you, father? "

"Might drop on his head from the sky," said the frivolous Herbert.

"Morris said the thing happened so naturally," said this father, "that you might if you so wished attribute it to coincidence."

"Well, don't break into the money before I come back," said Herbert, as he rose from the table. "I'm afraid it'll turn you into a mean, avaricious man, and we shall have to disown you."

His mother laughed, and following him to the door, watched him down the road, and returning to the breakfast table, was very happy at the expense of her husband's credulity. All of which did not prevent her from scurrying to the door at the postman's knock, nor prevent her from referring somewhat shortly to retired sergeant-majors of bibulous habits when she found that the post brought a tailor's bill.

"Herbert will have some more of his funny remarks, I expect, when he comes home," she said, as they sat at dinner.

"I dare say," said Mr. White, pouring himself out some beer; "but for all that, the thing moved in my hand; that I'll swear to."

"You thought it did," said the old lady soothingly.

"I say it did," replied the other. "There was no thought about it; I had just—What's the matter?"

His wife made no reply. She was watching the mysterious movements of a man outside, who, peering in an undecided fashion at the house, appeared to be trying to make up his mind to enter. In mental connection with the two hundred pounds, she noticed that the stranger was well dressed and wore a silk hat of glossy newness. Three times he paused at the gate, and then walked on again. The fourth time he stood with his hand upon it, and then with sudden resolution flung it open and walked up the" path. Mrs. White at the same moment placed her hands behind her, and hurriedly unfastening the strings of her apron, put that useful article of apparel beneath the cushion of her chair.

She brought the stranger, who seemed ill at ease; into the room. He gazed furtively at Mrs. White, and listened in a preoccupied fashion as the old lady apologized for the appearance of the room, and her husband's coat, a garment which he usually reserved for the garden. She then waited as patiently as her sex would permit for him to broach his business, but he was at first strangely silent.

"I—was asked to call," he said at last, and stooped and picked apiece of cotton from his trousers. "I come from Maw and Meggins."

The old lady started. "Is anything the matter?" she asked breathlessly. "Has anything happened to Herbert? What is it? What is it?"

Her husband interposed. "There, there, mother," he said hastily. "Sit down, and don't jump to conclusions. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure, sir," and he eyed the other wistfully.

"I'm sorry—" began the visitor. "Is he hurt?" demanded the mother. The visitor bowed in assent. "Badly hurt," he said quietly, "but he is not in any pain."

"Oh, thank God!" said the old woman, clasping her hands. "Thank God for that! Thank-"

She broke off suddenly as the sinister meaning of the assurance dawned upon her and she saw the awful confirmation of her fears in the other's averted face. She caught her breath, and turning to her slower-witted husband, laid her trembling old hand upon his. There was a long silence.

"He was caught in the machinery," said the visitor at length, in a low voice.

"Caught in the machinery," repeated Mr. White, in a dazed fashion, "yes."

He sat staring blankly out at the window, and taking his wife's hand between his own, pressed it as he had been wont to do in their old courting days nearly forty years before.

"He was the only one left to us," he said, turning gently to the visitor. "It is hard."

The other coughed, and rising, walked slowly to the window. "The firm wished me to convey their sincere sympathy with you in your great loss," he said, without looking round. "I beg that you will understand I am only their servant and merely obeying orders."

There was no reply; the old woman's face was white, her eyes staring, and her breath inaudible; on the husband's face was a look such as his friend the sergeant might have carried into his first action.

"I was to say that Maw and Meggins disclaim all responsibility," continued the other. "They admit no liability at all, but in consideration of your son's services they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation."

Mr. White dropped his wife's hand, and rising to his feet, gazed with a look of horror at his visitor. His dry lips shaped the words, "How much?"

"Two hundred pounds," was the answer.

Unconscious of his wife's shriek, the old man smiled faintly, put out his hands like a sightless man, and dropped, a senseless heap, to the floor.

III

In the huge new cemetery, some two miles distant, the old people buried their dead, and came back to a house steeped in shadow and in silence. It was all over so quickly that at first they could hardly realize it, and remained in a state of expectation as though of something else to happen—something else which was to lighten this load, too heavy for old hearts to bear. But the days passed, and expectation gave place to resignation—the hopeless resignation of the old, sometimes miscalled apathy. Sometimes they hardly exchanged a word, for now they had nothing to talk about, and their days were long to weariness.

It was about a week after that that the old man, waking suddenly in the night, stretched out his hand and found himself alone. The room was in darkness, and the sound of subdued weeping came from the window. He raised himself in bed and listened.

"Come back," he said tenderly. "You will be cold."

"It is colder for my son," said the old woman, and wept afresh.

The sound of her sobs died away on his ears. The bed was warm, and his eyes heavy with sleep. He dozed fitfully, and then slept until a sudden wild cry from his wife awoke him with a start.

"The monkey's paw!" she cried wildly. "The monkey's paw!"

He started up in alarm. "Where? Where is it? What's the matter?" She came stumbling across the room toward him. "I want it," she said quietly. "You've not destroyed it?"

"It's in the parlor, on the bracket," he replied, marveling. "Why?" She cried and laughed together, and bending over, kissed his cheek. "I only just thought of it," she said hysterically. "Why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't you think of it?"

Think of what? He questioned.

"The other two wishes," she replied rapidly. "We've only had one." "Was not that enough?" he demanded fiercely.

"No," she cried triumphantly; "we'll have one more. Go down and get it quickly, and wish our boy alive again."

The man sat up in bed and flung the bedclothes from his quaking limbs. "Good God, you are mad!" he cried, aghast.

"Get it," she panted; "get it quickly, and wish—Oh, my boy, my boy!"

Her husband struck a match and lit the candle. "Get back to bed," he said unsteadily. "You don't know what you are saying."

"We had the first wish granted," said the old woman feverishly; "why not the second?"

"A coincidence," stammered the old man. "Go and get it and wish," cried the old woman, and dragged him toward the door.

He went down in the darkness, and felt his way to the parlor, and then to the mantelpiece. The talisman was in its place, and a horrible fear that the unspoken wish might bring his mutilated son before him ere he could escape from the room seized upon him, and he caught his breath as he found that he had lost the direction of the door. His brow cold with sweat, he felt his way round the table, and groped along the wall until he found himself in the small passage with the unwholesome thing in his hand.

Even his wife's face seemed changed as he entered the room. It was white and expectant, and to his fears seemed to have an unnatural look upon it. He was afraid of her.

"Wish!" she cried, in a strong voice. "It is foolish and wicked," he faltered. "Wish!" repeated his wife.

He raised his hand. "I wish my son alive again." The talisman fell to the floor, and he regarded it shudderingly. Then he sank trembling into a chair as the old woman, with burning eyes, walked to the window and raised the blind.

He sat until he was chilled with the cold, glancing occasionally at the figure of the old woman peering through the window. The candle end, which had burnt below the rim of the china candlestick, was throwing pulsating shadows on the ceiling and walls, until, with a flicker larger than the rest, it expired. The old man, with an unspeakable sense of relief at the failure of the talisman, crept back to his bed, and a minute or two afterward the old woman came silently and apathetically beside him.

Neither spoke, but both lay silently listening to the ticking of the clock. A stair creaked, and a squeaky mouse scurried noisily through the wall. The darkness was oppressive, and after lying for some time screwing up his courage, the husband took the box of matches, and striking one, went downstairs for a candle.

At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he paused to strike another, and at the same moment a knock, so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible, sounded on the front door.

The matches fell from his hand. He stood motionless, his breath suspended until the knock was repeated. Then he turned and fled swiftly back to his room, and closed the door behind him. A third knock sounded through the house.

"What's that?" cried the old woman, starting up. "A rat," said the old man, in shaking tones—"a rat. It passed me on the stairs."

His wife sat up in bed listening. A loud knock resounded through house.

"It's Herbert!" she screamed. "It's Herbert!" She ran to the door, but her husband was before her, and catching her by the arm, held her tightly.

"What are you going to do?" he whispered hoarsely. "It's my boy; it's Herbert!" she cried, struggling mechanically. "I forgot it was two miles away. What are you holding me for? Let go. I must open the door."

"For God's sake don't let it in," cried the old man, trembling. "You're afraid of your own son," she cried, struggling. "Let me go. I'm coming, Herbert; I'm coming."

There was another knock, and another. The old woman with a sudden wrench broke free and ran from the room. Her husband followed to the landing, and called after her appealingly as she hurried downstairs. He heard the chain rattle back and, the bottom bolt drawn slowly and stiffly from the socket. Then the old woman's voice, strained and panting.

"The bolt," she cried loudly. "Come down. I can't reach it." But her husband was on his hands and knees groping wildly on the floor in search of the paw. If he could only find it before the thing outside got in. A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated though the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it came slowly back, and at the same moment, he found the monkey's paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish.

The knocking ceased suddenly, although the echoes of it were still in the house. He heard the chair drawn back and the door opened. A cold wind rushed up the staircase, and a long loud wail of disappointment and misery from his wife gave him courage to run down to her side, and then to the gate beyond. The street lamp flickering opposite shone on a quiet and deserted road.

EXERCISES

1. The writer presents you with a happy, cozy environment in the house of the Whites. What elements are we given to make the reader feel that atmosphere?
2. Who was their visitor that night and what eerie story did he tell the Whites?
3. Which was Mr. White's first wish? Wow was it fulfilled?
4. What was Mr. White's second wish? How was it accomplished?
5. Describe the last scene in details.
6. This is a horror story, and a well-written one. Every detail prepares the reader for a final total effect of dread. Explain the following cases on the bases of the previous assumption.

- The Whites had an only son.
- There were three only possible wishes for only three men, and two had asked theirs before Mr. White.
- The cemetery was a couple of miles away, and Mrs. White did not remember of the monkey's paws until a week after her son had been buried.

7. In building an atmosphere of fear, W. W. Jacobs provides "visible" and "invisible information. Mention some of each kind and say which is more effective.

Canadian Short Stories

The Hockey Sweater

Roch Carrier

EXERCISES

1. When the author was a child, his spiritual life centered on jockey; illustrate this assertion with some examples.
2. Who was the boys' hero, at the time? How do you know?
3. Why did the author's mother dislike his old sweater? What do you think of her reasons?
4. Why was the new sweater a disappointment to the boy?

5. Comment on his mother's argument, "it's not what you put on your back that matters, it's what you put inside your head."
6. What incident did the boy have in the rink?
7. What did he ask God for?
8. How is the conflict around Quebec nationalism reflected by this story?
9. Write at least three concluding statements about what you learned and enjoyed reading this short story.

The winters of my childhood were long, long seasons. We lived in three places the school, the church and the skating-rink– but our real life was on the skating-rink. Real battles were won on the skating-rink. Real strength appeared on the skating-rink. The real leaders showed themselves on the skating-rink. School was a sort of punishment. Parents always want to punish their children and school is their most natural way of punishing us. However, school was also a quiet place where we could prepare for the next hockey game, lay out our next strategies.

As for church, we found there the tranquility of God: there we forgot school and dreamed about the next hockey game. Through our daydreams it might happen that we would recite a prayer: we would ask God to help us play as well as Maurice Richard.

I remember very well the winter of 1946. We all wore the same uniform as Maurice Richard, the red, white and blue uniform of the Montreal Canadiens, the best hockey team in the world. We all combed our hair like Maurice Richard, and to keep it in place we used a kind of glue —a great deal of glue. We laced our skates like Maurice Richard. We cut his pictures out of all the newspapers. Truly, we knew everything there was to know about him.

On the ice, when the referee blew his whistle the two teams would rush at the puck; we were five Maruice Richards against five other Maurice Richards, throwing themselves on the puck. We were ten players all wearing the uniform of the Montreal Canadiens, all with the same burning enthusiasm. We all wore the famous number 9 on our backs.

How could we forget that!

One day, my Montreal Canadiens sweater was too small for me; and it was ripped in several places. My mother said: "If you wear that old sweater, people are going to think we are poor!"

Then she did what she did whenever we needed new clothes. She started to look through the catalogue that the Eaton Company in Montreal sent us in the mail every year. My mother was proud. She never wanted to buy our clothes at the general store. The only clothes that were good enough for us were the latest styles from Eaton's catalogue. My mother did not like the order forms included in the catalogue. They were written in English and she did not understand a single word of it. To order my hockey sweater, she did what she always did. She took out her writing pad and wrote in her fine school teacher's hand: "Dear Monsieur Eaton, Would you be so kind as to send me a Canadien's hockey sweater for my son, Roch, who is ten years old and a little bit tall for his age?

Docteur Robitalle thinks he is a little too thin. I am sending you three dollars. Please send me the change if there is any. I hope your packing will be better than it was last time."

Monsieur Eaton answered my mother's letter promptly. Two weeks later we received the sweater.

That day I had one of the greatest disappointments of my life! Instead of the red, white and blue Montreal Canadiens sweater, Monsieur Eaton had sent the blue and white sweater of the Toronto Maple Leafs. I had always worn the red, white and blue sweater of the Montreal Canadiens. All my friends wore the red, white and blue sweater. Never had anyone in my village worn the Toronto sweater. Besides, the Toronto team was always being beaten by the Canadiens.

With tears in my eyes, I found the strength to say: "I'll never wear that uniform."

"My boy," said my mother, "first you're going to try it on! If you make up your mind about something before you try it, you won't go very far in this life." My mother had pulled the blue and white Toronto Maple Leafs sweater over my head and put my arms into the sleeves. She pulled the sweater down and carefully smoothed the maple leaf right in the middle of my chest.

I was crying: "I can't wear that."

"Why not? This sweater is a perfect fit."

"Maurice Richard would never wear it."

"You're not Maurice Richard! Besides, it's not what you put on your back that matters, it's what you put inside your head."

"You'll never make me put in my head to wear a Toronto Maple Leafs sweater." My mother sighed in despair and explained to me: "If you don't keep this sweater which fits you perfectly I'll have to write to Monsieur Eaton and explain that you don't want to wear the Toronto sweater. Monsieur Eaton understands French perfectly, but he's English and he's going to be insulted because he likes the Maple Leafs. If he's insulted, do you think he'll be in a hurry to answer us? Spring will come before you play a single game, just because you don't want to wear that nice blue sweater."

So, I had to wear the Toronto Maple Leafs sweater.

When I arrived at the skating rink in my blue sweater, all the Maurice Richards in red, white and blue came, one by one, and looked at me. The referee blew his whistle and I went to take my usual position. The coach came over and told me I would be on the second line. A few minutes later the second line was called; I jumped onto the ice. The Maple Leafs sweater weighed on my shoulders like a mountain. The captain came and told me to wait; he'd need me later, on defense. By the third period I still had not played. Then one of the defensemen was hit on the nose with a stick and it started to bleed. I jumped onto the ice. My moment had come!

The referee blew his whistle and gave me a penalty. He said there were already five players on the ice. That was too much! It was too unfair! "This is persecution!" I shouted. "It's just because of my blue sweater!"

I crashed my stick against the ice so hard that it broke.

I bent down to pick up the pieces. When I got up, the young curate, on skates, was standing in front of me.

“My child,” he said, “just because you’re wearing a new Toronto Maple Leafs sweater, it doesn’t mean you’re going to make the laws around here. A good boy never loses his temper. Take off your skates and go to the church and ask God to forgive you.”

Wearing my Maple Leafs sweater I went to the church, where I prayed to God.

I asked God to send me right away, a hundred million moths that would eat up my Toronto Maple Leafs sweater.

South African Short Stories

Potgieter's Castle

By Lewis Nkosi
(From Come Back, Africa)

In the generous heat of summer, pushing against a nakedly blue and unknowable sky, carried atop a truck about which they knew nothing, uncertain as to destination of fate, they huddled together and watched land moving rapidly back in the opposite direction. A sinister-looking black man in tattered khaki shirt and pants, armed with a Kerrie and assegai, stood watch over them. The man had a powerful body; his bare feet were ugly, broad and spread out before him, full of holes and blisters. His eyes were bloodshot, infinitely sad in the cruel insensisitive manner of people who have seen too many murders and care for nothing. He seemed rather like the devil conserving his strength for an impending crazed dance of war. His manner of conveying a message was to prod one of the boys or men brutally on the ribs with his Kerrie and then to grunt out something completely inaudible, then again, without waiting for an answer or logical response, to subside, settle down near the rear of the truck, watching out of dull glazed eyes.

The other guard whom the men had seen at the Pass Office sat with the white farmer in the front of the truck. The truck traveled the whole of that day, stopping only at petrol stations and roadside cafés for short spells. Each time they stopped at some roadside eating-place the white farmer would get out of the front of the truck, walk round to the back where he inspected casually the physical condition of his prisoners. Each time he would grunt something to Zuma, the black satanic guard who sat with the boys at the back of the truck, then he would shuffle off toward the café from which he came out minutes later, carrying parcels of food for his two guards. The white man would then go back to the roadside café never to emerge until thirty minutes later when he came out looking fed, his red face flushed with new blood. The two guards wolfed down their food in full view of the prisoners, who, by this time, were so famished and thirsty they could have eaten a whale; and once having finished eating, the guards stood up, looking ugly and fed, and they fumbled with the fly of their pants, hauled out their genitals and began to piddle into the road.

The boys and the men were given no food whatsoever. For the whole journey, which took almost a full day, they were locked inside the iron cage at the back of the truck; and when they begged to be allowed to relieve themselves the guard shouted and raved maniacally, prodding at them with the Kerrie.

"Stand on the side of the truck and piddle!" the guard shouted. "Who do you think you are? Princes of the earth!" and one by one the boys stood up, pushed their genitals through the grillwork of the truck and piddled onto the empty road. After a while the truck moved again, kicked into motion by the hefty white farmer with large

hairy arms, red face and steel-blue eyes. The truck bumped along raising a cloud of dust and leaving a streak of water and oil upon the road. The boys, including Sipo, were no longer certain of the direction in which they were going, or how far they were from home. Nor did the older prisoners appear to know. They no longer felt any fear. A deep inhuman resignation had descended upon everybody; now they merely waited to see where this truck would take them, what kind of place or people they would encounter there and what would be required of them once they had reached their destination.

In a far corner of the truck, a man was relating the circumstances that led to his arrest. "I can't tell you, my friend, of the great commotion—men running, women shouting, and children crying, the whole of Sophiatown was one scene of vast confusion. The police came with Black Marias and took hundreds of us away. 'We'll break this strike, even if it takes us years to do it!' they said. When we reached the police-station they charged us with vagrancy and forced us to sign the contract with the farmer as prison labour."

The story was more or les the same for everybody. But Zuma, the guard who was sitting in the rear of the truck, listening, soon got irritated with the exchanges of stories and he shouted violently with a menacing voice: "Shut up, you big holes of your mothers! I can't hear myself thinking."

"People like him," said a thin dark man with a bitter rueful voice. "People like him—stooges who are doing the dirty work for the white man—will be the first to lose their necks when the time comes!"

Zuma scrambled to his feet, wielding his kerrie menacingly in the air: "Who was that talking such dangerous things? Who was that man? I want to see him and I'll show him what happens to people who dream up such mad ideas" Heads are going to roll, eh, and who, my dear friend with a mouth like an ape's ass—who is to make them roll?"

No one answered him; but it seemed that for the first time Zuma was faltering; the raised kerrie became heavy in his hand and gradually he lowered it, still searching the faces of the prisoners for a sign that might betray the speaker of the dark portentous words; but the men's faces told nothing; they were closed and inscrutable.

So crowded was the truck that a stench of sweat from tired unbathed, slightly damp bodies, ascended to the nostrils, choking the air with its sharp acrid odour. Some of the older prisoners who had been to jail before seemed to expect the worst; they stared of the truck from brutally cold, cynical eyes, their lips curved in contemptuous fetus-like pouches. When they felt the desire to talk they did so in quick reckless grunts against which, even the guard, was powerless to do anything.

"Shut up, you mother sucking bastards!" One of the men, whose face was covered with large bruises and gashes, stared at the guard through narrowed eyes and continued to talk to his mate in controlled venomous tones that were freighted with the immeasurable bitterness of his twenty years of fighting the police and escaping from jails. He and his mate would not be silenced though the guard rapped them sharply across the shins with a Kerrie. They responded with screams and curses and yells, spitting provokingly and the guard's feet. The guard smiled menacingly, with almost a deep gratitude that they had provided him with another excuse

for violence; he looked at them almost kindly, with…a seeming tenderness, from the caves of his solemn dark eyes in which a fire of hate crackled and burned everlastingly.

"I'll teach you a lesson, you black swine! I'll teach you a lesson you will never forget!" He blared at the two, not bothering to get up. "When we get to the farm I want you to come out of there singing like larks and I'll show you where a boy was gored by a bull! You understand? A nice secret place for pals of mine." The two men ignored him, although it was quite obvious that the other prisoners were shivering with fright and foreboding. Such threats seemed to assure them of a dark and bitter end and they all, almost to one man, wished that the two prisoners would stop provoking the guard any further.

For the rest of the journey there was a dead stillness in the truck against which nothing but the drone of the engine and the soft whirring of tiers in the heat could be heard. When the truck had traveled over fifty miles most of the prisoners—including Sipo—felt a lessening of tension which had nothing to do with a precise loss of fear; it merely had to do with their tiredness, their hunger and the numbed immobility of their bodies. All the anguish, the fear and the despair, seemed to have gathered into a knot which settled down at the bottom of their stomachs, cramping the muscles but deadening the weight of pain. So long as the body was huddled against the knees and the things each one of the men felt all right, felt a certain relief, which had to do with the awful tightness of the muscles, Sipo knew when the fear would come back; it would come the moment they were required to stand; he know with a harsh certainty that his legs and knees would feel the weight of his body and they would tremble slightly while his palms sweated with anxiety. For a while longer, this was not to be; they stared bleakly at the sky that rose like a vast canopy in the deathless majesty of space.

Now they were over a deep broad river, muddy, which seemed almost unmoving in its deeply trammeled progress. They left it behind as the truck climbed precariously on an uneasy treacherous road, beside which there were gaping dongas sloping down to the banks of the river. Over the hill, they began again the slow monotonous drive across the dry veld. They were now passing occasional farmsteads along the road, over vast tracks of mealie fields in which hordes of young boys and men toiled under the yellowing sun.

The workers wore almost no clothes except rough sacking in which neck and sleeve openings had been made by cutting the sack roughly with shears. Sometimes a white farmer stood among the labourers, shouting incessantly what they could not hear because of the noise of the truck; sometimes they saw only black guards carrying sjamboks or kerries in their hands driving the men like beasts of burden in front of them. Something elemental, not exactly horror, but something more bizarre, like the awakening of a vast deafening turmoil within the depths of a cavernous hell a kind of shrieking nightmare, seemed to surround these plantations and the silent out-of-the-way farms with their slaves and shouting overseers. There existed here a brutal atmosphere of arid, insensitive violence and despair which seemed to encompass everything—a form of chaos, of disaster, which connected the brutality of the mind to that of the land—this land which simultaneously supported the fat grain and empty horrific brains all at once. The heat too was not as strong here as it had seemed to be; it was merely denser, more palpable, and perhaps unceasing, blanketing the land with a soporific enduring subtropical

madness whose elemental power ate into the brain and produced the abominable creatures who now stalked the land, whipping and driving their slave labour.

As soon as they had crossed the river, the prisoners in the truck sensed the change in the atmosphere; they sensed it immediately they entered the maize triangle and the sun-washed graveyards. The prisoners seemed to shrink with horror and apprehension, as though they knew what all this portended. It was not long now before they reached the last turning on the road where a car track branched off to the right, into which their own truck swerved sharply and came to a stop in front of an iron gate. The black guard sitting in front with the farmer jumped down and opened the creaking gates for the truck to drive through. Sipo could read the scraggly letters on the gateway—*Prop. of P. J. Potgieter*. That was how the letters read. He too felt that as soon as the truck had passed through the gate he had lost whatever rights he might have possessed; he was now the property of Mr. P. J. Potgieter. The other prisoners too must have dimly felt this, their faces showed it, their faces held a shocked surrendering despair, a wounded yielding to whatever disaster or horrors their immediate future held for them. Their faces held this surprised shock until the truck came of a stop in front of what seemed a series of farm buildings serving diverse purposes. From the air, they caught the smell of hay, cattle, dung, grain, wood, the tilled land.

Amidst a great deal of violent and frenzied shouts the guards opened the back of the truck and the men stumbled to their feet, knees creaking and their feet thudding madly on the floor boards of the truck; and they jumped off onto the ground under a darkening sky, watching the dark shadows beginning to creep up from the valley below, and they stood in front of the farmer to be counted. They stood—twenty-eight of them—feeling the damp heated air of early evening was in from the stream nearby, another hotter gust blowing in from the mealie fields and potato stretches. They held themselves loosely in a half-dying despairing loss of youth, like lambs brought to slaughter, waiting only to be told what was to be done with them or rather what was going to be done to them.

They stood in a row in front of the white farmer to be counted. They stood with their hands hanging limply by their sides, their legs pressed tightly together, their stomachs turned in sharply at their navels, a row of ragged-looking, shivering, wide-eyed, hostile-eyed, brown-faced men breathing through their mouths and nostrils all at once, a few here and there wetting their hunger-dry lips with their tongues, all of them tired and unfed. They all seemed to be unsure as to the roles they were expected to play and nobody told them. It seemed that the only language that the guards understood was violence; they used violence casually with an annoying precision, as though the fact of it was the most beautiful thing they had discovered about the ordering of human society. They came now shouting, whirling their kerries, spitting rather than giving commands, while they assisted the farmer to count his recently acquired possession.

The farmer held a list of names in his hands and shouted at the top of his voice, a huge oak-like voice, appropriate to large empty spaces, broad with the incomprehensible vastness of the veld itself.

"Jalimani!"

"Present!"

"James! Solomon! David! You bloody kaffirs love bible names, don't you! Like hell you're Solomon. Filthy scum like you!"

The farmer turned to one of the black guards: "Okay, Zuma, run them in!"

The guards moved, kerries first, prodding, hitting, moving the men like cattle into an enormous building with iron doors and high holes for windows which were shut with iron bars like a jail. The doors were flung upon and before they had had enough time to familiarize themselves with their surroundings, to search hell, they were shoveled like excreta into the hole of a farm prison where they were locked up for the night. In this half gloom, they burned with remorse, self-pity and anger and they searched out the guard's eyes for a sign of humanity, but in the half darkness they could see nothing but the dark massive form, the kerrie swinging from a large gorilla hand. The man stood near the doorway, his huge dark form silhouetted against the pale evening light. "Okay, you mole-eating sons of bitches," he announced in a gruff peasant voice. "I want all of you to listen to me careful."

Imperceptibly, is voice shifted, as he spoke, to a more morose tone, tense, controlled, but unaccountably sad so that even his limbs seemed to hang loosely from the rest of his body. He had let the kerrie drop to the level of the cement floor; from time to time, he used it to pound on the floor as a way of empahasising his points.

"From now on, you're on *baas* Potgieter's farm," the man said morosely. Though sad, a certain harshness had not entirely gone out of his voice; his dented manner with words had a curious way of underlying his essential brutality. "As far as we know *baas* Potgieter's farm is not a holiday resort. You are not liable to be served with cakes and biscuits here. It's work you're going to do. At four o'clock in the morning, you will hear a bell ring. I want all of you to come out of here sharp and shoot. Come out singing like larks." The man said this in a venomously happy voice. "And I want you to queue up for harvesting sacks. Somebody will be waiting to take you down to the mealie fields where harvesting is done."

Here the man paused and then added with a fiendish cackle: "Prove your mettle as the brave sons of Chaka and Moshoeshoe. It's a fine opportunity for you. Sun comes out shining like a piece of diamond and the mealie stalks stretch on endlessly in front of you like the armies of old. And you fine warriors of Chaka and Mosheshoe will fall onto them with hand and sickle. I tell you, it's a fine opportunity." The man cackle again but there was no answering laughter from the ragged rows of prisoners in front of him; so he stopped suddenly as though he had caught a punch in the stomach.

"I see, you don't find this funny? ... You're right not to laugh, it's not funny at all. In fact, I don't mind telling you it's hell! It's purgatory. Sun out there burns like copper, the air stands still, but you—you won't be able to stand still for one moment. Not one blessed moment" You'll just have to keep on moving. You know why?... Of course, you don't know why. I'll tell you why: because Jack and me—Jack is the other guard—will be behind you with kerries and iron prodders to give you encouragement. The sjamboks I told you about." The man laughed

suddenly so that there was a brief moment of surprise among his listeners which was replaced by a deepening horror.

"The sjamboks which I told you about—these cowstraps which are dipped into salted water when not in use—have a way of biting the skin off. Anyway, you don't need me to tell you about that. That's chewing too much gaff. Anyway, you must be bored now with my speech," he said discretely. "however, I reckon you must know everything. Makes for good relations. Starting with a clean slate, as it were. Mind what you write on that slate, though. That's what *baas* Potgieter always says. Your average wage here will be three pounds a month... and lots of fresh air!"

Long after the guard had left, the men were unconscious of his laving left; they stood in the same position they had stood when he addressed them. Even after the door had come to and a bolt shot home, they still stood watching the door as though the guard was bound to pay them the compliment of another visit in a few minutes. It was only when one of the boys started sobbing, quietly, without making too much noise, and another man, who was a Christian started chanting the Lord's prayer, that the spell was broken and the men began to search around the rectangular room for the signs of furniture, blankets, whatever comforts were provided for them. In this as in many other things, they were to be profoundly surprised.

EXERCISES

1. Get ready to retell the main events of the story.
2. What events were more impressive to you?
3. Why did they hate the black policeman on the truck, perhaps more than the white man at the wheel?
4. The trip and the destination may stand as symbols for something passed but still present. What?

A Drink in the Passage

By Alan Paton

(From Come Back Africa)

In the year 1960, the Union of South Africa celebrated its Golden Jubilee, and there was a nation-wide sensation when the one-thousand-pound prize for the finest piece of sculpture was won by a black man, Edward Simelane. His work, **African Mother and Child**, not only excited the admiration, but touched the conscience of heart or whatever it was that responded, of white South Africa, and seemed likely to make him famous in other countries.

It was by an oversight that his work was accepted, for it was the policy of the government that all the celebrations and competitions should be strictly segregated. The committee of the sculpture section received a private reprimand for having been so careless as to omit the words "for whites only" from the conditions, but was told, by a very high personage it is said, that if Simelane's work "was indisputably the best", it should receive the

award. The committee then decided that this prize must be given along with the others, at the public ceremony that would bring this particular part of the celebrations to a close.

For this decision, it received a surprising amount of support from the white public; but in certain powerful quarters, there was an outcry against any departure from the "traditional policies" of the country, and a threat that many white prizewinners would renounce their prizes. However, crisis was averted, because the sculptor was "unfortunately unable to attend the ceremony".

"I wasn't feeling up to it," Simelane said mischievously to me. "My parents, and my wife's parents, and our priest, decided that I wasn't feeling up to it. And finally I decided so too. Of course Majosi and Sola and the others wanted me to go and get my prize personally, but I said, 'boys, I'm a sculptor, not a demonstrator'."

"This cognac is wonderful," he said, "especially in these big glasses. It's the first time I've had such a glass. It's also the first time I've drunk a brandy so slowly. In Orlando you develop a throat of iron, and you just put back your head and pour it down, in case the police should arrive."

He said to me, "This is the second cognac I've had in my life. Would you like to hear the story of how I had my first?"

You know the Alabaster Bookshop in Von Brandis Street? Well, after the competition, they asked me if they could exhibit my **African Mother and Child**. They gave a whole window to it, with a white velvet backdrop, if there is anything called white velvet, and some complimentary words.

Well, somehow I could never go and look in that window. On my way from the station to the Herald office, I sometimes went past there: but I would only squint at it out of the corner of my eye.

Then, one night I was working late at the Herald, and when I came out there was hardly anyone in the streets, so I thought I'd go and see the window, and indulge certain pleasurable human feeling I must have got a little lost int he contemplation of my own genius, because suddenly there was a yung white man standing next to me.

He said to me, "What do you think of that, mate?" And you know, one doesn't get called "mate" every day.

"I'm looking at it," I said.

"I live near here, "he said, "and I come and look at it nearly every night. You know it's by one of your own boys, don't you? See, Edward Simelane."

"Yes, I know."

"It's beautiful," he said. "Look at that mother's head. She's loving that child, but she's somehow watching to. Do you see that? Like someone guarding. She knows it won't be an easy life."

He cocked his head on one side, to see the thing better.

"He got a thousand pounds for it, "he said. "That's a lot of money for one of your boys. But good luck to him. You don't get much luck, do you?"

Then he said confidentially, "Mate, would you like a drink?"

Well honestly I didn't feel like a drink at that time of night, with a white stranger and all, and a train still to catch to Orlando.

"You know we black people must be out of the city by eleven," I said.

"It won't take long. My flat's just round the corner. Do you speak Afrikaans?"

"Since I was a child," I said in Afrikaans.

"We'll speak Afrikaans then. My English isn't too wonderful. I'm van Rensburg. And You?"

I couldn't have told him my name. I said I was Vakalisa, living in Orlando.

"Vakalisa, eh? I haven't heard that name before."

By this time he had started off, and I was following, but not willingly. That's my trouble, as you'll soon see. I can't break off an encounter. We didn't exactly walk abreast, but he didn't exactly walk in front of me. He didn't look constrained. He wasn't looking round to see if anyone might be watching.

He said to me, "Do you know what I wanted to do?"

"No," I said.

"I wanted a bookshop, like that one there. I always wanted that ever since I can remember. When I was small, I had a little shop of my own." He laughed at himself. "Some were real books, of course, but some of them I wrote myself. But I had bad luck. My parents died before I could finish school."

Then he said to me, "Are you educated?"

I said unwillingly, "Yes." Then I thought to myself, how stupid, for leaving the question open.

And sure enough he asked, "Far?"

And again unwillingly, I said, "Far."

He took a big leap. "Degree?"

"Yes."

"Literature?"

"Yes."

He expelled his breath, and gave a long "ah". We had reached his building, Majorca Mansions, not one of those luxurious places. I was glad to see that the entrance lobby was deserted. I wasn't at my ease. I don't feel at my ease in such places, not unless I am protected by friends, and this man was a stranger. The lift was at ground level, marked *Whites Only*. *Slegs vir Blankes*. Van Rensburg opened the door and waved me in. Was he constrained? To this day, I don't know. While I was waiting for him to press the button, so that we could get moving and away from that ground floor, he stood with his finger suspended over it, and looked at me with a kind of honest, unselfish envy.

"You were lucky," he said. "Literature, that's what I wanted to do."

He shook his head and pressed the button, and he didn't speak again until we stopped high up. But before we got out he said suddenly, "If I had had a bookshop, I'd have given that boy a window too."

We got out and walked along one of those polished concrete passageways, I suppose you could call it a steep if it weren't so high up, let's call it a passage. On the one side was a wall and plenty of fresh air, and far down below von Brandis Street. On the other side were the doors, impersonal doors; you could hear radios and

people talking, but there wasn't a soul in sight. I wouldn't like living so high; we Africans like being close to the earth. Van Rensburg stopped at one of the doors, and said to me, "I won't be a minute." Then he went in, leaving the door open, and inside I could hear voices. I thought to myself, he's telling them who's here. Then after a minute or so, he came back to the door, holding two glasses of red wine. He was warm and smiling.

"Sorry there's no brandy," he said. "Only wine. Here's happiness."

Now I certainly had not expected that I would have my drink in the passage. I wasn't only feeling what you may be thinking, I was thinking that one of the impersonal doors might open at any moment, and someone might see me in a "white" building and see me and van Rensburg breaking the liquor laws of the country. Anger could have saved me from the whole embarrassing situation, but you know I can't easily be angry. Even if I could have been, I might have found it hard to be angry with this particular man. But I wanted to get away from there, and I couldn't. My mother used to say to me, when I had said something anti-white, "Son, don't talk like that, talk as you are." She would have understood at once, why I took a drink from a man who gave it to me in the passage.

Van Rensburg said to me, "Don't you know this fellow, Simelane?"

"I've heard of him," I said.

"I'd like to meet him," he said. "I'd like to talk to him." He added in explanation, "You know, talk out my heart to him."

A woman of about fifty years of age came from the room beyond, bringing a plate of biscuits. She smiled and bowed to me. I took one of the biscuits, but not for all the money in the world could I have said to her *dankie, my nooi*, or that disgusting *dankie, missus*, nor did I want to speak to her in English because her language was Afrikaans, so I took the risk of it and used the word *mevrou*, from the politeness of which some Africakaaners would knock a black man down, and I said, in high Afrikaans, with a smile and a bow too, "*Ek is u dankbaar, mevrou*."

But nobody knocked me down. The woman smiled and bowed, and van Rensburg, in a strained voice that suddenly came out of nowhere, said, "Our land is beautiful. But it breaks my heart."

The woman put her hand on his arm, and said, "Jannie, Jannie."

Then another woman and a man, all about the same age, came up and stood behind van Rensburg.

"He's a B.A., van Rensburg told them. " What do you think of that?"

The first woman smiled and bowed to me again, and van Rensburg said, as though it were a matter for grief, "I wanted to give him brandy, but there's only wine."

The second woman said, "I remember, Jannie. Come with me."

She went back into the room, and he followed her. The first woman said to me, "Jannie's a good man. Strange, but good."

And I thought the whole thing was mad, and getting beyond me, with me a black stranger being shown a testimonial for the son of the house, with these white strangers standing and looking at me in the passage, as

though they wanted for God's sake to touch me somewhere and didn't know how, but I saw the earnestness of the woman who had smiled and bowed to me, and I said to her, "I can see that, *Mevrou*."

"He goes down every night to look at the statue," she said. "He says only God could make something so beautiful, therefore God must be in the man who made it, and he wants to meet him and talk out his heart to him."

She looked back at the room, and then she dropped her voice a little, and said to me, "Can't you see, it's somehow because it's a black woman and a black child?"

And I said to her, "I can see that, *Mevrou*.

She turned to the man and said of me, "he's a good boy."

Then the other woman returned with van Rensburg, and van Rensburg had a bottle of brandy. He was smiling and pleased, and he said tome, "This isn't ordinary brandy, it's French."

He showed me the bottle, and I, wanting to get the hell out of that place, looked at it and saw it was cognac. He turned to the man and said, "Uncle, you remember? When you were ill? The doctor said you must have good brandy. And the man at the bottle-store said this was the best brandy in the world."

"I must go," I said. "I must catch that train."

"I'll take you to the station," he said. "Don't you worry about that."

He poured me a drink and one for himself.

"Uncle," he said, "what about one for yourself?"

The older man said, "I don't mind if I do," and he went inside to get himself a glass.

Van Rensburg said, "Happiness," and lifted his glass to me. It was a good brandy, the best I've ever tasted. But I wanted to get the hell out of there. I stood in the passage and drank van Rensburg's brandy. Then Uncle came back with his glass and van Rensburg poured him a brandy, and Uncle raised his glass to me too. All of us were full of goodwill, but I was waiting for the opening of one of those impersonal doors. Perhaps they were too, I don't know. Perhaps when you want so badly to touch someone, you don't care. I was drinking my brandy almost as fast as I would have drunk it in Orlando.

"I must go," I said.

Van Rensburg said, "I'll take you to the station." He finished his brandy, and I finished mine too. We handed the glasses to Uncle, who said to me, "Good night my boy." The first woman said, "May God bless you," and the other woman bowed and smiled. Then van Rensburg and I went down in the lift to the basement, and got into his car.

"I told you I'd take you to the station," he said. "I'd take you home, but I'm frightened of Orlando at night."

He drove up Eloff Street, and he said, "Did you know what I meant?" I knew that he wanted an answer to something, and I wanted to answer him, but I couldn't, because I didn't know what that something was. He couldn't be talking about being frightened of Orlando at night, because what more could one mean that just that?

"By what?" I asked.

"You know," he said, "about our land being beautiful?"

Yes, I know what he meant, and I knew that for God's sake he wanted to touch me too and he couldn't; for his eyes had been blinded by years in the dark. And I thought it was a pity, for if men never touch each other, they'll hurt each other one day. And it was a pity he was blind, and couldn't touch me, for black men don't touch white men any more; only by accident, when they make something like **Mother and Child**.

He said to me, "What are you thinking?"

I said, "Many things," and my inarticulateness distressed me, for I knew he wanted something from me. I felt him fall back, angry, hurt, despairing, I didn't know. He stopped at the main entrance to the station, but I didn't tell him I couldn't go in there. I got out and said to him, "Thank you for the sociable evening."

"They liked having you," he said. "Did you see that?"

I said, "Yes, I saw that."

He sat slumped in his seat, like a man with a burden of incomprehensible, insoluble grief. I wanted to touch him, but I was thinking about the train. He said good night and I said it too. We each saluted the other. What he was thinking, God knows, but I was thinking he was like a man trying to run a race in iron shoes, and not understanding why he cannot move.

When I got back to Orlando, I told my wife the story, and she wept.

EXERCISES

1. Look for information about the system of Apartheid that existed in South Africa until a few years ago. How was that system ended?
2. What was it in the statue that moved and confused van Rensburg? Why does the author say that such a thing is perhaps the only way black men could touch white men, and just by accident?
3. "A drink in the passage" was as far as the white man could go. Why?
4. For whom did Simelane's wife cry?
5. Do you invite people who are different to have a drink in the passage?

Caribbean Short Stories

MY AUNT GOLD TEETH

V. S. Naipaul

I never knew her real name and it is quite likely that she did have one, though I never heard her called anything but Gold Teeth. She did, indeed, have gold teeth. She had sixteen of them. She had married early and she had married well, and shortly after her marriage she exchanged her perfectly sound teeth for gold ones, to announce to the world that her husband was a man of substance.

Even without her gold teeth my aunt would have been noticeable. She was short, scarcely five foot, and she was fat. If you saw her in silhouette you would have found it difficult to know whether she was facing you or whether she was looking sideways.

She ate little and prayed much. Her family being Hindu, and her husband being a pundit, she, too, was an orthodox Hindu. Of Hinduism she knew little apart from the ceremonies and the taboos, and this was enough for her. Gold Teeth saw God as a Power, and religious ritual as a means of harnessing that Power for great practical good, her good.

I fear I may have given the impression that Gold Teeth prayed because she wanted to be less fat. The fact was that Gold Teeth had no children and she was almost forty. It was her childlessness, not her fat, that oppressed her, and she prayed for the curse to be removed. She was willing to try any means —any ritual, any prayer— in order to trap and channel the supernatural Power.

And so it was that she began to indulge in surreptitious Christian practices.

She was living at the time in a country village called Cunupia, in County Caroni. Here the Canadian Mission had long waged war against the Indian heathen, and saved many. But Gold Teeth stood firm. The Minister of Cunupia expended his Presbyterian piety on her; so did the headmaster of the Mission school. But all in vain. At no time was Gold Teeth persuaded even to think about being converted. The idea horrified her. Her father had been in his day one of the best known Hindu pundits, and even now her husband's fame as a pundit, as a man who could read and write Sanskrit, had spread far beyond Cunupia. She was in no doubt whatsoever that Hindus were the best people in the world, and that Hinduism was a superior religion. She was willing to select, modify and incorporate alien eccentricities into her worship; but to abjure her own faith—never!

Presbyterianism was not the only danger the good Hindu had to face in Cunupia. Besides, of course, the ever-present threat of open Muslim aggression, the Catholics were to be reckoned with. Their pamphlets were everywhere and it was hard to avoid them Lit them Gold Teeth read of novenas and rosarios, squads of saints and angels. These were thing she understood and could even sympathize with. and encouraged her to seek

further. She read of the mysteries and the miracles, of penances and indulgences. Her scepticism sagged, and yielded to a quickening, if reluctant, enthusiasm.

One morning she took the train for the County town of Chaguanas, three miles, two stations and twenty minutes away. The Church of St. Philip and St. James in Chaguanas stands imposingly at the end of the Caroni Savannah Road, and although Gold Teeth knew Chaguanas well, all she knew of the church was that it had- a clock, at which she had glanced on her way to the railway station nearby. She had hitherto been far more interested in the drab ochre-washed edifice opposite, which was the police station.

She carried herself into the churchyard, awed by her own temerity, feeling like an explorer in a lands of cannibals. To her relief, the church was empty. It was not as terrifying as she had expected. In the gilt and images and the resplendent cloths she found much that reminded her of her Hindu temple. Her eyes caught a discreet sign: CANDLES TWO CENTS EACH. She undid the knot in the end of her veil, where she kept her money, took out three cents, popped them into the box, picked up a candle and muttered a prayer in Hindustani. A brief moment of elation gave way to a sense of guilt, and she was suddenly anxious to get away from the church as fast as her weight would let her.

She took a bus home, and hid the candle in her chest of drawers. She had half feared that her husband's Brahmin cal flair for clairvoyance would have uncovered the reason for her trip to Chaguanas. When after four days, which she spent in an ecstasy of prayer, her husband had mentioned nothing, Gold Teeth thought it safe to burn the candle. She burned it She burned it secretly at night, before her Hindu images, and sent up, as she thought, prayers of double efficacy.

Everyday her religious schizophrenia grew, and presently she began wearing a crucifix. Neither her husband nor her neighbors knew she did so. The chain was lost in the billows of fat around her neck, and the crucifix was itself buried in the valley of her gargantuan breasts. Later she acquired two holy pictures, one of the Virgin Mary, the other of the crucifixion, and took care to conceal them from her husband. The prayers she offered to these Christian things filled her with new hope and bueyancy. She became an addict of Christianity.

Then her husband, Ramprasad, fell ill.

Ramprasad's sudden, unaccountable illness alarmed Gold Teeth. It was; she knew, no ordinary illness, and she knew, too, that her religious transgression was the cause. The District Medical Officer at Chaguanas said it was diabetes, but Gold Teeth knew better. To be on the safe side, though, she used he insulin he prescribed and, to be even safer, she consulted Ganesh Pundit, the masseur with mystic leanings, celebrated as a faith-healer.

Ganesh came all the way from Feunte Grove m Cunupia. He came in great humility, anxious to serve Gold Teeth's husband, for Gold Teeth's husband m a Brahmin among Brahmins, a *Panday,* a man who knew all five Vedas; while he, Ganesh, was a mere Chaubay and knew only four.

With spotless white *koortah,* his dhoti cannily tied and a tasselled green scarf as a concession to elegance, Ganesh exuded the confidence of the professional mystic. He looked at the sick man, observed his pallor, sniffed the air inquiringly. "This man," he said "is bewitched. Veven spirits are upon him."

He was telling Gold Teeth nothing she didn't know. She had known from the first that there were spirits in the affair but she was glad that Ganesh had ascertained their number.

"But you mustn't worry," Ganesh added, "We will 'tie' the house—in spiritual bonds—and no spirit will be able to come in.

Then, without being asked, Gold Teeth brought Out a blanket, folded it, placed it on the floor and invited Ganesh, to sit on it. Next she brought him a brass jar of fresh water, a mango leaf and a plate full of burning charcoal.

"Brig me some ghee," Ganesh said, and after Gold Teeth had done so, he set to work. Muttering continuously in Hindustani he sprinkled the water from the brass jar around him with the mango leaf. Then he melted the ghee in the fire and the charcoal hissed so sharply that Gold Teeth could not make out his words. Presently he rose and said, *"You* must put some of the ash of this fire on your husband's forehead, but if he doesn't want you to do that, mix it with his food. You must keep the water in this jar and place it every night before your front door."

Gold Teeth pulled her veil over her forehead.

Ganesh coughed. "That," he said, rearranging his scarf, "is all. There is nothing more I can do. God will do the rest.

He refused payment for his services. It was enough honour, he said, for a man as humble as he was to serve Pundit Ramprasad, and she, Gold Teeth, had been singled out by fate to be the spouse of such a worthy man. Gold Teeth received the impression that Ganesh spoke from a first-hand knowledge of fate and its designes, and her heart, burned deep down under inches of mortal, flabby flesh, sank a little.

"Baba," she said hesitantly, "reverend Father, I have something to ~ay to you." But she couldn't say anything more and Ganesh, seeing this, filled his eyes with charity and love.

"What is it, my child?" -

"I have done a great wrong, Baba."

"What sort of wrong?" he asked, and his tone indicated that Gold Teeth could do no wrong.

"I have prayed to Christian things."

And to Gold Teeth's surprise, Ganesh chuckled benevolently. "And do you think God minds, daughter? There is only one God and different people pray to Him in different ways. It doesn't matter how you pray, but God is pleased if you pray at all."

"So it is not because of me that my husband has fallen ill?"

"No, to be sure, daughter."

In his professional capacity Ganesh was consulted by people of many faiths, and with the licence of the mystic he had exploited the commodiousness of Hinduism, and made room for all beliefs. In this way he had many clients, as he called them, many satisfied clients.

Henceforward Gold Teeth not only pasted Ramprasad's pale forehead with the sacred ash Ganesh had prescribed, but mixed substantial amounts with h~ food. Ramprasad's appetite, enormous even in sickness, diminished; and he shortly entered into a visible and alarming decline that mystified his wife.

She fed him more ash than before, and when it was exhausted and Ramprasad perilously macerated, she fell back on the Hindu wife's last resort. She took her husband home to her mother. That venerable lady, my grandmother, lived with us in Port-of-Spain, in Woodbrook.

Ramprasad was tall and skeletal, and his face was gray. The virile voice that had expounded a thousand theological points and recited a hundred puranas was now a wavering whisper. We cooped him up in a room called, oddly, 'the pantry.' It had never been used as a pantry and one can only assume that the architect, in the idealistic manner of his tribe, had so designated it some forty years before. I was a tiny room. If you wished to enter the pantry you were compelled, as soon as you opened the door, to dim on to the bed; it fitted the room to a miracle. The lower half of the walls were concrete, the upper close lattice-work; there were no windows.

My grandmother had her doubts about the suitability of the room for a sick man. She was worried about the lattice-work. It let in air and light, and Ramprasad was not going to die from these things if she could help it. With cardboard, oil-cloth and canvas she made the lattice-work air-proof.

And, sure enough, within a week Ramprand's appetite returned, insatiable and insistent as before. My grandmother claimed all the credit for this, though Gold Teeth knew that the ash she had fed him had not been without effect. Then she realized with horror that she had ignored a very important thing. The house in Cunupia had been tied and no spirits could enter, but the house in Woodbrook had been given no such protection and any spirit could come and go as it chose. The problem was pressing.

Ganesh was out of the question. By giving his services free he had made it impossible for Gold Teeth to call him in again. But thinking in this way of Ganesh, she remembered his words: "It doesn't matter how you pray, but God is pleased if you pray at all."

Why not, then bring Christianity into play again?

She didn't want to take any chances this time. She decided to tell Ramprasad.

He was propped up in bed, and eating. When Gold Teeth opened the door he stopped eating and blinked at the unwanted light. Gold Teeth, stepping into the and filling it, shadowed the room once more he went on eating. She placed the palms of her hand on the bed. It creaked.

"Man," she said.

Ramprasad continued to eat.

"Man," she said in English, "I thinking about going to the church to pray. You never know, and it better to be on the safe side. After all, the house ain't tied—"

"I don't want you to pray in no church," he whispered, in English too.

Gold Teeth did the only thing she could do. She began to cry.

Three days in succession she asked his permission go to church, and his opposition weakened in the face of her tears. He was now, besides, too weak to oppose anything. Although his appetite had return he was still very ill and very weak, and every day his, condition became worse.

On the fourth day he said to Gold Teeth, "Well, pray to Jesus and go to church, if it will put your mind at rest."

And Gold Teeth straight away set about putting her mind at rest. Every morning she took the trolley-bus to the Holy Rosary Church, to offer worship in her private way. Then she was emboldened to bring. a crucifix and pictures of the Virgin and the Messiah into the house. We were all somewhat worried by this, but Gold Teeth's religious nature was well known to us; her husband was a learned pundit and when all was said and done this was an emergency, a matter of life and death. So we could do nothing but look on. Incense and camphor and ghee burned now before the likeness of Krishna and Shiva as well as Mary and Jesus. Gold Teeth revealed an appetite for prayer that, equalled her husband's for food, and we marvelled at both, if only because neither prayer nor food seemed to be of any use to Ramprasad.

One evening, shortly after bell and gong and conchshell had announced that Gold Teeth's official devotions were almost over, a sudden chorus of lamentation burst over the house, and I was summoned to the room reserved for prayer. "Come quickly, something dreadful has happened to your aunt."

The prayer-room, still heavy with fumes of incense, presented an extraordinary sight. Before the Hindu as a sack of flour, a large amorphous mass. I had only seen Gold Teeth standing or sitting, and the aspect of Gold Teeth prostrate, so novel and so grotesque, was disturbing.

My grandmother, an alarmist by nature, down and put her ear to the upper half of the body on the. floor "I don't seem to hear her heart," she said.

We were somewhat terrified. We tried to lift Gold Teeth but she seemed as heavy as lead. Then, slowly, the body quivered. The flesh beneath the clothes rippled, then billowed, and the children in the room sharpened their shrieks. Instinctively we all stood back from the body and waited to see what was going to happen. Gold Teeth's hand began to pound the floor and at the same time she began to gurgle.

My grandmother had grasped the situation. "She's got the spirit," she said.

At the word 'spirit,' the children shrieked louder, and my grandmother slapped them into silence.

The gurgling resolved itself into words pronounced with a lingering ghastly quaver. "Hail Mary, Hara Ram," Gold Teeth said, "the snakes are after me. Everywhere snakes. Seven snakes. Rama! Rama! Full of grace. Seven spirits leaving cunupia by the four o'clock train for Port-of-Spain."

My grandmother and my mother listened eagerly, their faces lit up with pride. I was rather ashamed at the exhibition, and annoyed with Gold Teeth for putting me into a fright. I moved towards the door.

"Who is that going away? Who is the young *daffar,* unbeliever?" the voice asked abruptly.

"Come back quickly, boy," my grandmother whispered "Come back and ask her pardon."

I did as I was told.

"It is all right, son," Gold Teeth replied, "you don't know. You are young."

Then the spirit appeared to leave her. She wrenched herself up to a sitting position and wondered why we were all there. For the rest of that evening she behaved as if nothing had happened, and she pretended she didn't notice that everyone was looking at her and treating her with unusual respect.

"I have always said it, and I will say it again," my grandmother said, "that these Christians are very religious people. That is why I encouraged Gold Teeth to pray to Christian things.

Ramprasad died early next morning and we had the announcement on the radio after the local news at one o'clock. Ramprasad's death was the only one announced and so, although it came between commercials, it made some impression. We burned him that afternoon in Mucurapo Cementery.

As soon as we got back my grandmother said, "I have always said it, and I will say it again: I don't like these Christian things. Ramprasad would have got better if only you. Gold Teeth, had listened to me and not none running after these Christian things."

Gold Teeth sobbed her assent; and her body squabbered and shook as she confessed the whole story of her trafficking with Christianity. We listened in astonishment and shame. We didn't know that a good Hindu, and a member of our family, could sink so low. Gold Teeth beat her breast, and pulled ineffectually at her and begged to be forgiven. "It is all my she cried. "My own fault, Ma. I fell in a moment of weakness. Then I just couldn't stop."

My grandmother's shame turned to pity. "It's all right, Gold Teeth. Perhaps it was this you needed to bring you back to your senses."

That evening Gold Teeth ritually destroyed every reminder of Christianity in the house.

"You have only yourself to blame," my grandmother said, "if you have no children now to look after you."

EXERCISES

1. Outline the main events of the story.
2. Make a physical description of Gold Teeth.
3. Compare aunt Gold Teeth with her husband, Ramprasad.
4. Write a brief essay on Gold Teeth's believes. Look for parallel believes in our reality and give your opinion.

Triumph

C. L. R. James

Where people in England and America say slums, Trinidadians said barrack-yards. Probably the word is a relic of the days when England relied as much on garrisons of soldiers as on her fleet to protect her valuable sugar-producing colonies. Every street in Port-of-Spain proper could show you numerous examples of the type: a

narrow gateway leading into a fairly big yard, on either side of which run long, low buildings, consisting of anything from four to eighteen rooms, each about twelve feet square. In these lived the porters, the prostitutes, cartermen, washerwomen and domestic servants of the city.

In one corner of the yard is the hopelessly inadequate water-closet, unmistakable to the nose if not to the eye; sometimes there is a structure with the title of bathroom, a courtesy title, for he or she who would wash in it with decent privacy must cover the person as if bathing on the banks of the Thames; the kitchen happily presents no difficulty; never is there one and each barrack-yarder cooks before her door. In the center of the yard is a heap of stones. On these the halflaundered clothes are bleached before being finally spread out to dry on the wire lines which in every yard cross and recross each other in all directions. Not only to Minerva have These stones been dedicated. Time was when they would have had an honored shrine if local temple to Mars, for they were the major source of ammunition for the homicidal strife which so often flared up in barrack-yards.

No longer do the barrack-yarders live the picturesque life of twenty-five years ago. Then, practicing for the carnival, rival singers, Willie, Jean, and Freddie, porter, wharf-man or loafer in ordinary life, were for that season ennobled by some such striking sobriquet as The Duke of Normandy or the Lord Invincible, and carried with dignity homage such as young aspirants to literature had paid to Mr. Kipling or Mr. Shaw. They sang in competition from seven in the evening until far into the early morning, stimulated by the applause of their listeners and the excellence and copiousness of the rum; night after night the stickmen practiced their dangerous and skilful game, the 'pierrots', after elaborate preface of complimentary speech, belabored each other with riding whips; while around the performers the spectators pressed thick and good-humored until mimic warfare was transformed into real, and stones from 'the bleach' flew thick. But today that life is dead. All carnival practice must cease at ten o'clock. The policemen is to the stick-fighter and 'pierrot' as the sanitary inspector to mosquito larvae. At nights the streets are bright with electric light, the arm of the law is longer, its grip stronger. Gone are the old lawlessness and picturesqueness. Barrack-yard life has lost its savor. Luckily, prohibition in Trinidad is still but a word. And life, dull and drab as it is in comparison, can still offer its great moments.

On a Sunday morning in one of the rooms of the barrack in Abercromby Street sat Mamitz. Accustomed is squalid adversity to reign unchallenged in these quarters, vet in this room it was more than usually triumphant, sitting, as it were, high on a throne of regal state, so depressed was the woman and so depressing her surroundings.

The only representatives of the brighter side of life were three full-page pictures torn from illustrated periodicals photographs of Lindberg, Bernard Shaw and Sargent's 'Portrait of a Woman', and these owed their presence solely to the fact that no pawn-shop would have accepted them. They looked with unseeing eyes upon a upon the floor to form a bed. Mamitz sat on the door step talking to, or rather being talked to by her friend, Zelestine, who stood astride the concrete canal which ran in front of the door.

‘‘Somebody do you something,’’ said Celestine with conviction. ‘‘Nobody goin’ to change my mind from that. An’ if you do what I tell you, you will t’row off this black spirit that on you. A nice woman like you, and you carn’t get a man to keep you! You carn’t get nothing to do!’’

Mamitz said nothing. Had Celestine said the exact opposite Mamitz reply would have been the same. She was a black woman, too black to be pure negro, probably with some Madrasi East Indian blood in her, a suspicion which was made a certainty by the long thick plaits of her plentiful hair. She was shortish and fat, voluptuously developed, tremendously developed, and as a creole loves development in a woman more than any other extraneous allure, Mamitz (like the rest of her sex in all stations of life) saw to it when she moved that you missed none of her charms. But for the last nine weeks she had been -‘in derricks’, to use Celestine phrase. First of all the train conductor who used to keep her (seven dollars every Saturday night, out of which Mamitz usually, got three) had accused her of infidelity and beaten her. Neither the accusation nor the beating had worried Mamitz. To her and her type those were minor incidents of existence, from their knowledge of life and men, the kept woman ‘s inevitable fate. But after a temporary reconciliation he had -beaten her once more, very badly indeed, and left her. Even this was not an irremediable catastrophe. But thenceforward, Mamitz, from being the most prosperous woman in the yard, had sunk gradually to being the most destitute. Despite her very obvious attractions, no man took notice of her. She went out asking for washing or for work as a cook. No success. Luckily, in the days of her prosperity she had been generous to Celestine who now kept her from actual starvation. One stroke of luck she had had. The agent for the barracks had suddenly taken a fancy to her, and Mamitz had not found it difficult to persuade him to give her a chance with the rent. But that respite was over: he was pressing for the money, and Mamitz had neither money to pay nor hope of refuge when she was turned out. Celestine would have taken her in, but Celestine’s keeper was a policemen who visited her three or four nights a week, and to one in that position a fifteen-foot room does not offer much scope for housffig the homeless. Yet Celestine was grieved that she could do nothing to help Mamitz in her trouble which she attributed to the evil and supernatural machinations of Irene, their common enemy.

‘‘Take it from me, that woman do you something. Is she put Nathan against you. When was the quarrel again?’’

‘‘It was two or three days after Nathan gave me the first beating.’’

Nathan then had started on his evil courses before the quarrel with Irene took place, but Celestine brushed away objection.

‘‘She musta had it in her mind for you from before. You didn’t see how she fly out at you... As long as you livin’ here an’ I cookin’ I wouldn’t see you want a cup o’tea an’ a spoonful o’ rice. But I carn’t help with the rent... An you ain’t have nobody here.’’ -Mamitz shook her head. She was from Demerara. ‘‘If you could only cross the sea that will cut any spirit that on you... Look the animal!’’

Irene had come out of her room on the opposite side of the yard. She could not fail to see Celestine and Mamitz and she called loudly to a neighbor lower down the yard:

“Hey Jo-jo! What is the time? Ten o’clock a’ready? Le’me start to cook me chicken that me man buy for me, even if ‘e have a so’ foot...1 don’t know how long it will last before ‘e get drunk and kick me out o’here. Then I will have to go dawg’n round other o’people to see if I could pick up what they t’ row ‘way.

She fixed a box in front of her door, put bet coal pot on it, and started to attend to her chicken.

Sunday morning in barrack-yard is pot-parade. Of the sixteen tenants in the yard twelve had their pots out, and they lifted the meat with long iron forks to turn it, or threw water into the pot so that it steamed to the heavens and every woman could tell what her neighbor was cooking beef, or pork, or chicken. It didn’t matter what you cooked in- the week, if you didn’t cook at all. But to cook salt fish, or hog-head, or pig-tail on a Sunday morning was a disgrace. You put your pot inside your house and cooked it there.

Mamitz, fat, easy-going, and cowed by many days of semi-starvation, took little notice of Irene. But Celestine, a thin little whip of a brown-skinned woman, bubbled over with repressed rage.

“By Christ, if it wasn’t for one t’ing I’d rip every piece o’clothes she have on off’er.”

“Don’ bother wid’er. What is the use o’gettin’ yourself in trouble with Jimmy?”

Jimmy was the policeman. He was a steady, reliable man but he believed in discipline and when he spoke,

he spoke. He had made Celestine understand that she was not to fight: he wasn’t going to find himself mixed up in court as the keeper of any brawling woman. Celestine’s wrath, deprived of its natural outlet, burned none the less implacably.

“I tell you something, Mamitz, I goin’ to talk to the agent in the morning. I goin’ to tell’im to give you to the end of the month. Is only five days... I goin’ to give you a bath. Try and see if you could get some gully-root and so on this afternoon. .., Tonight I goin’ give you... An’ I will give you some prayers to read. God is stronger than the devil. We gon’ break this t’ing that on you. Cheer up. I goin’ send you a plate with you’ chicken. an’ rice as. soon as it finish. Meanwhile burn . you little candle, say you’ little prayers, console you’ little mind. I goin’ give you that bath tonight. You ain’ kill priest. “You ain’ cuss you” mudder. So you ain’ have cause to “fraid nothin’.”

Celestine would never trust herself to indulge in abuse whit Irene; the chances that it would end in a fight were too great. So she contented herself with casting a look the most murderous hate and scorn and, defiance at her enemy, and then went to her own pot which was calling for attention.

And yet three months before Mamitz, Celestine and Irene had been good friends. They shared their rum and their joys and troubles; and on Sunday afternoons they used to sit before Mamitz’s room singing hymns: “Abide With Me”, “Jesu, Lover of My Soul”, “On. ward! Christian Soldiers.” Celestine and Irene sang soprano and Irene sang well. Mamitz was naturally fine contralto and had a fine ear, while Nathan, who was a Barbadian and consequently knew vocal music, used to sing bass whenever he happened to be in. The singing would put him in a good mood and he would send off to buy more rum and everything would be-peaceful and happy. But Irene was a jealous woman, not only jealous of Mamitz steady three dollars a week and Celestine’s policeman with his twenty-eight dollars at the end of the month. She lived with a cab man, whose income though good enough was irregular. And he was a married man, with a wife and children to support. Irene had to do washing to help

out, while Mamitz and Celestine did nothing, merely cooked and. washed clothes for their men. So gradually a state dissatisfaction arose. Then one damp evening, Mamitz, passing near the bamboo pole which supported a clothes line overburdened with Irenes' clother, brought ii down with her broad, expansive person. The line burst, and nightgowns, sheets, pillow-cases, white suits and tablecloths fluttered to the mud. It had been a rainy week with little sun and already it would had been difficult to get clothes ready in time for Saturday morning: after this it was impossible. And hot and fiery was the altercation. Celestine who tried to make peace was drawn into the quarrel by Irene's comprehensive and incendiary invective.

"You comin' to put you' mouth in this. You think because you Jivin' with a policemen you is a magistrate. Mind you' business, woman, mm' you' business. The two o' all you don't do nothing for you' livin'. You only sittin' down an' eatin' out the men all you livin' wid. An' I wo'k so hard an' put out me clo's on the line. And this one like some cab-horse knock it down, and when I tell'er about it you comin' to meddle! Lei me tell you..."

So the wordy warfare raged, Celestine's policeman coming in for rough treatment at the tongue of Irene. Celestine, even though she was keeping herself in check, was a match for any barrack-yard woman Port-of-Spain could produce, but yet it was Mamitz who clinched the victory.

"Don't mind Celestine livin' with a policeman. You will be glad to get 'im for you'self. An' it better than livin' with any stinkin' so'—foot man."

For Irene's cab-man had a sore on his foot, which he had had for thirty years and would carry with him to the grave even if he lived for thirty years more. Syphilis, congenital and acquired, and his copious boozing would see to it that there was no recovery. Irene had stupidly hoped that nobody in the yard knew. But in Trinidad when His Excellency the Governor and his wife have a quarrel the street boys speak of it the day after, and Richard's bad foot had long been a secret topic of conversation in the yard. But it was Mamitz who had made it public property, and Irene hated Mamitz with a virulent hatred, and had promised to 'do' for her. Three days before, Nathan, the tram-conductor, had given Mamitz the first beating; but even at the time of the quarrel there was no hint of his swift defection and Mamitz's rapid descent to her present plight. So that Celestine, an errant but staunch religionist, was convinced that Mamitz's troubles were due to Irene's trafficking with the devil, if not personally, at least through one of his numerous agents who ply their profitable trade in every part of Port-of-Spain. Secure in her own immunity from anything that Irene might 'put on her', she daily regretted that she couldn't rip the woman to pieces. "Oh Jesus! If it wasn't for Jimmy I'd tear the wretch limb from limb!'. But the energy that she could not put into the destruction of Irene she spent in upholding Mamitz. The fiery Celestine had a real affection for the placid Mamitz, whose quiet ways were so soothing. But, more than this, she was determined not to see Mamitz go down. In the bitter antagonism she nursed against Irene, it would have been a galling defeat if Mamitz went to the wall. Further, her reputation as a woman who knew things and could put crooked people straight was at stake. Once she had seen to Jimmy's food an clothes and creature comforts she set herself to devise ways and means of supporting the weak, easily crushed Mamitz.

Celestine's policeman being on duty that night, she herself was off duty and free to attend to her own affairs. At midnight, with the necessary rites and ceremonies, Ave Marias and Pater Nosters, she bathed Mamitz in a large bath pan full of water prepared with gully root, fever grass, lime leaves, *guerin tout, herbe* a *femmes*, and other roots, leaves and grasses noted for their efficacy (when properly applied) against malign plots and influences. That was at twelve o'clock the Sunday night. On Monday morning at eight o'clock behold Popo des Vignes walking into the yard, with a little bag in his hand.

Popo is a creole of creoles. His name is des Vignes, but do not be misled into thinking that there flows in his veins blood of those aristocrats who found their way to Trinidad after '89. He is a Negro, and .his slave ancestor adopted the name from his master. Popo is nearing forty, medium-sized though large about the stomach, with a longish moustache. He is dressed in a spotless suit of white with tight-fitting shoes of a particulary yellowish brown (no heavy English brogues or fantastic American shoes for him). On his head he of smoking his cigarette and his jacket always flying wears his straw hat at a jaunty, angle, and his manner open (he wears no waistcoat) will give the impression that Popo is a man 'of pleasure rather than a man of work. An that impression would be right. He has never done a week's honest work in his life. He can get thirty dollars for you if you are in difficulties (at one hundred per cent); or three thousand dollars if you have a house or a cocoa estate. During the cocoa crop he lurks by the railway station with an unerring eye for peasant proprietors who have brought their :1 cocoa into town and are not quite certain where 'they will get the best price. This is his most profitable business, for he gets commission both from the proprietors and from the big buyers. But he is no fastidious as to how he makes money, and will do anything that does not blind him down, and leaves him free of manual or clerical labor. For the rest, after he has had a good meal at about half past seven in the evening he can ~drink rum until six o'clock the next morning without turning a hair; and in his own circle he has a wide reputation for his connoisseurship in matters of love and his catholicity of taste in women.

"Eh, Mr. des Vignes! How you?", said Celestine. The inhabitants of every barrack-yard, especially the women, knew Popo. "Keeping fine."

"Who you lookin' for roun' this way?"

"I come roun' to see you. How is Jimmy? When you getting married?"

"Married," said Celestine with fine scorn. "Me married a police! I wouldn't trust a police further than I could smell him. Police ain't have no regard. A police will lock up 'is mudder to get a stripe. An' besides I am want to married the man in the house all the time, you go'n be a perfect slave. I all right as I be."

"Anyway, I want you to buy a ring."

"Rings you sellin' in the bag? I sin' have no money, but le' me see them." Popo opened his bags and displayed the rings-beautiful gold of American workmanship, five dollars cash and six dollars on terms. They had cost an Assyrian merchant in Park Street ten dollars the dozen, an Popo was selling them on commission. He was doing good business, especially with those who paid two dollars down and gave promises of monthly or weekly installments. If later the merchant saw trouble to collect his installments or to get back his rings, that wouldn't

worry Popo much for buy that time he would have chucked up the job.
"So you wouldn't take one," said he, getting ready to put away his treasures again.
"Come roun' at the end o' the month. But don't shut them up yet. I have a friend I want to see them."
She went to the door.
"Mamitz!"she called. "Come see some rings Mr. des Vignes sellin'."
Mamitz came into Clestine's room, large, slow-moving, voluptuous, with her thick, smooth hair neatly plated and her black skin shining. She took Popo's fancy at once.
"But you have a nice friend, Celestine," said Popo.
"And she has a nice name too: Mamitz! Well, how many rings you are going to buy from me?"
Celestine answered quickly: "Mamitz can't buy no rings. The man was keepin' her, they fall out, an' she lookin' for a husband now."
"A nice woman like you can't stay long without a husband," said des Vignes. "Let me give you some luck... Choose a ring and I will make you a present."
Mamitz chose a ring and des Vignes put it on her finger himself.
"Excuse me, I comin' back now," said Celestine. "The Sanitary Inspector comin' just now, an' I want to clean up some rubbish before he come."
When she came back des Vignes was just going.
"As we say, Mamitz," he smiled. "So long, Celestine!"
He was hardly out of earshot when Celestine excitedly tackled Mamitz.
"What 'e tell you?"
"'E say that 'e comin' round here about ten o'clock tonight or little later... An' 'e give me this." In her palm reposed a red two-dollar note.
"You see what I tell you?" said Celestine triumphantly. "That bath. But don' stop. Read the prayers three times a day for nine days... Buy some stout, Mitz, to nourish up you' self... 'E aint' a man you could depend on. If you dress a broomstick in a petticoat 'e will run after it. But you goin' to get something out o' 'im for a few weeks or so... An' you see 'e is a nice man."
Mamitz smiled her lazy smile.
Celestine knew her man. For four weeks Popo was a more or less regular visitor to Mamitz's room. He paid the rent, he gave her money to get her bed and furniture out of the pawn-shop, and every Sunday morning Mamitz was stirring beef or pork or chicken in her pot. More than that, whenever Popo said he was coming to see her, he gave her money to prepare a meal so that sometimes late in the week, on a Thursday night, Mamitz's pot smelt as if it was Sunday morning. Celestine shared in the prosperity and they could afford to rake small notice of Irene who prophesied early disaster.
'All you flourishin' now. But wait little bit. I know that Popo des Vignes well. 'E don't knock round a 'roman no more than a month. Just now all that high Livin' goin' shut down an' I going see you Mamitz eatin' straw."

But Mamitz grew fatter than ever, and when she walked down the road in a fugi silk dress, tight fitting and short, which exposed her noble calves to the knee and accentuated the amplitudes of her person, she created a sensation among those men who took notice of her.

On Sunday morning she went into the market to buy beef. She was passing along the stalls going to the man she always brought from, when a butcher called out to her.

"Hey, Mamitz! Come this way."

Mamitz went. She didn't know the man, but she was of an acquiescent nature and she went to see what he wanted.

"But I don't know you", she said, after looking at him. "Where you know my name?"

"Aint't was you walkin' down Abercromby Street last Sunday in a white silk dress?"

"Yes," smiled Mamitz.

"Well, I know a nice woman when I see one. An' I find out where you livin' too. Ain't you livin' in the barrack just below Park Street?... Girl, you did look too sweet. You must'n, buy beef from nobody but me. How much you want? A pound? Look a nice piece. Don't worry to- pay me for that. You could pay me later. Whenever you want beef, come round this way."

Mamitz accepted and went. She didn't like the butcher too much, but he liked her. And a pound of beef was a pound of beef. Nicholas came to see her a day or two after and brought two pints of stout as a present. At first Mamitz didn't bother with him. But des Vignes was a formidable rival. Nicholas made Mamitz extravagant presents and promises. What helped him that Popo now began to slack off. A week would Mainitz would not see him. And no more money was forthcoming. So, after a while she accepted Nicholas, and had no cause to regret her bargain. Nicholas made a lot of money as a butcher. He not only paid the rent. but gayer her five dollars every Saturday night, and she could always get a dollar or two out of him during the week. Before long he loved her to distraction, and was given to violent fits of jealousy which, however, were always followed by repentance and lavish presents. Still Mamitz hankered after Popo. One day she wrote him a little note telling him that she was sorry she had to accept Nicholas but that she would be glad to see him any time he came round. She sent it to the Miranda Hotel where Popo took his meals. But no answer came and after a while Mamitz ceased actively to wish to see Popo. She was prosperous and pretty happy. She and Celestine were thicker than ever, and were on good terms with the neighbors in the yard. Only Irene they knew would do them mischief, and on mornings when Mamitz got up, on Celestine's advice, she looked care-f-ally before the door lest she should unwittingly set foot on any church-yard bones, deadly powders, or other satanic agencies guaranteed to make the victim go mad, steal or commit those breaches of good conduct which are punishable by law. But nothing untoward happened. As Celestine pointed out to Mamitz, the power of the bath held good,. "and as for me," concluded she, "no powers Irene can handle can touch my little finger."

Easter Sunday came. and with it came Popo. He 'walked into the yard early, about seven in the morning, and knocked up Mamitz who was still sleeping.

"I t'ought you had given me up for good," said Mamitz. "I write you and you didn't answer."

"I didn't want any butcher to stick me with his knife," laughed Popo. "Anyway, that is all right... I was playing baccarat last night and I made a good haul, so I come to spend Easter with you. Look! Here is five dollars. Buy salt fish and sweet oil and some greens and tomatoes. Buy some pints of rum. And some stout for yourself. I am coming back about nine o'clock. Today is Easter Saturday, Nicholas is going to be in the market the whole day. Don't be afraid for him."

Mamitz became excited. She gave the five dollars to Celestine and put her in charge of the catering, while she prepared for her lover. At about half past nine Popo returned. He, Mamitz and Celestine ate in Mamitz's room, and before they got up from the table, much more than two bottles of rum had disappeared. Then Celestine left them and went to the market to Nicholas. She told him that Mamitz wasn't feeling too well and had sent for beef and pork. The willing Nicholas handed over the stuff and sent a shilling for his lady love. He said he was rather short of money but at the end of the day he was going to make a big draw. Celestine cooked, and at about half past one, she, Popo and Mamitz had lunch. Celestine had to go out again and buy more rum. The other people in the yard didn't take much -notice of what was an everyday occurrence, were rather pleased in fact, for after lunch Celestine had a bottle and a half of rum to herself and ostentatiously invited all the neighbors to have drinks, all, of course, except Irene.

At about three o'clock Irene felt that she could bear it no longer and that -if she didn't take this chance it would be throwing away a gift from God. She put on her shoes, took her basket on her arm, and left the yard. It was the basket that aroused the observant Celestine suspicions for she knew that Irene had already doe all her shopping that morning. She sat thinking for a few seconds, then she knocked at Mamitz's door.

"Look here, Mamitz," she called. "It's time for Mr. des Vignes to go. Irene just gone out with a basket, I think she gone to the market to tell Nicholas."

"But he can't get away today," called Mamitz."

"You know how the man jealous and how 'e bad," persisted Celestine "Since nine o'clock Mr. des Vignes, is time for you to go."

Celestine's wise counsel prevailed. Popo dressed himself with his usual scrupulous neatness and cleared off.. 'The rum bottles were put out of the and Mamitz's room was made tidy. She and Celestine had hardly finished when Irene appeared with the basket empty.

"You see," said Celestine. "Now look out"

Sure enough, it wasn't five minutes after when a cab drew outside, and Nicholas still in his bloody butcher's apron, came hot foot into the yard. tie went-straight up to Mamitz and seized her by the throat.

"Where the hell is that man you had in the room with you —the room I payin' rent for?"

"Don't talk dam' foolishness, man, lemme go," said Mamitz.

"I will stick my knife into you as I will ;tick it in a cow. You had Popo des Vignes in that room for the whole day. Speak the truth, you dog."

"You' mother, you' sister, you' aunt, wife was the dog," shrieked Mamitz, quoting one of Celestine's most brilliant pieces of repartee.

"It's the wo'se when you meddle with them common low-island people," said Celestine. Nicholas was from St. Vincent, and Negroes from St. Vincent, Grenada and the smaller West Indian islands are looked down upon by the Trinidad Negro as low-island people.

You" shut you' blasted mouth and don' meddle with what don' concern you. Is you encouragin' the woman. I want the truth, or by Christ I'll make beef o' one o' you here today."

"Look here man, lemme tell you something."

Mamitz, drunk with love and run and inspired by Celestine, was showing spirit. "That woman over there come and tell you that Mr. des Vignes was in this room. The man come in the yard, 'e come to Celestine to sell 'er a ring she did promise to buy from 'im long time. Look in me room," she flung the half doors wide, "you see any signs of any man in there? Me bed look as if any man been lyin' down on it? But I had no right to meddle with a low brute like you. You been botherin' me long enough. Go live with Irene. Go share she wid the so' foot cab-man. Is woman like she men like you want.' I sorry the day I ever see you. An' I hope I never see you' face again."

She stopped, panting, and Celestine, who had only been waiting for an opening, took up the tale.

"But look at the man! The man leave 'is work this bright Easter Saturday because this nasty woman go and tell 'im that Mr. des Vignes in the room with Mamitz! Next thing you go'n say that 'e livin' with me. But man, I never see such ass as you. Bertha, Olive, Josephine," she appealed -to some of the other inhabitants of the yard. "Ain't all you been here the whole day an' see Mr. des Vignes come here after breakfast? I pay 'im two dollars I had for 'im. t sen' and buy a pint o' rum an' I call Mamitz for the three o' we to fire a little liquor for the Easter. Next thing I see is this one goin' out —to carry news: and now this Vincelonian fool leave 'e work— But, man, you drunk."

Bertha, Olive and Josephine, who had shared in the rum, confirmed Celestine's statement. Irene had been sitting at the door of her room cleaning fish and pretending to take no notice, but at this she jumped up.

"Bertha, you ought to be ashame' o' you' self. For a drink o'rum you lyin' like that? Don't believe them, Nicholas. Whole day—"

But here occurred an unlooked for interruption. The cabby, hearing the altercation and not wishing to lose time on a day like Easter Saturday, had put a little boy in charge of his horse and had been listening for a 'minute or two. He now approached and held Nicholas by the arm.

"Boss," he said "don't listen to that woman. She livin' with Richard the cab-man an' 'e tell me that all women does lie but'e never hear or know none that does lie like she—"

There was a burst of laughter.

"Come go, boss," said the cabby, pulling the hot, unwilling Nicholas by the arm.

"I have to go back to my work, but I am comin' back to night and I am goin' to lick the stuffin' out o' you.

‘‘An’ my man is a policeman,’’ said Celestine. ‘‘An’ e’ goin’ to be here tonight. An’ if you touch this woman, you spend you’ Easter in the lock-up sure as my name is Celestine an’ you are a good-for-nothing Vincelonian fool of a butcher.’’

Nicholas drove away, leaving Celestine mistress of the field, but for the rest of the afternoon Mamitz was depressed. She was tired out with the day’s excitement, and after all Nicholas had good money. On a night like this he would be drawing quite a lot of money and now it seemed that she was in danger of losing him. She knew how he hated Popo. She liked Popo more than Nicholas, much’ more, but after all people had to live.

Celestine, however, was undaunted. ‘‘Don’t mm’ what ‘e say. ‘E comin’ back. ‘E comin’ back to beg. When you see a man love a woman like he love you, she could treat ‘mi how she like, ‘e still comin’ back like a dog to eat ‘is vomit. But you listen to me, Mamitz. When ‘e come back cuss ‘im a little bit, Guss ‘im plenty. Make ‘im see that you ain’t going to stand too nonsense from ‘im.’’

Mamitz smiled in her sleepy way, but she was not hopeful. And all the rest of the afternoon Irene worried her by singing ballads appropriate to the occasion.

Though you belong to somebody else
Tonight you belong to me.
Come, come, to me Thora,
Come once again and be...
How can I live without you!
How can I let you go!

Her voice soared shrill over the babel of clattering tongues in the yard. And as the voice rose so Mamitz’s heart sank.

‘‘Don’ forget,’’ were Celestine’s last words before the parted for the night. ‘‘If ‘e come back tonight, don’t open the door for ‘im straight. Le’ ‘im knock a little bit.’’

‘‘All right,’’ said Mamitz dully. She was thinking that she had only about thirty-six cents left over from the money des Vignes had given her. Not another cent.

But Celestine was right. The enraged Nicholas went back to work and cut beef and sawed bones with a ferocity that astonished his fellow-butchers and purchasers. But at seven o’clock, with his pocket full of money and nothing to do, he felt miserable. He had made is plans for the Easter: Saturday night he had decided to spend with Mamitz, and all Easter Sunday after he knocked off at nine in the morning. Easter Monday he had for himself and he had been thinking of taking Mamitz, Celestine and Jimmy down to Careenage in a taxi to bathe. He mooned about the streets for a time. He took two or three drinks, but he didn’t feel in the mood for running a spree and getting drunk. He was tired from the strain of the day and he felt for the restful company of a woman, especially the woman he loved —the good— looking, fat, agreeable Mamitz. At about half past ten he found his resolution never to look at her again wavering.

‘‘Damn it,’’ he said to himself. ‘‘That woman Irene is a liar. She see how I am treatin’ Mamitz well and she want to break up the livin’.’’

He fought the question out with himself.

"But the woman couldn't lie like that. The man must been there."

He was undecided. He went over the arguments for and- against, the testimony of Bertha and Olive, the testimony of the cab-man. His reason inclined him to believe that Mamitz had been entertaining des Vignes for the whole day in the room he was paying for, while he, the fool, was working hard for money to carry to her. But-stronger powers than reason were fighting for Mamitz, and eleven o'clock found him in the yard knocking at the door.

"Mamitz! Mamitz! Open. Is me —Nicholas." There was a slight pause. Then he heard Mamitz's voice sounding a little strange.

"What the devil you want!"

"I sorry for what happen today. Is that meddlin' woman, Irene. She come to the market an' she lie on you. Open the door, Mamitz... I have something here for you."

Celestine next door was listening closely, pleased that Mamitz was proving herself so obedient to instruction.

"Man, I 'fraid you. You have a knife out there and you come here to cut me up as Gorrie cut up Eva."

"I have no knife. I brought some money for you."

"I don't believe you. You want to treat me as if I a cow."

"I tell you I have no knife.., open the door, woman, or I'll break it in. You can't treat me like that."

Nicholas's temper was getting the better of him, he hadn't expected this.

The watchful Celestine here interfered.

"Open the door for the man, Mamitz. 'E say 'e beg pardon and, after all, is he payin' the rent."

So Mamitz very willingly opened the door and Nicholas went in. He left early the next morning to go to work but he promised Mamitz to be back by half past nine.

Irene, about her daily business in the yard, gathered that Nicholas had come 'dawgin' back to Mamitz the night before and Mamitz was drivin' him dog and lance, but Celestine beg for him and Mamitz let 'im come in Mamitz, she noticed, got up that morning much later than usual. In fact Celestine (who was always up at five o'clock) knocked her up and went into the room before she came out. It was not long before Irene. knew that something was afoot. First of all, Mamitz never opened her door as usual, but slipped in and out dosing it after her. Neither she nor Celestine went to the market. They sent out Bertha's little sister who returned with beef and pork and mutton, each piece of which Mamitz held up high in the air and commented upon. Then Bertha's sister went out again and returned with a new coal pot. Irene could guess where it came from—some little store, in Charlotte Street probably, whose owner was not afraid to run the risk of selling on Sundays. In and out the yard went Bertha's little sister, and going and coming she clutched something, tightly in her hand. Irene, her senses tuned by resentment and hate to their highest pitch, could not make out what was happening. Meanwhile Celestine was inside Mamitz's room, and Mamitz, outside, had started to cook in three coal-pots.

Every minute or so Mamitz would poke her head inside the room and talk to Celestine. Irene could see Mamitz shaking her fat self with laughter while she could hear Celestine's shrill cackle inside. Then Bertha's sister returned for the last time and after going into the room to deliver whatever her message was, came and stood a few yards away, opposite Mamitz's door, expectantly waiting. Think as she would, Irene could form no idea as to what was going on inside.

When Mamitz went and stood near Bertha's sister; and a second after, the two halves of the door were flung open and Irene saw Celestine standing in the door way with arms akimbo. But there was nothing to —and then she saw. Both halves of the door were plastered with notes, green five-dollar notes, red two-dollar notes, and blue-dollar notes, with a pin at a corner of each to keep it firm. The pin-heads were shining in the sun. Irene was so flabbergasted that for a second or two she stood with her mouth open. Money Nicholas had given Mamitz. Nicholas had come back and begged pardon; and given her all this money. The fool! So that was what Celestine has been doing inside there all the time. Bertha's sister had been running up. and down to get some of the notes changed. There must be about forty, no, fifty dollars spread out of the door . Mamitz and Bertha's sister were sinking with laughter and the joke was spreading, for other people in the yard were going up to see what the disturbance was about.' What a blind fool that Nicholas was! Tears of rage and mortification rushed to Irene's eyes.

"Hey, Irene, come see a picture Nicholas bring for Mamitz last night! An' tomorrow we gojn' to Careenage. We don't want you, but we will carry you' husband, the seawater will do 'is so' —foot good." Celestine's voice rang across the yard.

Bertha, Josephine, the fat Mamitz and the rest were laughing so that they could hardly hold themselves up. Irene could find neither spirit nor voice to reply. She trembled so that her hands shook. The china bowl in which she was washing rice slipped from her fingers and broke into a dozen pieces while the rice streamed into the dirty water of the canal.

EXERCISES

1. What is sad? What is funny?
2. What is the most interesting character? Give reasons.
3. Though the position of some characters may be questionable by traditional moral standards, we cannot but empathize with them thanks to the treatment James gives them. Why do you think the writer does so?
4. Find an example of an African derived religious practice in the story. Do you know of any similar practice here? Do you make practices of this sort?
5. Triumph over whom? Over what?
6. Despite their bleak condition, the characters seem unaware of it, or at least no one thinks of a possible subversion of reality. Why do you think this happens?

7. Some of the values that you may find regrettable are sustained by the community as ethically legitimate. Quote examples and list elements for a criticism and elements for a justification of their behavior.
8. Establish parallelisms and differences with our reality. Write briefly about the topic. Think of enduring, culturally rooted, female-male dependency, of how much of the ‘‘cooking well on Sunday’’ factor there is in many people’s passion for gadgets or show ups, and of prostitution.

American Short Stories

Rip Van Winkle

By Washington Irving (1783-1850)

By Woden, God of Saxons, From whence comes Wensday, that is Wodensday,
Truth is a thing that ever I will keep
Unto thylke day in which I creep into
My sepulchre——

CARTWRIGHT.

Prologue

[The following Tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province, and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his favorite topics; whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore, so invaluable to true history. Whenever, therefore, he happened upon a genuine Dutch family, snugly shut up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black-letter, and studied it with the zeal of a book-worm.

The result of all these researches was a history of the province during the reign of the Dutch governors, which he published some years since. There have been various opinions as to the literary character of his work, and, to tell the truth, it is not a whit better than it should be. Its chief merit is its scrupulous accuracy, which indeed was a little questioned on its first appearance, but has since been completely established; and it is now admitted into all historical collections, as a book of unquestionable authority.

The old gentleman died shortly after the publication of his work, and now that he is dead and gone, it cannot do much harm to his memory to say that his time might have been better employed in weightier labors. He, however, was apt to ride his hobby his own way; and though it did now and then kick up the dust a little in the eyes of his neighbors, and grieve the spirit of some friends, for whom he felt the truest deference and affection; yet his errors and follies are remembered "more in sorrow than in anger," and it begins to be suspected, that he never intended to injure or offend. But however his memory may be appreciated by critics, it is still held dear by many folks, whose good opinion is well worth having; particularly by certain biscuit-bakers, who have gone so far

as to imprint his likeness on their new-year cakes; and have thus given him a chance for immortality, almost equal to the being stamped on a Waterloo Medal, or a Queen Anne's Farthing.]

WHOEVER has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky, but, sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant, (may he rest in peace!) and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weather-cocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple good-natured fellow of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor, and an obedient hen-pecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation; and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual, with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and

shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone-fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; every thing about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some out-door work to do; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighborhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as

courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broom-stick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village; which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sundial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfuly in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favorite sport of squirrel shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air: "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!"—at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighborhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist—several pair of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and mutually relieving one another, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had labored on in silence;

for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins[2]. They were dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar: one had a large beard, broad face, and small piggish eyes: the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colors. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlor of Dominie Van Shaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavor of excellent Hollands. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the woe-begone party at ninepins—the flagon—"Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!" thought Rip—"what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle!"

[2] A bowling game.

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrusted with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysterers of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip; "and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen: he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grapevines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high impenetrable wall over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done? The morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast their eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same, when to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long!

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognized for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered; it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—every thing was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which

he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been—Rip was sorely perplexed—"That flagon last night," thought he, "has addled my poor head sadly!"

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cur indeed—"My very dog," sighed poor Rip, "has forgotten me!"

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, "the Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco-smoke instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens—elections—members of congress—liberty—Bunker's Hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired "on which side he voted?" Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, "Whether he was Federal or Democrat?" Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made

his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, "what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?"—"Alas! gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the by-standers—"A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit, what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they?—name them."

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the church-yard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone too."

"Where's Brom Dutcher?"

"Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point—others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony's Nose. I don't know—he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?"

"He went off to the wars too, was a great militia general, and is now in congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war—congress—Stony Point;—he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three, "Oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and every thing's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!"

The by-standers began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool; the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice:

"Where's your mother?"

"Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New-England peddler."

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he—"Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now!—Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor—Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks: and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon; being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon

the river, and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at nine-pins in a hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her; she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm; but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favor.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door, and was reverenced as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of his Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood, but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunderstorm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of nine-pins; and it is a common wish of all hen-pecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

Note

The foregoing Tale, one would suspect, had been suggested to Mr. Knickerbocker by a little German superstition about the Emperor Frederick der Rothbart, and the Kyffhäuser mountain: the subjoined note, however, which he had appended to the tale, shows that it is an absolute fact, narrated with his usual fidelity:

"The story of Rip Van Winkle may seem incredible to many, but nevertheless I give it my full belief, for I know the vicinity of our old Dutch settlements to have been very subject to marvellous events and appearances. Indeed, I have heard many stranger stories than this, in the villages along the Hudson; all of which were too well authenticated to admit of a doubt. I have even talked with Rip Van Winkle myself who, when last I saw him, was a very venerable old man, and so perfectly rational and consistent on every other point, that I think no conscientious person could refuse to take this into the bargain; nay, I have seen a certificate on the subject taken before a country justice and signed with a cross, in the justice's own handwriting. The story, therefore, is beyond the possibility of doubt.

D.K."

Postscript

The following are travelling notes from a memorandum-book of Mr. Knickerbocker:

The Kaatsberg, or Catskill mountains, have always been a region full of fable. The Indians considered them the abode of spirits, who influenced the weather, spreading sunshine or clouds over the landscape, and sending good or bad hunting seasons. They were ruled by an old squaw spirit, said to be their mother. She dwelt on the highest peak of the Catskills, and had charge of the doors of day and night to open and shut them at the proper hour. She hung up the new moons in the skies, and cut up the old ones into stars. In times of drought, if properly propitiated, she would spin light summer clouds out of cobwebs and morning dew, and send them off from the crest of the mountain, flake after flake, like flakes of carded cotton, to float in the air; until, dissolved by the heat of the sun, they would fall in gentle showers, causing the grass to spring, the fruits to ripen, and the corn to grow an inch an hour. If displeased, however, she would brew up clouds black as ink, sitting in the midst of them like a bottle-bellied spider in the midst of its web; and when these clouds broke, woe betide the valleys!

In old times, say the Indian traditions, there was a kind of Manitou or Spirit, who kept about the wildest recesses of the Catskill Mountains, and took a mischievous pleasure in wreaking all kinds of evils and vexations upon the red men. Sometimes he would assume the form of a bear, a panther, or a deer, lead the bewildered hunter a weary chase through tangled forests and among ragged rocks; and then spring off with a loud ho! ho! leaving him aghast on the brink of a beetling precipice or raging torrent.

The favorite abode of this Manitou is still shown. It is a great rock or cliff on the loneliest part of the mountains, and, from the flowering vines which clamber about it, and the wild flowers which abound in its neighborhood, is known by the name of the Garden Rock. Near the foot of it is a small lake, the haunt of the solitary bittern, with

water-snakes basking in the sun on the leaves of the pond-lilies which lie on the surface. This place was held in great awe by the Indians, insomuch that the boldest hunter would not pursue his game within its precincts. Once upon a time, however, a hunter who had lost his way, penetrated to the garden rock, where he beheld a number of gourds placed in the crotches of trees. One of these he seized and made off with it, but in the hurry of his retreat he let it fall among the rocks, when a great stream gushed forth, which washed him away and swept him down precipices, where he was dashed to pieces, and the stream made its way to the Hudson, and continues to flow to the present day; being the identical stream known by the name of the Kaaters-kill.

EXERCISES

1. How does Washington Irving give purported authenticity to the story he will tell?
2. How is Rip Van Winkle described? What was good and what was wrong in this character? Do you know anybody like him?
3. How were his farm and his family?
4. Make a full account of Mrs. Van Winkle. Do you know anybody like her? If you do, write a little about that person.
5. Translate the paragraph that makes a depiction of Rip Van Winkle's dog.
6. Rip Van Winkle frequently escaped to the gathering of idlers in front of the village's inn. Mention some characteristics of that singular local institution.
7. Rip Van Winkle underwent a strange adventure in the mountains. Make an account of the chief events that may back up a retelling of the story.
8. Mr. Van Winkle slept throughout the Revolutionary period and woke up in the USA. What shocking experiences did such experience bring him? What was comforting to him despite the losses he had suffered?
9. What is most funny? What is saddest?
10. If you could, what would you change in the story? Why?

Feathertop

A MORALIZING LEGEND

By Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

"DICKON," cried Mother Rigby, "a coal for my pipe!"

The pipe was in the old dame's mouth when she said these words. She had thrust it there after filling it with tobacco, but without stooping to light it at the hearth, where indeed there was no appearance of a fire having been kindled that morning. Forthwith, however, as soon as the order was given, there was an intense red glow out of the bowl of the pipe, and a whiff of smoke from Mother Rigby's lips. Whence the coal came, and how brought thither by an invisible hand, I have never been able to discover.

"Good!" quoth Mother Rigby, with a nod of her head. "Thank ye, Dickon! And now for making this scarecrow. Be within call, Dickon, in case I need you again."

The good woman had risen thus early (for as yet it was scarcely sunrise) in order to set about making a scarecrow, which she intended to put in the middle of her corn-patch. It was now the latter week of May, and the crows and blackbirds had already discovered the little, green, rolled-up leaf of the Indian corn just peeping out of the soil. She was determined, therefore, to contrive as lifelike a scarecrow as ever was seen, and to finish it immediately, from top to toe, so that it should begin its sentinel's duty that very morning. Now Mother Rigby (as everybody must have heard) was one of the most cunning and potent witches in New England, and might, with very little trouble, have made a scarecrow ugly enough to frighten the minister himself. But on this occasion, as she had awakened in an uncommonly pleasant humor, and was further dulcified by her pipe of tobacco, she resolved to produce something fine, beautiful, and splendid, rather than hideous and horrible.

"I don't want to set up a hobgoblin in my own corn-patch, and almost at my own door-step," said Mother Rigby to herself, puffing out a whiff of smoke; "I could do it if I pleased, but I'm tired of doing marvellous things, and so I'll keep within the bounds of every-day business just for variety's sake. Besides, there is no use in scaring the little children for a mile roundabout, though 'tis true I'm a witch."

It was settled, therefore, in her own mind, that the scarecrow should represent a fine gentleman of the period, so far as the materials at hand would allow. Perhaps it may be as well to enumerate the chief of the articles that went to the composition of this figure.

The most important item of all, probably, although it made so little show, was a certain broomstick, on which Mother Rigby had taken many an airy gallop at midnight, and which now served the scarecrow by way of a spinal column, or, as the unlearned phrase it, a backbone. One of its arms was a disabled flail which used to be wielded by Goodman Rigby, before his spouse worried him out of this troublesome world; the other, if I mistake not, was composed of the pudding stick and a broken rung of a chair, tied loosely together at the elbow. As for its legs, the right was a hoe-handle, and the left, an undistinguished and miscellaneous stick from the wood-pile.

Its lungs, stomach, and other affairs of that kind were nothing better than a meal-bag stuffed with straw. Thus, we have made out the skeleton and entire corporosity of the scarecrow, with the exception of its head; and this was admirably supplied by a somewhat withered and shrivelled pumpkin, in which Mother Rigby cut two holes for the eyes, and a slit for the mouth, leaving a bluish-colored knob, in the middle, to pass for a nose. It was really quite a respectable face.

"I've seen worse ones on human shoulders, at any rate," said Mother Rigby. "And many a fine gentleman has a pumpkin-head, as well as my scarecrow!"

But the clothes, in this case, were to be the making of the man. So the good old woman took down from a peg an ancient plum-colored coat of London make, and with relics of embroidery on its seams, cuffs, pocket-flaps, and button-holes, but lamentably worn and faded, patched at the elbows, tattered at the skirts, and threadbare all over. On the left breast was a round hole, whence either a star of nobility had been rent away, or else the hot heart of some former wearer had scorched it through and through. The neighbors said that this rich garment belonged to the Black Man's[3] wardrobe, and that he kept it at Mother Rigby's cottage for the convenience of slipping it on whenever he wished to make a grand appearance at the governor's table. To match the coat there was a velvet waistcoat of very ample size, and formerly embroidered with foliage that had been as brightly golden as the maple-leaves in October, but which had now quite vanished out of the substance of the velvet. Next came a pair of scarlet breeches, once worn by the French governor of Louisbourg[4], and the knees of which had touched the lower step of the throne of Louis le Grand[5]. The Frenchman had given these small-clothes to an Indian powwow[6], who parted with them to the old witch for a gill of strong-waters[7], at one of their dances in the forest. Furthermore, Mother Rigby produced a pair of silk stockings and put them on the figure's legs, where they showed as unsubstantial as a dream, with the wooden reality of the two sticks making itself miserably apparent through the holes. Lastly, she put her dead husband's wig on the bare scalp of the pumpkin, and surmounted the whole with a dusty three-cornered hat, in which was stuck the longest tail-feather of a rooster.

Then the old dame stood the figure up in a corner of her cottage and chuckled to behold its yellow semblance of a visage, with its knobby little nose thrust into the air. It had a strangely self-satisfied aspect, and seemed to say—"Come look at me!"

"And you are well worth looking at—that's a fact!" quoth Mother Rigby, in admiration at her own handiwork. "I've made many a puppet, since I've been a witch, but methinks this is the finest of them all. 'Tis almost too good for a scarecrow. And, by the by, I'll just fill a fresh pipe of tobacco and then take him out to the corn-patch."

While filling her pipe, the old woman continued to gaze with almost motherly affection at the figure in the corner. To say the truth—whether it were chance, or skill, or downright witchcraft—there was something wonderfully

[3] *Black Man*: A folk name for the devil.
[4] *Louisburgh*: A seaport town of Nova Scotia, formerly strongly fortified by France.
[5] *Louis Le Grand*: Louis the Great (Louis XIV), King of France from 1643 to 1715.
[6] *Powwow*: Here Native American priest, or medicine man. Often it means a conference with other Native Americans.
[7] *Strong-Waters*: An archaic term for whisky or brandy.

human in this ridiculous shape, bedizened[8] with its tattered finery; and as for the countenance, it appeared to shrivel its yellow surface into a grin—a funny kind of expression betwixt scorn and merriment, as if it understood itself to be a jest at mankind. The more Mother Rigby looked, the better she was pleased.

"Dickon," cried she sharply, "another coal for my pipe!"

Hardly had she spoken, than, just as before, there was a red glowing coal on the top of the tobacco. She drew in a long whiff and puffed it forth again into the bar of morning sunshine, which struggled through the one dusty pane of her cottage window. Mother Rigby always liked to flavor her pipe with a coal of fire from the particular chimney-corner, whence this had been brought. But where that chimney-corner might be, or who brought the coal from it—further than that the invisible messenger seemed to respond to the name of Dickon—I cannot tell.

"That puppet yonder," thought Mother Rigby, still with her eyes fixed on the scarecrow, "is too good a piece of work to stand all summer in a corn-patch, frightening away the crows and blackbirds. He's capable of better things. Why, I've danced with a worse one, when partners happened to be scarce, at our witch meetings in the forest! What if I should let him take his chance among the other men of straw and empty fellows who go bustling about the world?"

The old witch took three or four more whiffs of her pipe, and smiled.

"He'll meet plenty of his brethren, at every street-corner!" continued she. "Well; I didn't mean to dabble in witchcraft to-day, further than the lighting of my pipe; but a witch I am, and a witch I'm likely to be, and there's no use trying to shirk it. I'll make a man of my scarecrow, were it only for the joke's sake!"

While muttering these words, Mother Rigby took the pipe from her own mouth and thrust it into the crevice which represented the same feature in the pumpkin-visage of the scarecrow.

"Puff, darling, puff!" said she. "Puff away, my fine fellow! your life depends on it!"

This was a strange exhortation, undoubtedly, to be addressed to a mere thing of sticks, straw, and old clothes, with nothing better than a shrivelled pumpkin for a head; as we know to have been the scarecrow's case. Nevertheless, as we must carefully hold in remembrance, Mother Rigby was a witch of singular power and dexterity; and, keeping this fact duly before our minds, we shall see nothing beyond credibility in the remarkable incidents of our story. Indeed, the great difficulty will be at once got over, if we can only bring ourselves to believe that, as soon as the old dame bade him puff, there came a whiff of smoke from the scarecrow's mouth. It was the very feeblest of whiffs, to be sure; but it was followed by another and another, each more decided than the preceding one.

"Puff away, my pet! puff away, my pretty one!" Mother Rigby kept repeating, with her pleasantest smile. "It is the breath of life to ye; and that you may take my word for!"

Beyond all question the pipe was bewitched. There must have been a spell either in the tobacco or in the fiercely glowing coal that so mysteriously burned on top of it, or in the pungently aromatic smoke which exhaled from the kindled weed. The figure, after a few doubtful attempts, at length blew forth a volley of smoke extending all the

[8] *Bedizened*: Bedecked; adorned tawdrily.

way from the obscure corner into the bar of sunshine. There it eddied and melted away among the motes of dust. It seemed a convulsive effort; for the two or three next whiffs were fainter, although the coal still glowed and threw a gleam over the scarecrow's visage. The old witch clapped her skinny hands together, and smiled encouragingly upon her handiwork. She saw that the charm worked well. The shriveled, yellow face, which heretofore had been no face at all, had already a thin, fantastic haze, as it were of human likeness, shifting to and fro across it; sometimes vanishing entirely, but growing more perceptible than ever, with the next whiff from the pipe. The whole figure, in like manner, assumed a show of life, such as we impart to ill-defined shapes among the clouds, and half-deceive ourselves with the pastime of our own fancy.

If we must needs pry closely into the matter, it may be doubted whether there was any real change, after all, in the sordid, worn-out, worthless, and ill-joined substance of the scarecrow; but merely a spectral illusion, and a cunning effect of light and shade, so colored and contrived as to delude the eyes of most men. The miracles of witchcraft seem always to have had a very shallow subtlety; and, at least, if the above explanation do not hit the truth of the process, I can suggest no better.

"Well puffed, my pretty lad!" still cried old Mother Rigby. "Come, another good stout whiff, and let it be with might and main! Puff for thy life, I tell thee! Puff out of the very bottom of thy heart; if any heart thou hast, or any bottom to it! Well done, again! Thou didst suck in that mouthfull, as if for the pure love of it."

And then the witch beckoned to the scarecrow, throwing so much magnetic potency into her gesture, that it seemed as if it must inevitably be obeyed, like the mystic call of the loadstone[9], when it summons the iron.

"Why lurkest thou in the corner, lazy one?" said she. "Step forth! Thou hast the world before thee!"

Upon my word, if the legend were not one which I heard on my grandmother's knee, and which had established its place among things credible before my childish judgment could analyze its probability, I question whether I should have the face to tell it now!

—In obedience to Mother Rigby's word, and extending its arm as if to reach her outstretched hand, the figure made a step forward—a kind of hitch and jerk, however, rather than a step—then tottered and almost lost its balance. What could the witch expect? It was nothing, after all, but a scarecrow stuck upon two sticks. But the strong-willed old beldam[10] scowled, and beckoned, and flung the energy of her purpose so forcibly at this poor combination of rotten wood, and musty straw, and ragged garments, that it was compelled to show itself a man, in spite of the reality of things. So it stepped into the bar of sunshine. There it stood—poor devil of a contrivance that it was!—with only the thinnest vesture of human similitude about it, through which was evident the stiff, ricketty, incongruous, faded, tattered, good-for-nothing patchwork of its substance, ready to sink in a heap upon the floor, as conscious of its own unworthiness to be erect. Shall I confess the truth? At its present point of vivification, the scarecrow reminds me of some of the lukewarm and abortive characters, composed of

[9] *Loadstone*: An iron ore having the qualities of a magnet.
[10] *Beldam*: An ugly old woman or hag. A commoner spelling is "Beldame."

heterogeneous materials, used for the thousandth time, and never worth using, with which romance-writers (and myself, no doubt, among the rest) have so over-peopled the world of fiction.

But the fierce old hag began to get angry and show a glimpse of her diabolic nature, (like a snake's head, peeping with a hiss out of her bosom,) at this pusillanimous behavior of the thing, which she had taken the trouble to put together.

"Puff away, wretch!" cried she, wrathfully. "Puff, puff, puff, thou thing of straw and emptiness!—thou rag or two!—thou meal bag!—thou pumpkin-head!—thou nothing!—where shall I find a name vile enough to call thee by? Puff, I say, and suck in thy fantastic life along with the smoke; else I snatch the pipe from thy mouth, and hurl thee where that red coal came from!"

Thus threatened, the unhappy scarecrow had nothing for it but to puff away for dear life. As need was, therefore, it applied itself lustily to the pipe, and sent forth such abundant vollies of tobacco-smoke that the small cottage-kitchen became all vaporous. The one sunbeam struggled mistily through, and could but imperfectly define the image of the cracked and dusty window-pane on the opposite wall. Mother Rigby, meanwhile, with one brown arm akimbo and the other stretched towards the figure, loomed grimly amid the obscurity, with such port and expression as when she was wont to heave a ponderous nightmare on her victims, and stand at the bedside to enjoy their agony. In fear and trembling did this poor scarecrow puff. But its efforts, it must be acknowledged, served an excellent purpose; for, with each successive whiff, the figure lost more and more of its dizzy and perplexing tenuity[11], and seemed to take denser substance. Its very garments, moreover, partook of the magical change, and shone with the gloss of novelty, and glistened with the skillfully embroidered gold that had long ago been rent away. And, half-revealed among the smoke, a yellow visage bent its lusterless eyes on Mother Rigby.

At last, the old witch clinched her fist and shook it at the figure. Not that she was positively angry, but merely acting on the principle—perhaps untrue, or not the only truth, though as high a one as Mother Rigby could be expected to attain—that feeble and torpid[12] natures, being incapable of better inspiration, must be stirred up by fear. But here was the crisis. Should she fail in what she now sought to effect, it was her ruthless purpose to scatter the miserable simulacra into its original elements.

"Thou hast a man's aspect," said she, sternly. "Have also the echo and mockery of a voice! I bid thee speak!"

The scarecrow gasped, struggled, and at length emitted a murmur, which was so incorporated with its smoky breath that you could scarcely tell whether it were indeed a voice, or only a whiff of tobacco. Some narrators of this legend hold the opinion, that Mother Rigby's conjurations, and the fierceness of her will had compelled a familiar spirit into the figure, and that the voice was his.

"Mother," mumbled the poor, stifled voice, "be not so awful with me! I would fain speak; but being without wits, what can I say?"

[11] *Tenuity*: Thinness, flimsiness.
[12] *Torpid*: Sluggish.

“Thou canst speak, darling, canst thou?” cried Mother Rigby, relaxing her grim countenance into a smile. “And what shalt thou say, quoth-a![13] Say, indeed! Art thou of the brotherhood of the empty skull, and demandest of me what thou shalt say? Thou shalt say a thousand things, and saying them a thousand times over, thou shalt still have said nothing! Be not afraid, I tell thee! When thou comest into the world (whither I purpose sending thee, forthwith) thou shalt not lack the wherewithal to talk. Talk! Why, thou shalt babble like a mill-stream, if thou wilt. Thou hast brains enough for that, I trow!”

“At your service, mother,” responded the figure.

“And that was well said, my pretty one,” answered Mother Rigby. “Then thou speakest like thyself, and meant nothing. Thou shalt have a hundred such set phrases, and five hundred to the boot of them[14]. And now, darling, I have taken so much pains with thee, and thou art so beautiful, that, by my troth, I love thee better than any witch’s puppet in the world; and I’ve made them of all sorts—clay, wax, sticks, night-fog, morning-mist, sea-foam, and chimney-smoke. But thou art the very best. So give heed to what I say!”

“Yes, kind mother,” said the figure, “with all my heart!”

“With all thy heart!” cried the old witch, setting her hands to her sides, and laughing loudly. “Thou hast such a pretty way of speaking! With all thy heart! And thou didst put thy hand to the left side of thy waistcoat, as if thou really hadst one!”

So now, in high good-humor with this fantastic contrivance of hers, Mother Rigby told the scarecrow that it must go and play its part in the great world, where not one man in a hundred, she affirmed, was gifted with more real substance than itself. And, that he might hold up his head with the best of them, she endowed him, on the spot, with an unreckonable amount of wealth. It consisted partly of a gold mine in Eldorado, and of ten thousand shares in a broken bubble[15], and of half a million acres of vineyard at the North Pole, and of a castle in the air, and a chateau in Spain, together with all the rents and income therefrom accruing. She further made over to him the cargo of a certain ship, laden with salt of Cadiz, which she herself, by her necromantic arts, had caused to founder, ten years before, in the deepest part of mid-ocean. If the salt were not dissolved, and could be brought to market, it would fetch a pretty penny among the fishermen. That he might not lack ready money, she gave him a copper farthing of Birmingham manufacture, being all the coin she had about her, and likewise a great deal of brass, which she applied to his forehead, thus making it yellower than ever.

“With that brass alone,” quoth Mother Rigby, “thou canst pay thy way all over the earth. Kiss me, pretty darling! I have done my best for thee.”

Furthermore, that the adventurer might lack no possible advantage towards a fair start in life, this excellent old dame gave him a token, by which he was to introduce himself to a certain magistrate, member of the council, merchant, and elder of the church (the four capacities constituting but one man,) who stood at the head of

[13] *Quoth-a*: A corruption of “quoth he”, used as an interjection; as, “indeed!” “Forsooth!”
[14] *To the boot of*: In addition to.
[15] *A broken bubble*: an unsuccessful “get-rich-quick” scheme.

society in the neighboring metropolis. The token was neither more nor less than a single word, which Mother Rigby whispered to the scarecrow, and which the scarecrow was to whisper to the merchant.

"Gouty as the old fellow is, he'll run thy errands for thee, when once thou hast given him that word in his ear," said the old witch. "Mother Rigby knows the worshipful Justice Gookin, and the worshipful Justice knows Mother Rigby!"

Here the witch thrust her wrinkled face close to the puppet's, chuckling irrepressibly, and fidgeting all through her system, with delight at the idea which she meant to communicate.

"The worshipful Master Gookin," whispered she, "hath a comely maiden to his daughter. And hark ye, my pet! Thou hast a fair outside, and a pretty wit enough of thine own. Yea, a pretty wit enough! Thou wilt think better of it when thou hast seen more of other people's wits. Now, with thy outside and thy inside, thou art the very man to win a young girl's heart. Never doubt it! I tell thee it shall be so. Put but a bold face on the matter, sigh, smile, flourish thy hat, thrust forth thy leg like a dancing-master, put thy right hand to the left side of thy waistcoat—and pretty Polly Gookin is thine own!"

All this while the new creature had been sucking in and exhaling the vapory fragrance of his pipe, and seemed now to continue this occupation as much for the enjoyment it afforded, as because it was an essential condition of his existence. It was wonderful to see how exceedingly like a human being it behaved. Its eyes (for it appeared to possess a pair) were bent on Mother Rigby, and at suitable junctures it nodded or shook its head. Neither did it lack words proper for the occasion—"Really! Indeed! Pray tell me! Is it possible! Upon my word! By no means! Oh! Ah! Hem!"—and other such weighty utterances as imply attention, inquiry, acquiescence, or dissent, on the part of the auditor. Even had you stood by, and seen the scarecrow made, you could scarcely have resisted the conviction that it perfectly understood the cunning counsels, which the old witch poured into its counterfeit of an ear. The more earnestly it applied its lips to the pipe, the more distinctly was its human likeness stamped among visible realities; the more sagacious grew its expression; the more lifelike its gestures and movements, and the more intelligibly audible its voice. Its garments, too, glistened so much the brighter with an illusory magnificence. The very pipe, in which burned the spell of all this wonderwork, ceased to appear as a smoke-blackened earthen stump, and became a meerschaum[16], with painted bowl and amber mouth-piece.

It might be apprehended, however, that as the life of the illusion seemed identical with the vapor of the pipe, it would terminate simultaneously with the reduction of the tobacco to ashes. But the beldam foresaw the difficulty.

"Hold thou the pipe, my precious one," said she, "while I fill it for thee again."

It was sorrowful to behold how the fine gentleman began to fade back into a scarecrow, while Mother Rigby shook the ashes out of the pipe and proceeded to replenish it from her tobacco-box.

"Dickon," cried she, in her high, sharp tone, "another coal for this pipe!"

[16] *Meerschaum*: Literally (in German) "sea foam". A very fine white claylike mineral employed for making expensive pipes. It turns to rich brown color with use.

No sooner said than the intensely red speck of fire was glowing within the pipe-bowl; and the scarecrow, without waiting for the witch's bidding, applied the tube to his lips, and drew in a few short, convulsive whiffs, which soon, however, became regular and equable.

"Now, mine own heart's darling," quoth Mother Rigby, "whatever may happen to thee, thou must stick to thy pipe. Thy life is in it; and that, at least, thou knowest well, if thou knowest nought besides. Stick to thy pipe, I say! Smoke, puff, blow thy cloud; and tell the people, if any question be made, that it is for thy health, and that so the physician orders thee to do. And, sweet one, when thou shalt find thy pipe getting low, go apart into some corner, and (first filling thyself with smoke) cry sharply, 'Dickon, a fresh pipe of tobacco!' and, 'Dickon, another coal for my pipe!' and have it into thy pretty mouth as speedily as may be. Else, instead of a gallant gentleman in a gold-laced coat, thou wilt be but a jumble of sticks and tattered clothes, and a bag of straw, and a withered pumpkin! Now depart, my treasure, and good luck go with thee!"

"Never fear, mother!" said the figure, in a stout voice, and sending forth a courageous whiff of smoke, "I will thrive, if an honest man and a gentleman may!"

"Oh, thou wilt be the death of me!" cried the old witch, convulsed with laughter. "That was well said. If an honest man and a gentleman may! Thou playest thy part to perfection. Get along with thee for a smart fellow; and I will wager on thy head, as a man of pith and substance, with a brain and what they call a heart, and all else that a man should have, against any other thing on two legs. I hold myself a better witch than yesterday, for thy sake. Did not I make thee? And I defy any witch in New England to make such another! Here; take my staff along with thee!"

The staff, though it was but a plain oaken stick, immediately took the aspect of a gold-headed cane.

"That gold-head has as much sense in it as thine own," said Mother Rigby, "and it will guide thee straight to worshipful Master Gookin's door. Get thee gone, my pretty pet, my darling, my precious one, my treasure; and if any ask thy name, it is Feathertop. For thou hast a feather in thy hat, and I have thrust a handfull of feathers into the hollow of thy head, and thy wig, too, is of the fashion they call Feathertop—so be Feathertop thy name!"

And, issuing from the cottage, Feathertop strode manfully towards town. Mother Rigby stood at the threshold, well pleased to see how the sunbeams glistened on him, as if all his magnificence were real, and how diligently and lovingly he smoked his pipe, and how handsomely he walked, in spite of a little stiffness of his legs. She watched him until out of sight, and threw a witch-benediction after her darling, when a turn of the road snatched him from her view.

Betimes in the forenoon, when the principal street of the neighboring town was just at its acme of life and bustle, a stranger of very distinguished figure was seen on the sidewalk. His port as well as his garments betokened nothing short of nobility. He wore a richly embroidered plum-colored coat, a waistcoat of costly velvet, magnificently adorned with golden foliage, a pair of splendid scarlet breeches, and the finest and glossiest of white silk stockings. His head was covered with a peruque[17], so daintily powdered and adjusted that it would

[17] *Peruque*: A whig.

have been sacrilege to disorder it with a hat; which, therefore, (and it was a gold-laced hat, set off with a snowy feather,) he carried beneath his arm. On the breast of his coat glistened a star. He managed his gold-headed cane with an airy grace, peculiar to the fine gentlemen of the period; and, to give the highest possible finish to his equipment, he had lace ruffles at his wrist, of a most ethereal delicacy, sufficiently avouching how idle and aristocratic must be the hands which they half concealed.

It was a remarkable point in the accoutrement[18] of this brilliant personage that he held in his left hand a fantastic kind of a pipe, with an exquisitely painted bowl and an amber mouth-piece. This he applied to his lips as often as every five or six paces, and inhaled a deep whiff of smoke, which, after being retained a moment in his lungs, might be seen to eddy gracefully from his mouth and nostrils.

As may well be supposed, the street was all a-stir to find out the stranger's name.

"It is some great nobleman, beyond question," said one of the towns-people. "Do you see the star at his breast?"

"Nay; it is too bright to be seen," said another. "Yes; he must needs be a nobleman, as you say. But by what conveyance, think you, can his lordship have voyaged or travelled hither? There has been no vessel from the old country for a month past; and if he have arrived overland from the southward, pray where are his attendants and equipage?"

"He needs no equipage to set off his rank," remarked a third. "If he came among us in rags, nobility would shine through a hole in his elbow. I never saw such dignity of aspect. He has the old Norman blood in his veins, I warrant him."

"I rather take him to be a Dutchman, or one of your High Germans," said another citizen. "The men of those countries have always the pipe at their mouths."

"And so has a Turk," answered his companion. "But, in my judgment, this stranger hath been bred at the French court, and hath there learned politeness and grace of manner, which none understand so well as the nobility of France. That gait, now! A vulgar spectator might deem it stiff—he might call it a hitch and jerk—but, to my eye, it hath an unspeakable majesty, and must have been acquired by constant observation of the deportment of the Grand Monarque. The stranger's character and office are evident enough. He is a French ambassador, come to treat with our rulers about the cession of Canada."

"More probably a Spaniard," said another, "and hence his yellow complexion; or, most likely, he is from the Havana, or from some port on the Spanish Main, and comes to make investigation about the piracies which our government is thought to connive at. Those settlers in Peru and Mexico have skins as yellow as the gold which they dig out of their mines."

"Yellow or not," cried a lady, "he is a beautiful man!—so tall—so slender!—such a fine, noble face, with so well-shaped a nose, and all that delicacy of expression about the mouth! And, bless me, how bright his star is! It positively shoots out flames!"

[18] *Accoutrement*: Outfit, equipment.

“So do your eyes, fair lady,” said the stranger, with a bow and a flourish of his pipe; for he was just passing at the instant. “Upon my honor, they have quite dazzled me.”

“Was ever so original and exquisite a compliment?” murmured the lady, in an ecstasy of delight.

Amid the general admiration excited by the stranger’s appearance, there were only two dissenting voices. One was that of an impertinent cur[19], which, after snuffing at the heels of the glistening figure, put its tail between its legs and skulked into its master’s back-yard, vociferating an execrable howl. The other dissentient was a young child, who squalled at the fullest stretch of his lungs, and babbled some unintelligible nonsense about a pumpkin.

Feathertop, meanwhile, pursued his way along the street. Except for the few complimentary words to the lady, and now and then a slight inclination of the head in requital of the profound reverences of the by-standers, he seemed wholly absorbed in his pipe. There needed no other proof of his rank and consequence than the perfect equanimity with which he comported himself, while the curiosity and admiration of the town swelled almost into clamor around him. With a crowd gathering behind his footsteps, he finally reached the mansion-house of the worshipful Justice Gookin, entered the gate, ascended the steps of the front-door, and knocked. In the interim, before his summons was answered, the stranger was observed to shake the ashes out of his pipe.

“What did he say in, that sharp voice?” inquired one of the spectators.

“Nay, I know not,” answered his friend. “But the sun dazzles my eyes strangely. How dim and faded his lordship looks all of a sudden! Bless my wits, what is the matter with me?”

“The wonder is,” said the other, “that his pipe, (which was out only an instant ago,) should be all alight again, and with the reddest coal I ever saw! There is something mysterious about this stranger. What a whiff of smoke was that! Dim and faded did you call him? Why, as he turns about the star on his breast is all a-blaze.”

“It is, indeed,” said his companion; “and it will go near to dazzle pretty Polly Gookin, whom I see peeping at it out of the chamber-window.”

The door being now opened, Feathertop turned to the crowd, made a stately bend of his body like a great man acknowledging the reverence of the meaner sort, and vanished into the house. There was a mysterious kind of a smile, if it might not better be called a grin or grimace, upon his visage; but, of all the throng that beheld him, not an individual appears to have possessed insight enough to detect the illusive character of the stranger except a little child and a cur-dog.

Our legend here loses somewhat of its continuity, and, passing over the preliminary explanation between Feathertop and the merchant, goes in quest of the pretty Polly Gookin. She was a damsel of a soft, round figure, with light hair and blue eyes, and a fair, rosy face, which seemed neither very shrewd nor very simple. This young lady had caught a glimpse of the glistening stranger, while standing at the threshold, and had forthwith put on a laced cap, a string of beads, her finest kerchief, and her stiffest damask petticoat in preparation for the interview. Hurrying from her chamber to the parlor, she had ever since been viewing herself in the large looking-

[19] *Cur*: A mongrel or inferior dog.

glass and practising pretty airs—now a smile, now a ceremonious dignity of aspect, and now a softer smile than the former—kissing her hand likewise, tossing her head, and managing her fan; while, within the mirror, an unsubstantial little maid repeated every gesture, and did all the foolish things that Polly did, but without making her ashamed of them. In short, it was the fault of pretty Polly's ability, rather than her will, if she failed to be as complete an artifice[20] as the illustrious Feathertop himself; and, when she thus tampered with her own simplicity, the witch's phantom might well hope to win her.

No sooner did Polly hear her father's gouty footsteps approaching the parlor-door, accompanied with the stiff clatter of Feathertop's high-heeled shoes, than she seated herself bolt upright and innocently began warbling a song.

"Polly! daughter Polly!" cried the old merchant. "Come hither, child."

Master Gookin's aspect, as he opened the door, was doubtful and troubled.

"This gentleman," continued he, presenting the stranger, "is the Chevalier Feathertop—nay, I beg his pardon, my Lord Feathertop!—who hath brought me a token of remembrance from an ancient friend of mine. Pay your duty to his lordship, child, and honor him as his quality deserves."

After these few words of introduction, the worshipful magistrate immediately quitted the room. But, even in that brief moment, (had the fair Polly glanced aside at her father instead of devoting herself wholly to the brilliant guest,) she might have taken warning of some mischief nigh at hand. The old man was nervous, fidgety, and very pale. Purposing a smile of courtesy, he had deformed his face with a sort of galvanic[21] grin, which, when Feathertop's back was turned, he exchanged for a scowl; at the same time shaking his fist, and stamping his gouty foot—an incivility which brought its retribution along with it. The truth appears to have been that Mother Rigby's word of introduction, whatever it might be, had operated far more on the rich merchant's fears, than on his good-will. Moreover, being a man of wonderfully acute observation, he had noticed that these painted figures on the bowl of Feathertop's pipe were in motion. Looking more closely, he became convinced that these figures were a party of little demons, each duly provided with horns and a tail, and dancing hand in hand, with gestures of diabolical merriment, round the circumference of the pipe bowl. As if to confirm his suspicions, while Master Gookin ushered his guest along a dusky passage from his private room to the parlor, the star on Feathertop's breast had scintillated actual flames, and threw a flickering gleam upon the wall, the ceiling, and the floor.

With such sinister prognostics manifesting themselves on all hands, it is not to be marvelled at that the merchant should have felt that he was committing his daughter to a very questionable acquaintance. He cursed, in his secret soul, the insinuating elegance of Feathertop's manners, as this brilliant personage bowed, smiled, put his hand on his heart, inhaled a long whiff from his pipe, and enriched the atmosphere with the smoky vapor of a fragrant and visible sigh. Gladly would poor Master Gookin have thrust his dangerous guest into the street; but there was a constraint and terror within him. This respectable old gentleman, we fear, at an earlier period of life,

[20] *Artifice*: Something artificial or made up.
[21] *Galvanic*: Forced, convulsive, as if caused by an electronic shock.

had given some pledge or other to the Evil Principle, and perhaps was now to redeem it by the sacrifice of his daughter.

It so happened that the parlor door was partly of glass, shaded by a silken curtain, the folds of which hung a little awry[22]. So strong was the merchant's interest in witnessing what was to ensue between the fair Polly and the gallant Feathertop that, after quitting the room, he could by no means refrain from peeping through the crevice of the curtain.

But there was nothing very miraculous to be seen; nothing—except the trifles previously noticed—to confirm the idea of a supernatural peril, environing the pretty Polly. The stranger, it is true, was evidently a thorough and practised man of the world, systematic and self-possessed, and therefore the sort of a person to whom a parent ought not to confide a simple young girl, without due watchfulness for the result. The worthy magistrate, who had been conversant with all degrees and qualities of mankind, could not but perceive every motion and gesture of the distinguished Feathertop came in its proper place; nothing had been left rude or native in him; a well-digested conventionalism had incorporated itself thoroughly with his substance, and transformed him into a work of art. Perhaps it was this peculiarity that invested him with a species of ghastliness and awe. It is the effect of anything completely and consummately artificial, in human shape, that the person impresses us as an unreality, and as having hardly pith enough to cast a shadow upon the floor. As regarded Feathertop, all this resulted in a wild, extravagant, and fantastical impression, as if his life and being were akin to the smoke that curled upward from his pipe.

But pretty Polly Gookin felt not thus. The pair were now promenading the room; Feathertop with his dainty stride, and no less dainty grimace; the girl with a native maidenly grace, just touched, not spoiled, by a slightly affected manner, which seemed caught from the perfect artifice of her companion. The longer the interview continued, the more charmed was pretty Polly, until, within the first quarter of an hour, (as the old magistrate noted by his watch,) she was evidently beginning to be in love. Nor need it have been witchcraft that subdued her in such a hurry; the poor child's heart, it may be, was so very fervent, that it melted her with its own warmth, as reflected from the hollow semblance of a lover. No matter what Feathertop said, his words found depth and reverberation in her ear; no matter what he did, his action was heroic to her eye. And by this time it is to be supposed there was a blush on Polly's cheek, a tender smile about her mouth, and a liquid softness in her glance; while the star kept coruscating[23] on Feathertop's breast, and the little demons careered with more frantic merriment than ever about the circumference of his pipe-bowl. O pretty Polly Gookin, why should these imps rejoice so madly that a silly maiden's heart was about to be given to a shadow! Is it so unusual a misfortune?—so rare a triumph?

By and by Feathertop paused, and throwing himself into an imposing attitude, seemed to summon the fair girl to survey his figure, and resist him longer, if she could. His star, his embroidery, his buckles, glowed, at that instant, with unutterable splendor; the picturesque hues of his attire took a richer depth of coloring; there was a gleam

[22] *Awry*: Turned to one side, crookedly.

[23] *Coruscating*: Glittering or gleaming in flashes. Hawthorne makes much of the uncanny brightness of Feathertop's star.

and polish over his whole presence betokening the perfect witchery of well-ordered manners. The maiden raised her eyes, and suffered them to linger upon her companion with a bashful and admiring gaze. Then, as if desirous of judging what value her own simple comeliness might have, side by side with so much brilliancy, she cast a glance towards the full-length looking-glass in front of which they happened to be standing. It was one of the truest plates in the world, and incapable of flattery. No sooner did the images, therein reflected, meet Polly's eye, than she shrieked, shrank from the stranger's side, gazed at him for a moment in the wildest dismay, and sank insensible upon the floor. Feathertop likewise had looked towards the mirror, and there beheld, not the glittering mockery of his outside show, but a picture of the sordid patchwork of his real composition, stript of all witchcraft.

The wretched simulacrum! We almost pity him. He threw up his arms, with an expression of despair that went further than any of his previous manifestations, towards vindicating his claims to be reckoned human. For perchance the only time, since this so often empty and deceptive life of mortals began its course, an illusion had seen and fully recognized itself.

Mother Rigby was seated by her kitchen-hearth, in the twilight of this eventful day, and had just shaken the ashes out of a new pipe, when she heard a hurried tramp along the road. Yet it did not seem so much the tramp of human footsteps, as the clatter of sticks or the rattling of dry bones.

"Ha!" thought the old witch. "What step is that? Whose skeleton is out of its grave now, I wonder?"

A figure burst headlong into the cottage-door. It was Feathertop! His pipe was still a-light; the star still flamed upon his breast; the embroidery still glowed upon his garments; nor had he lost, in any degree or manner that could be estimated, the aspect that assimilated him with our mortal-brotherhood. But yet, in some indescribable way, (as is the case with all that has deluded us, when once found out,) the poor reality was felt beneath the cunning artifice.

"What has gone wrong?" demanded the witch. "Did yonder sniffling hypocrite thrust my darling from his door? The villain! I'll set twenty fiends to torment him, till he offer thee his daughter on his bended knees!"

"No, mother," said Feathertop despondingly, "it was not that!"

"Did the girl scorn my precious one?" asked Mother Rigby, her fierce eyes glowing like two coals of Tophet. "I'll cover her face with pimples! Her nose shall be as red as the coal in thy pipe! Her front teeth shall drop out! In a week hence, she shall not be worth thy having!"

"Let her alone, mother!" answered poor Feathertop. "The girl was half-won; and methinks a kiss from her sweet lips might have made me altogether human! But," he added, after a brief pause and then a howl of self-contempt, "I've seen myself, mother!—I've seen myself for the wretched, ragged, empty thing I am! I'll exist no longer!"

Snatching the pipe from his mouth, he flung it with all his might against the chimney, and, at the same instant, sank upon the floor, a medley of straw and tattered garments, with some sticks protruding from the heap; and a

shrivelled pumpkin in the midst. The eye-holes were now lustreless; but the rudely-carved gap, that just before had been a mouth, still seemed to twist itself into a despairing grin, and was so far human.

“Poor fellow!” quoth Mother Rigby, with a rueful glance at the relics of her ill-fated contrivance. “My poor, dear, pretty Feathertop! There are thousands upon thousands of coxcombs and charlatans in the world, made up of just such a jumble of worn-out, forgotten, and good-for-nothing trash as he was! Yet they live in fair repute, and never see themselves for what they are. And why should my poor puppet be the only one to know himself, and perish for it?”

While thus muttering, the witch had filled a fresh pipe of tobacco, and held the stem between her fingers, as doubtful whether to thrust it into her own mouth or Feathertop’s.

“Poor Feathertop!” she continued. “I could easily give him another chance, and send him forth again to-morrow. But no! his feelings are too tender; his sensibilities too deep. He seems to have too much heart to bustle for his own advantage, in such an empty and heartless world. Well, well! I’ll make a scarecrow of him after all. ’Tis an innocent and useful vocation, and will suit my darling well; and, if each of his human brethren had as fit a one, ’twould be the better for mankind; and, as for this pipe of tobacco, I need it more than he!”

So saying, Mother Rigby put the stem between her lips. “Dickon!” cried she, in her high, sharp tone, “another coal for my pipe!”

EXERCISES

1. Describe the process of “the making” of Feathertop. What is most impressive to you?
2. The story, taking place back in the Eighteenth Century, contains some pronouns in their archaic form. Look for their meaning.
3. Mimic "akimbo."
4. In three instances Feathertop was seen as he really was. When? Why do you thing that it was like that?
5. How did you feel at the end of the story: glad, sorry or divided between those feelings? Explain your opinion.
6. Does the story illustrate the saying that Hawthorne's humor was half a smile and half a sigh? Provide arguments to sustain your answer.
7. Whom is Hawthorne satirizing with this story? Feathertop? Eighteenth Century colonial society? Contemporary society? Explain your point of view.
8. Do you know any “Feathertop” living happily and believing that he/she is a wonderful human being?
9. How much do you care about appearance? Chose one of the following topics for a brief essay:

⇨ Professors should not wear short pants/long hair/short skirts/nose rings/tattoos in school

⇨ There is nothing wrong with professors wearing short pants/long hair/short skirts/nose rings/tattoos in school

10. Copy a fragment proper for teaching.

The Pit and the Pendulum

By Edgar Allan Poe 1809-1849

Impia tortorum longos hic turba furores
Sanguinis innocui, non satiata, aluit.
Sospite nunc patria, fracto nunc funeris antro,
Mors ubi dira fuit vita salusque patent.

[Quatrain composed for the gates of a market to be erected upon the site of the Jacobin Club House at Paris.]

I was sick—sick unto death with that long agony; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence—the dread sentence of death—was the last of distinct accentuation which reached my ears. After that, the sound of the inquisitorial voices seemed merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. It conveyed to my soul the idea of revolution—perhaps from its association in fancy with the burr of a mill wheel. This only for a brief period; for presently I heard no more. Yet, for a while, I saw; but with how terrible an exaggeration! I saw the lips of the black-robed judges. They appeared to me white—whiter than the sheet upon which I trace these words—and thin even to grotesqueness; thin with the intensity of their expression of firmness—of immoveable resolution—of stern contempt of human torture. I saw that the decrees of what to me was Fate, were still issuing from those lips. I saw them writhe with a deadly locution. I saw them fashion the syllables of my name; and I shuddered because no sound succeeded. I saw, too, for a few moments of delirious horror, the soft and nearly imperceptible waving of the sable draperies which enwrapped the walls of the apartment. And then my vision fell upon the seven tall candles upon the table. At first they wore the aspect of charity, and seemed white and slender angels who would save me; but then, all at once, there came a most deadly nausea over my spirit, and I felt every fibre in my frame thrill as if I had touched the wire of a galvanic battery, while the angel forms became meaningless spectres, with heads of flame, and I saw that from them there would be no help. And then there stole into my fancy, like a rich musical note, the thought of what sweet rest there must be in the grave. The thought came gently and stealthily, and it seemed long before it attained full appreciation; but just as my spirit came at length properly to feel and entertain it, the figures of the judges vanished, as if magically, from before me; the tall candles sank into nothingness; their flames went out utterly; the blackness of darkness supervened; all sensations appeared swallowed up in a mad rushing descent as of the soul into Hades. Then silence, and stillness, night were the universe.

I had swooned; but still will not say that all of consciousness was lost. What of it there remained I will not attempt to define, or even to describe; yet all was not lost. In the deepest slumber—no! In delirium—no! In a swoon—no! In death—no! even in the grave all is not lost. Else there is no immortality for man. Arousing from the most profound of slumbers, we break the gossamer web of some dream. Yet in a second afterward, (so frail may that web have been) we remember not that we have dreamed. In the return to life from the swoon there are two

stages; first, that of the sense of mental or spiritual; secondly, that of the sense of physical, existence. It seems probable that if, upon reaching the second stage, we could recall the impressions of the first, we should find these impressions eloquent in memories of the gulf beyond. And that gulf is—what? How at least shall we distinguish its shadows from those of the tomb? But if the impressions of what I have termed the first stage, are not, at will, recalled, yet, after long interval, do they not come unbidden, while we marvel whence they come? He who has never swooned, is not he who finds strange palaces and wildly familiar faces in coals that glow; is not he who beholds floating in mid-air the sad visions that the many may not view; is not he who ponders over the perfume of some novel flower—is not he whose brain grows bewildered with the meaning of some musical cadence which has never before arrested his attention.

Amid frequent and thoughtful endeavors to remember; amid earnest struggles to regather some token of the state of seeming nothingness into which my soul had lapsed, there have been moments when I have dreamed of success; there have been brief, very brief periods when I have conjured up remembrances which the lucid reason of a later epoch assures me could have had reference only to that condition of seeming unconsciousness. These shadows of memory tell, indistinctly, of tall figures that lifted and bore me in silence down—down—still down—till a hideous dizziness oppressed me at the mere idea of the interminableness of the descent. They tell also of a vague horror at my heart, on account of that heart's unnatural stillness. Then comes a sense of sudden motionlessness throughout all things; as if those who bore me (a ghastly train!) had outrun, in their descent, the limits of the limitless, and paused from the wearisomeness of their toil. After this I call to mind flatness and dampness; and then all is madness—the madness of a memory which busies itself among forbidden things.

Very suddenly there came back to my soul motion and sound—the tumultuous motion of the heart, and, in my ears, the sound of its beating. Then a pause in which all is blank. Then again sound, and motion, and touch—a tingling sensation pervading my frame. Then the mere consciousness of existence, without thought—a condition which lasted long. Then, very suddenly, thought, and shuddering terror, and earnest endeavor to comprehend my true state. Then a strong desire to lapse into insensibility. Then a rushing revival of soul and a successful effort to move. And now a full memory of the trial, of the judges, of the sable draperies, of the sentence, of the sickness, of the swoon. Then entire forgetfulness of all that followed; of all that a later day and much earnestness of endeavor have enabled me vaguely to recall.

So far, I had not opened my eyes. I felt that I lay upon my back, unbound. I reached out my hand, and it fell heavily upon something damp and hard. There I suffered it to remain for many minutes, while I strove to imagine where and what I could be. I longed, yet dared not to employ my vision. I dreaded the first glance at objects around me. It was not that I feared to look upon things horrible, but that I grew aghast lest there should be nothing to see. At length, with a wild desperation at heart, I quickly unclosed my eyes. My worst thoughts, then, were confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me. I struggled for breath. The intensity of the darkness seemed to oppress and stifle me. The atmosphere was intolerably close. I still lay quietly, and made

effort to exercise my reason. I brought to mind the inquisitorial proceedings, and attempted from that point to deduce my real condition. The sentence had passed; and it appeared to me that a very long interval of time had since elapsed. Yet not for a moment did I suppose myself actually dead. Such a supposition, notwithstanding what we read in fiction, is altogether inconsistent with real existence;—but where and in what state was I? The condemned to death, I knew, perished usually at the autos-da-fé, and one of these had been held on the very night of the day of my trial. Had I been remanded to my dungeon, to await the next sacrifice, which would not take place for many months? This I at once saw could not be. Victims had been in immediate demand. Moreover, my dungeon, as well as all the condemned cells at Toledo, had stone floors, and light was not altogether excluded.

A fearful idea now suddenly drove the blood in torrents upon my heart, and for a brief period, I once more relapsed into insensibility. Upon recovering, I at once started to my feet, trembling convulsively in every fibre. I thrust my arms wildly above and around me in all directions. I felt nothing; yet dreaded to move a step, lest I should be impeded by the walls of a tomb. Perspiration burst from every pore, and stood in cold big beads upon my forehead. The agony of suspense grew at length intolerable, and I cautiously moved forward, with my arms extended, and my eyes straining from their sockets, in the hope of catching some faint ray of light. I proceeded for many paces; but still all was blackness and vacancy. I breathed more freely. It seemed evident that mine was not, at least, the most hideous of fates.

And now, as I still continued to step cautiously onward, there came thronging upon my recollection a thousand vague rumors of the horrors of Toledo. Of the dungeons there had been strange things narrated—fables I had always deemed them—but yet strange, and too ghastly to repeat, save in a whisper. Was I left to perish of starvation in this subterranean world of darkness; or what fate, perhaps even more fearful, awaited me? That the result would be death, and a death of more than customary bitterness, I knew too well the character of my judges to doubt. The mode and the hour were all that occupied or distracted me.

My outstretched hands at length encountered some solid obstruction. It was a wall, seemingly of stone masonry—very smooth, slimy, and cold. I followed it up; stepping with all the careful distrust with which certain antique narratives had inspired me. This process, however, afforded me no means of ascertaining the dimensions of my dungeon; as I might make its circuit, and return to the point whence I set out, without being aware of the fact; so perfectly uniform seemed the wall. I therefore sought the knife which had been in my pocket, when led into the inquisitorial chamber; but it was gone; my clothes had been exchanged for a wrapper of coarse serge. I had thought of forcing the blade in some minute crevice of the masonry, so as to identify my point of departure. The difficulty, nevertheless, was but trivial; although, in the disorder of my fancy, it seemed at first insuperable. I tore a part of the hem from the robe and placed the fragment at full length, and at right angles to the wall. In groping my way around the prison, I could not fail to encounter this rag upon completing the circuit. So, at least I thought: but I had not counted upon the extent of the dungeon, or upon my own weakness. The

ground was moist and slippery. I staggered onward for some time, when I stumbled and fell. My excessive fatigue induced me to remain prostrate; and sleep soon overtook me as I lay.

Upon awaking, and stretching forth an arm, I found beside me a loaf and a pitcher with water. I was too much exhausted to reflect upon this circumstance, but ate and drank with avidity. Shortly afterward, I resumed my tour around the prison, and with much toil came at last upon the fragment of the serge. Up to the period when I fell I had counted fifty-two paces, and upon resuming my walk, I had counted forty-eight more;—when I arrived at the rag. There were in all, then, a hundred paces; and, admitting two paces to the yard, I presumed the dungeon to be fifty yards in circuit. I had met, however, with many angles in the wall, and thus I could form no guess at the shape of the vault; for vault I could not help supposing it to be.

I had little object—certainly no hope—these researches; but a vague curiosity prompted me to continue them. Quitting the wall, I resolved to cross the area of the enclosure. At first I proceeded with extreme caution, for the floor, although seemingly of solid material, was treacherous with slime. At length, however, I took courage, and did not hesitate to step firmly; endeavoring to cross in as direct a line as possible. I had advanced some ten or twelve paces in this manner, when the remnant of the torn hem of my robe became entangled between my legs. I stepped on it, and fell violently on my face.

In the confusion attending my fall, I did not immediately apprehend a somewhat startling circumstance, which yet, in a few seconds afterward, and while I still lay prostrate, arrested my attention. It was this—my chin rested upon the floor of the prison, but my lips and the upper portion of my head, although seemingly at a less elevation than the chin, touched nothing. At the same time my forehead seemed bathed in a clammy vapor, and the peculiar smell of decayed fungus arose to my nostrils. I put forward my arm, and shuddered to find that I had fallen at the very brink of a circular pit, whose extent, of course, I had no means of ascertaining at the moment. Groping about the masonry just below the margin, I succeeded in dislodging a small fragment, and let it fall into the abyss. For many seconds I hearkened to its reverberations as it dashed against the sides of the chasm in its descent; at length there was a sullen plunge into water, succeeded by loud echoes. At the same moment there came a sound resembling the quick opening, and as rapid closing of a door overhead, while a faint gleam of light flashed suddenly through the gloom, and as suddenly faded away.

I saw clearly the doom which had been prepared for me, and congratulated myself upon the timely accident by which I had escaped. Another step before my fall, and the world had seen me no more. And the death just avoided, was of that very character which I had regarded as fabulous and frivolous in the tales respecting the Inquisition. To the victims of its tyranny, there was the choice of death with its direst physical agonies, or death with its most hideous moral horrors. I had been reserved for the latter. By long suffering my nerves had been unstrung, until I trembled at the sound of my own voice, and had become in every respect a fitting subject for the species of torture which awaited me.

Shaking in every limb, I groped my way back to the wall; resolving there to perish rather than risk the terrors of the wells, of which my imagination now pictured many in various positions about the dungeon. In other

conditions of mind I might have had courage to end my misery at once by a plunge into one of these abysses; but now I was the veriest of cowards. Neither could I forget what I had read of these pits—that the sudden extinction of life formed no part of their most horrible plan.

Agitation of spirit kept me awake for many long hours; but at length I again slumbered. Upon arousing, I found by my side, as before, a loaf and a pitcher of water. A burning thirst consumed me, and I emptied the vessel at a draught. It must have been drugged; for scarcely had I drunk, before I became irresistibly drowsy. A deep sleep fell upon me—a sleep like that of death. How long it lasted of course, I know not; but when, once again, I unclosed my eyes, the objects around me were visible. By a wild sulphurous lustre, the origin of which I could not at first determine, I was enabled to see the extent and aspect of the prison.

In its size I had been greatly mistaken. The whole circuit of its walls did not exceed twenty-five yards. For some minutes this fact occasioned me a world of vain trouble; vain indeed! for what could be of less importance, under the terrible circumstances which environed me, then the mere dimensions of my dungeon? But my soul took a wild interest in trifles, and I busied myself in endeavors to account for the error I had committed in my measurement. The truth at length flashed upon me. In my first attempt at exploration I had counted fifty-two paces, up to the period when I fell; I must then have been within a pace or two of the fragment of serge; in fact, I had nearly performed the circuit of the vault. I then slept, and upon awaking, I must have returned upon my steps—thus supposing the circuit nearly double what it actually was. My confusion of mind prevented me from observing that I began my tour with the wall to the left, and ended it with the wall to the right.

I had been deceived, too, in respect to the shape of the enclosure. In feeling my way I had found many angles, and thus deduced an idea of great irregularity; so potent is the effect of total darkness upon one arousing from lethargy or sleep! The angles were simply those of a few slight depressions, or niches, at odd intervals. The general shape of the prison was square. What I had taken for masonry seemed now to be iron, or some other metal, in huge plates, whose sutures or joints occasioned the depression. The entire surface of this metallic enclosure was rudely daubed in all the hideous and repulsive devices to which the charnel superstition of the monks has given rise. The figures of fiends in aspects of menace, with skeleton forms, and other more really fearful images, overspread and disfigured the walls. I observed that the outlines of these monstrosities were sufficiently distinct, but that the colors seemed faded and blurred, as if from the effects of a damp atmosphere. I now noticed the floor, too, which was of stone. In the centre yawned the circular pit from whose jaws I had escaped; but it was the only one in the dungeon.

All this I saw indistinctly and by much effort: for my personal condition had been greatly changed during slumber. I now lay upon my back, and at full length, on a species of low framework of wood. To this I was securely bound by a long strap resembling a surcingle. It passed in many convolutions about my limbs and body, leaving at liberty only my head, and my left arm to such extent that I could, by dint of much exertion, supply myself with food from an earthen dish which lay by my side on the floor. I saw, to my horror, that the pitcher had been

removed. I say to my horror; for I was consumed with intolerable thirst. This thirst it appeared to be the design of my persecutors to stimulate: for the food in the dish was meat pungently seasoned.

Looking upward, I surveyed the ceiling of my prison. It was some thirty or forty feet overhead, and constructed much as the side walls. In one of its panels a very singular figure riveted my whole attention. It was the painted figure of Time as he is commonly represented, save that, in lieu of a scythe, he held what, at a casual glance, I supposed to be the pictured image of a huge pendulum such as we see on antique clocks. There was something, however, in the appearance of this machine which caused me to regard it more attentively. While I gazed directly upward at it (for its position was immediately over my own) I fancied that I saw it in motion. In an instant afterward the fancy was confirmed. Its sweep was brief, and of course slow. I watched it for some minutes, somewhat in fear, but more in wonder. Wearied at length with observing its dull movement, I turned my eyes upon the other objects in the cell.

A slight noise attracted my notice, and, looking to the floor, I saw several enormous rats traversing it. They had issued from the well, which lay just within view to my right. Even then, while I gazed, they came up in troops, hurriedly, with ravenous eyes, allured by the scent of the meat. From this it required much effort and attention to scare them away.

It might have been half an hour, perhaps even an hour, (for in cast my I could take but imperfect note of time) before I again cast my eyes upward. What I then saw confounded and amazed me. The sweep of the pendulum had increased in extent by nearly a yard. As a natural consequence, its velocity was also much greater. But what mainly disturbed me was the idea that had perceptibly descended. I now observed—with what horror it is needless to say—that its nether extremity was formed of a crescent of glittering steel, about a foot in length from horn to horn; the horns upward, and the under edge evidently as keen as that of a razor. Like a razor also, it seemed massy and heavy, tapering from the edge into a solid and broad structure above. It was appended to a weighty rod of brass, and the whole hissed as it swung through the air.

I could no longer doubt the doom prepared for me by monkish ingenuity in torture. My cognizance of the pit had become known to the inquisitorial agents—the pit whose horrors had been destined for so bold a recusant as myself—the pit, typical of hell, and regarded by rumor as the Ultima Thule of all their punishments. The plunge into this pit I had avoided by the merest of accidents, I knew that surprise, or entrapment into torment, formed an important portion of all the grotesquerie of these dungeon deaths. Having failed to fall, it was no part of the demon plan to hurl me into the abyss; and thus (there being no alternative) a different and a milder destruction awaited me. Milder! I half smiled in my agony as I thought of such application of such a term.

What boots it to tell of the long, long hours of horror more than mortal, during which I counted the rushing vibrations of the steel! Inch by inch—line by line—with a descent only appreciable at intervals that seemed ages—down and still down it came! Days passed—it might have been that many days passed—ere it swept so closely over me as to fan me with its acrid breath. The odor of the sharp steel forced itself into my nostrils. I prayed—I wearied heaven with my prayer for its more speedy descent. I grew frantically mad, and struggled to

force myself upward against the sweep of the fearful scimitar. And then I fell suddenly calm, and lay smiling at the glittering death, as a child at some rare bauble.

There was another interval of utter insensibility; it was brief; for, upon again lapsing into life there had been no perceptible descent in the pendulum. But it might have been long; for I knew there were demons who took note of my swoon, and who could have arrested the vibration at pleasure. Upon my recovery, too, I felt very—oh, inexpressibly sick and weak, as if through long inanition. Even amid the agonies of that period, the human nature craved food. With painful effort I outstretched my left arm as far as my bonds permitted, and took possession of the small remnant which had been spared me by the rats. As I put a portion of it within my lips, there rushed to my mind a half formed thought of joy—of hope. Yet what business had I with hope? It was, as I say, a half formed thought—man has many such which are never completed. I felt that it was of joy—of hope; but felt also that it had perished in its formation. In vain I struggled to perfect—to regain it. Long suffering had nearly annihilated all my ordinary powers of mind. I was an imbecile—an idiot.

The vibration of the pendulum was at right angles to my length. I saw that the crescent was designed to cross the region of the heart. It would fray the serge of my robe—it would return and repeat its operations—again—and again. Notwithstanding terrifically wide sweep (some thirty feet or more) and the its hissing vigor of its descent, sufficient to sunder these very walls of iron, still the fraying of my robe would be all that, for several minutes, it would accomplish. And at this thought I paused. I dared not go farther than this reflection. I dwelt upon it with a pertinacity of attention—as if, in so dwelling, I could arrest here the descent of the steel. I forced myself to ponder upon the sound of the crescent as it should pass across the garment—upon the peculiar thrilling sensation which the friction of cloth produces on the nerves. I pondered upon all this frivolity until my teeth were on edge.

Down—steadily down it crept. I took a frenzied pleasure in contrasting its downward with its lateral velocity. To the right—to the left—far and wide—with the shriek of a damned spirit; to my heart with the stealthy pace of the tiger! I alternately laughed and howled as the one or the other idea grew predominant.

Down—certainly, relentlessly down! It vibrated within three inches of my bosom! I struggled violently, furiously, to free my left arm. This was free only from the elbow to the hand. I could reach the latter, from the platter beside me, to my mouth, with great effort, but no farther. Could I have broken the fastenings above the elbow, I would have seized and attempted to arrest the pendulum. I might as well have attempted to arrest an avalanche!

Down—still unceasingly—still inevitably down! I gasped and struggled at each vibration. I shrunk convulsively at its every sweep. My eyes followed its outward or upward whirls with the eagerness of the most unmeaning despair; they closed themselves spasmodically at the descent, although death would have been a relief, oh! how unspeakable! Still I quivered in every nerve to think how slight a sinking of the machinery would precipitate that keen, glistening axe upon my bosom. It was hope that prompted the nerve to quiver—the frame to shrink. It was hope—the hope that triumphs on the rack—that whispers to the death-condemned even in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

I saw that some ten or twelve vibrations would bring the steel in actual contact with my robe, and with this observation there suddenly came over my spirit all the keen, collected calmness of despair. For the first time during many hours—or perhaps days—I thought. It now occurred to me that the bandage, or surcingle, which enveloped me, was unique. I was tied by no separate cord. The first stroke of the razorlike crescent athwart any portion of the band, would so detach it that it might be unwound from my person by means of my left hand. But how fearful, in that case, the proximity of the steel! The result of the slightest struggle how deadly! Was it likely, moreover, that the minions of the torturer had not foreseen and provided for this possibility! Was it probable that the bandage crossed my bosom in the track of the pendulum? Dreading to find my faint, and, as it seemed, in last hope frustrated, I so far elevated my head as to obtain a distinct view of my breast. The surcingle enveloped my limbs and body close in all directions—save in the path of the destroying crescent.

Scarcely had I dropped my head back into its original position, when there flashed upon my mind what I cannot better describe than as the unformed half of that idea of deliverance to which I have previously alluded, and of which a moiety only floated indeterminately through my brain when I raised food to my burning lips. The whole thought was now present—feeble, scarcely sane, scarcely definite,—but still entire. I proceeded at once, with the nervous energy of despair, to attempt its execution.

For many hours the immediate vicinity of the low framework upon which I lay, had been literally swarming with rats. They were wild, bold, ravenous; their red eyes glaring upon me as if they waited but for motionlessness on my part to make me their prey. “To what food,” I thought, “have they been accustomed in the well?”

They had devoured, in spite of all my efforts to prevent them, all but a small remnant of the contents of the dish. I had fallen into an habitual see-saw, or wave of the hand about the platter: and, at length, the unconscious uniformity of the movement deprived it of effect. In their voracity the vermin frequently fastened their sharp fangs in my fingers. With the particles of the oily and spicy viand which now remained, I thoroughly rubbed the bandage wherever I could reach it; then, raising my hand from the floor, I lay breathlessly still.

At first the ravenous animals were startled and terrified at the change—at the cessation of movement. They shrank alarmedly back; many sought the well. But this was only for a moment. I had not counted in vain upon their voracity. Observing that I remained without motion, one or two of the boldest leaped upon the frame-work, and smelt at the surcingle. This seemed the signal for a general rush. Forth from the well they hurried in fresh troops. They clung to the wood—they overran it, and leaped in hundreds upon my person. The measured movement of the pendulum disturbed them not at all. Avoiding its strokes they busied themselves with the anointed bandage. They pressed—they swarmed upon me in ever accumulating heaps. They writhed upon my throat; their cold lips sought my own; I was half stifled by their thronging pressure; disgust, for which the world has no name, swelled my bosom, and chilled, with a heavy clamminess, my heart. Yet one minute, and I felt that the struggle would be over. Plainly I perceived the loosening of the bandage. I knew that in more than one place it must be already severed. With a more than human resolution I lay still.

Nor had I erred in my calculations—nor had I endured in vain. I at length felt that I was free. The surcingle hung in ribands from my body. But the stroke of the pendulum already pressed upon my bosom. It had divided the serge of the robe. It had cut through the linen beneath. Twice again it swung, and a sharp sense of pain shot through every nerve. But the moment of escape had arrived. At a wave of my hand my deliverers hurried tumultuously away. With a steady movement—cautious, sidelong, shrinking, and slow—I slid from the embrace of the bandage and beyond the reach of the scimitar. For the moment, at least, I was free.

Free!—and in the grasp of the Inquisition! I had scarcely stepped from my wooden bed of horror upon the stone floor of the prison, when the motion of the hellish machine ceased and I beheld it drawn up, by some invisible force, through the ceiling. This was a lesson which I took desperately to heart. My every motion was undoubtedly watched. Free!—I had but escaped death in one form of agony, to be delivered unto worse than death in some other. With that thought I rolled my eves nervously around on the barriers of iron that hemmed me in. Something unusual—some change which, at first, I could not appreciate distinctly—it was obvious, had taken place in the apartment. For many minutes of a dreamy and trembling abstraction, I busied myself in vain, unconnected conjecture. During this period, I became aware, for the first time, of the origin of the sulphurous light which illumined the cell. It proceeded from a fissure, about half an inch in width, extending entirely around the prison at the base of the walls, which thus appeared, and were, completely separated from the floor. I endeavored, but of course in vain, to look through the aperture.

As I arose from the attempt, the mystery of the alteration in the chamber broke at once upon my understanding. I have observed that, although the outlines of the figures upon the walls were sufficiently distinct, yet the colors seemed blurred and indefinite. These colors had now assumed, and were momentarily assuming, a startling and most intense brilliancy, that gave to the spectral and fiendish portraitures an aspect that might have thrilled even firmer nerves than my own. Demon eyes, of a wild and ghastly vivacity, glared upon me in a thousand directions, where none had been visible before, and gleamed with the lurid lustre of a fire that I could not force my imagination to regard as unreal.

Unreal!—Even while I breathed there came to my nostrils the breath of the vapour of heated iron! A suffocating odour pervaded the prison! A deeper glow settled each moment in the eyes that glared at my agonies! A richer tint of crimson diffused itself over the pictured horrors of blood. I panted! I gasped for breath! There could be no doubt of the design of my tormentors—oh! most unrelenting! oh! most demoniac of men! I shrank from the glowing metal to the centre of the cell. Amid the thought of the fiery destruction that impended, the idea of the coolness of the well came over my soul like balm. I rushed to its deadly brink. I threw my straining vision below. The glare from the enkindled roof illumined its inmost recesses. Yet, for a wild moment, did my spirit refuse to comprehend the meaning of what I saw. At length it forced—it wrestled its way into my soul—it burned itself in upon my shuddering reason.—Oh! for a voice to speak!—oh! horror!—oh! any horror but this! With a shriek, I rushed from the margin, and buried my face in my hands—weeping bitterly.

The heat rapidly increased, and once again I looked up, shuddering as with a fit of the ague. There had been a second change in the cell — and now the change was obviously in the form. As before, it was in vain that I, at first, endeavoured to appreciate or understand what was taking place. But not long was I left in doubt. The Inquisitorial vengeance had been hurried by my two-fold escape, and there was to be no more dallying with the King of Terrors. The room had been square. I saw that two of its iron angles were now acute—two, consequently, obtuse. The fearful difference quickly increased with a low rumbling or moaning sound. In an instant the apartment had shifted its form into that of a lozenge. But the alteration stopped not here—I neither hoped nor desired it to stop. I could have clasped the red walls to my bosom as a garment of eternal peace. "Death," I said, "any death but that of the pit!" Fool! might I have not known that into the pit it was the object of the burning iron to urge me? Could I resist its glow? or, if even that, could I withstand its pressure And now, flatter and flatter grew the lozenge, with a rapidity that left me no time for contemplation. Its centre, and of course, its greatest width, came just over the yawning gulf. I shrank back—but the closing walls pressed me resistlessly onward. At length for my seared and writhing body there was no longer an inch of foothold on the firm floor of the prison. I struggled no more, but the agony of my soul found vent in one loud, long, and final scream of despair. I felt that I tottered upon the brink—I averted my eyes—

There was a discordant hum of human voices! There was a loud blast as of many trumpets! There was a harsh grating as of a thousand thunders! The fiery walls rushed back! An outstretched arm caught my own as I fell, fainting, into the abyss. It was that of General Lasalle. The French army had entered Toledo. The Inquisition was in the hands of its enemies.

EXERCISES

1) Describe the moment of the sentence. How does the author depict the judges?
2) Where was he taken? What did he think at first his destiny was?
3) Total darkness must have provoked a state of horror in the convict. What do you think?
4) What discoveries did he make in exploring his dungeon? Would you have done the same?
5) Make a full description of the agony to which the prisoner was condemned with the pendulum. What kind of torture was that, physical or psychological? Explain.
6) How did he escape from the pendulum?
7) What came next?
8) The story has an unexpected end. Could it be otherwise? Try another ending.
9) The story is good for a horror documentary for TV. Write hints that would lead the actor into the crucial moments of such a documentary.

The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County

By Mark Twain 1835-1910 (biography missing)

In compliance with the request of a friend of mine, who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler, and inquired after my friend's friend, Leonidas W. Smiley, as requested to do, and I hereunto append the result. I have a lurking suspicion that Leonidas W. Smiley is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that, if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous Jim Smiley, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some infernal reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless to me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded.

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the barroom stove of the old, dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good-day. I told him a friend of mine had commissioned me to make some inquiries about a cherished companion of his boyhood named Leonidas W. Smiley—Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, young minister of the Gospel, who he had heard was at one time a resident of Angel's Camp. I added that, if Mr. Wheeler could tell me anything about this Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, I would feel under many obligations to him.

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat me down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was anything ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse. I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once.

"Rev. Leonidas W. H'm, Reverend le—well, there was a feller here once by the name of Jim Smiley, in the winter of '49—or maybe it was the spring of '50—I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume wasn't finished when he first came to the camp; but anyway, he was the curiousest man about always betting on anything that turned up you ever see, if he could get anybody to bet on the other side; and if he couldn't, he'd change sides. Any way that suited the other man would suit him—any way just so's he got a bet, he was satisfied. But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky; he most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solit'ry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and take any side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse race, you'd find him flush, or you'd find him busted at the end of it; if there was a dogfight, he'd bet on it; if there was a cat-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a chicken-fight, he'd bet on it; why, if there was two birds setting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly first; or if there was a camp meeting, he would be

there reg'lar, to bet on Parson Walker, which he judged to be the best exhorter about here, and so he was, too, and a good man. If he even seen a straddlebug start to go anywheres, he would bet you how long it would take him to get wherever he was going to, and if you took him up, he would foller that straddlebug to Mexico but what he would find out where he was bound for and how long he was on the road. Lots of the boys here has seen that Smiley, and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference to him—he would bet on anything—the dangdest feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn't going to save her; but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better—thank the Lord for his inf'nit mercy—and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Prov'dence, she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, "Well, I'll risk two-and-a-half that she don't, anyway."

Thish-yer Smiley had a mare—the boys called her the fifteen-minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that—and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or three hundred yards start, and then pass her under way; but always at the fag end of the race she'd get excited and desperate-like, and come cavorting and straddling up, and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose—and always fetch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down.

And he had a little small bull pup, that to look at him you'd think he wan't worth a cent, but to set around and look ornery, and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as money was up on him, he was a different dog; his underjaw'd begin to stick out like the fo-castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine savage like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him, and bullyrag him, and bite him, and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson—which was the name of the pup—Andrew Jackson would never let on but what he was satisfied, and hadn't expected nothing else—and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time, till the money was all up; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog jest by the j'int of his hind leg and freeze to it—not chaw, you understand, but only jest grip and hang on till they throwed up the sponge, if it was a year. Smiley always come out winner on that pup, till he harnessed a dog once that didn't have no hind legs, because they'd been sawed off by a circular saw, and when the thing had gone along far enough, and the money was all up, and he come to make a snatch for his pet holt, he saw in a minute how he'd been imposed on, and how the other dog had him in the door, so to speak, and he 'peared surprised, and then he looked sorter discouraged-like, and didn't try no more to win the fight, and so he got shucked out bad. He give Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke, and it was his fault for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take holt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece and laid down and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius—I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them

circumstances, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n, and the way it turned out.

Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tomcats, and all them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut—see him turn one summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flatfooted and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do most anything—and I believe him. Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor—Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog—and sing out, "Flies, Dan'l, flies!" and quicker'n you could wink, he'd spring straight up, and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor again as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straightfor'ard as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it came to fair and square jumping on a dead level, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up money on him as long as he had a red. Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be, for fellers that had traveled and been everywheres, all said he laid over any frog that ever they see.

Well, Smiley kept the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him downtown sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller—a stranger in the camp, he was—come across him with his box, and says:

"What might it be that you've got in the box?"

And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, "It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, maybe, but it an't—it's only just a frog."

And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, "H'm—so 'tis. Well, what's he good for?"

"Well," Smiley says, easy and careless, "he's good enough for one thing, I should judge—he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county."

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog."

"Maybe you don't," Smiley says. "Maybe you understand frogs, and maybe you don't understand 'em; maybe you've had experience, and maybe you an't only a amature, as it were. Anyways, I've got my opinion, and I'll risk forty dollars that he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county."

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad like, "Well, I'm only a stranger here, and I an't got no frog; but if I had a frog, I'd bet you."

And then Smiley says, “That’s all right—that’s all right—if you’ll hold my box a minute, I’ll go and get you a frog.” And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley’s and set down to wait.

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a teaspoon and filled him full of quail shot—filled him pretty near up to his chin—and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

“Now, if you’re ready, set him alongside of Dan’l, with his fore-paws just even with Dan’l and I’ll give the word.” Then he says, “one—two—three—jump!” and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan’l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders—so—like a French-man, but it wan’t no use—he couldn’t budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn’t no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn’t have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulders—this way—at Dan’l, and says again, very deliberate, “Well, I don’t see no p’ints about that frog that’s any better’n any other frog.”

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan’l a long time, and at last he says, “I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw’d off for—I wonder if there an’t something the matter with him—he ’pears to look might baggy, somehow.” And he ketched Dan’l by the nap of the neck, and lifted him up and says, “Why, blame my cats, if he don’t weigh five pound!” and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man—he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketched him. And—

[Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.] And turning to me as he moved away, he said: “Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy—I an’t going to be gone a second.”

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond Jim Smiley would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and so I started away.

At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he buttonholed me and recommenced:

Well, thish-yer Smiley had a yaller one-eyed cow that didn’t have no tail, only jest a short stump like a bannanner, and—”

However, lacking both time and inclination, I did not wait to hear about the afflicted cow, but took my leave.

EXERCISES

1. How does Twain introduce the man who will tell the story?
2. What was John Smiley hobby? Should we call it a “hobby”?

3. How did Smiley make money out of his mare and out of his dog? What did you find funniest in each case?
4. Retell the story of the frog. Do you think Smiley deserved what the stranger did to him?
5. Do you know of any story on this topic of betting? Write briefly about it.

The War Prayer

By Mark Twain 1835-1910

It was a time of great and exalting excitement. The country was up in arms, the war was on, in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism; the drums were beating, the bands playing, the toy pistols popping, the bunched firecrackers hissing and spluttering; on every hand and far down the receding and fading spread of roofs and balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags flashed in the sun; daily the young volunteers marched down the wide avenue gay and fine in their new uniforms, the proud fathers and mothers and sisters and sweethearts cheering them with voices choked with happy emotion as they swung by; nightly the packed mass meetings listened, panting, to patriot oratory which stirred the deepest deeps of their hearts, and which they interrupted at briefest intervals with cyclones of applause, the tears running down their cheeks the while; in the churches the pastors preached devotion to flag and country, and invoked the God of Battles beseeching His aid in our good cause in outpourings of fervid eloquence which moved every listener. It was indeed a glad and gracious time, and the half dozen rash spirits that ventured to disapprove of the war and cast a doubt upon its righteousness straightway got such a stern and angry warning that for their personal safety's sake they quickly shrank out of sight and offended no more in that way.

Sunday morning came — next day the battalions would leave for the front; the church was filled; the volunteers were there, their young faces alight with martial dreams — visions of the stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender! Then home from the war, bronzed heroes, welcomed, adored, submerged in golden seas of glory! With the volunteers sat their dear ones, proud, happy, and envied by the neighbors and friends who had no sons and brothers to send forth to the field of honor, there to win for the flag, or, failing, die the noblest of noble deaths. The service proceeded; a war chapter from the Old Testament was read; the first prayer was said; it was followed by an organ burst that shook the building, and with one impulse the house rose, with glowing eyes and beating hearts, and poured out that tremendous invocation

"God the all-terrible! Thou who ordainest! Thunder thy clarion and lightning thy sword!"

Then came the “long” prayer. None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading and moving and beautiful language. The burden of its supplication was, that an ever-merciful and benignant Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers, and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work; bless them, shield them in the day of battle and the hour of peril, bear them in His mighty hand, make them strong and confident, invincible in the bloody onset; help them to crush the foe, grant to them and to their flag and country imperishable honor and glory —

An aged stranger entered and moved with slow and noiseless step up the main aisle, his eyes fixed upon the minister, his long body clothed in a robe that reached to his feet, his head bare, his white hair descending in a frothy cataract to his shoulders, his seamy face unnaturally pale, pale even to ghastliness. With all eyes following him and wondering, he made his silent way; without pausing, he ascended to the preacher’s side and stood there waiting. With shut lids the preacher, unconscious of his presence, continued with his moving prayer, and at last finished it with the words, uttered in fervent appeal, “Bless our arms, grant us the victory, O Lord our God, Father and Protector of our land and flag!”

The stranger touched his arm, motioned him to step aside — which the startled minister did — and took his place. During some moments he surveyed the spellbound audience with solemn eyes, in which burned an uncanny light; then in a deep voice he said:

“I come from the Throne — bearing a message from Almighty God!” The words smote the house with a shock; if the stranger perceived it he gave no attention. “He has heard the prayer of His servant your shepherd, and will grant it if such shall be your desire after I, His messenger, shall have explained to you its import — that is to say, its full import. For it is like unto many of the prayers of men, in that it asks for more than he who utters it is aware of — except he pause and think.

“God’s servant and yours has prayed his prayer. Has he paused and taken thought? Is it one prayer? No, it is two — one uttered, the other not. Both have reached the ear of Him Who heareth all supplications, the spoken and the unspoken. Ponder this — keep it in mind. If you would beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware! lest without intent you invoke a curse upon a neighbor at the same time. If you pray for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it, by that act you are possibly praying for a curse upon some neighbor’s crop which may not need rain and can be injured by it.

“You have heard your servant’s prayer — the uttered part of it. I am commissioned of God to put into words the other part of it — that part which the pastor — and also you in your hearts — fervently prayed silently. And ignorantly and unthinkingly? God grant that it was so! You heard these words: ’Grant us the victory, O Lord our God!’ That is sufficient. the ‘whole’ of the uttered prayer is compact into those pregnant words. Elaborations were not necessary. When you have prayed for victory you have prayed for many unmentioned results which follow victory—‘must’ follow it, cannot help but follow it. Upon the listening spirit of God fell also the unspoken part of the prayer. He commandeth me to put it into words. Listen!

“O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle — be Thou near them! With them — in spirit — we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it — for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the Source of Love, and Who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Amen.

(‘After a pause.’) “Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! The messenger of the Most High waits!”

It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said.

EXERCISES

By the turn of the Nineteenth Century, Mark Twain began to worry seriously about imperialist policies and wars in places like South Africa, China, and the Philippines. In this story, the author turns his satire to attack chauvinism, which, in his eyes, can make people blind to the real causes of War.

1. Describe the excitement that swept the country.
2. What happened to those who disagreed?
3. Who gathered in the church on Sunday morning? What were their dreams?
4. According to the stranger, what part of the prayer was missing? Quote some examples.
5. What did the stranger mean by what he said?
6. Scrutinize the last statement. What does Twain want to say with such closing idea?
7. Is there any recent war to which the message of this story could be applied? Explain.
8. Contrast Twain’s position with that of Howells in “Editha”, in this selection

The Lady or the Tiger?

By Frank Stockton 1834-1902 (biography missing)

IN THE very olden time, there lived a semi-barbaric king, whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbors, were still large, florid, and untrammelled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing; and, when he and himself agreed upon any thing, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight, and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism had become semified was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valor, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheatre, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished. Or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena,—a structure which well deserved its name; for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely from the brain of this man, who, every barleycorn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

When all the people had assembled in the galleries, and the king, surrounded by his court, sat high up on his throne of royal state on one side of the arena, he gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheatre. Directly opposite him, on the other side of the enclosed space, were two doors, exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial, to walk directly to these doors and open one of them. He could open either door he pleased: he was subject to no guidance or influence but that of the aforementioned impartial and incorruptible chance. If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger, the fiercest and most cruel that could be procured, which immediately sprang upon him, and tore him to pieces, as a punishment for his guilt. The moment that the case of the criminal was thus decided,

doleful iron bells were clanged, great wails went up from the hired mourners posted on the outer rim of the arena, and the vast audience, with bowed heads and downcast hearts, wended slowly their homeward way, mourning greatly that one so young and fair, or so old and respected, should have merited so dire a fate.

But, if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects; and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward of his innocence. It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family, or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selection: the king allowed no such subordinate arrangements to interfere with his great scheme of retribution and reward. The exercises, as in the other instance, took place immediately, and in the arena. Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers' and dancing maidens blowing joyous airs on golden horns and treading on measure, advanced to where the pair stood side by side; and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnized. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted glad hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

This was the king's semi-barbaric method of administering justice. Its perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady: he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest idea whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married. On some occasions the tiger came out of one door, and on some out of the other. The decisions of this tribunal were not only fair, they were positively determinate: the accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty; and, if innocent, he was rewarded on the spot, whether he liked it or not. There was no escape from the judgments of the king's arena.

The institution was a very popular one. When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty lent an interest to the occasion which it could not otherwise have attained. Thus, the masses were entertained and pleased, and the thinking part of the community could bring no charge of unfairness against this plan; for did not the accused person have the whole matter in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter as blooming as his most florid fancies, and with a soul as fervent and imperious as his own. As is usual in such cases, she was the apple of his eye, and was loved by him above all humanity. Among his courtiers was a young man of that fineness of blood and lowness of station common to the conventional heroes of romance who love royal maidens. This royal maiden was well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom; and she loved him with an ardor that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong. This love affair moved on happily for many months, until one day the king happened to discover its existence. He did not hesitate nor waver in regard to his duty in the premises. The youth was immediately cast into prison, and a day was appointed for his trial in the king's arena. This, of course, was an especially important occasion; and his majesty, as well as all the people, was greatly interested in the workings and development of this trial. Never before had such a case

occurred; never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of a king. In after-years such things became commonplace enough; but then they were, in no slight degree, novel and startling.

The tiger-cages of the kingdom were searched for the most savage and relentless beasts, from which the fiercest monster might be selected for the arena; and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges, in order that the young man might have a fitting bride in case fate did not determine for him a different destiny. Of course, everybody knew that the deed with which the accused was charged had been done. He had loved the princess, and neither he, she, nor any one else thought of denying the fact; but the king would not think of allowing any fact of this kind to interfere with the workings of the tribunal, in which he took such great delight and satisfaction. No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of; and the king would take an aesthetic pleasure in watching the course of events, which would determine whether or not the young man had done wrong in allowing himself to love the princess.

The appointed day arrived. From far and near the people gathered, and thronged the great galleries of the arena; and crowds, unable to gain admittance, massed themselves against its outside walls. The king and his court were in their places, opposite the twin doors,—those fateful portals, so terrible in their similarity.

All was ready. The signal was given. A door beneath the royal party opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful, fair, his appearance was greeted with a low hum of admiration and anxiety. Half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. No wonder the princess loved him! What a terrible thing for him to be there!

As the youth advanced into the arena, he turned, as the custom was, to bow to the king: but he did not think at all of that royal personage; his eyes were fixed upon the princess, who sat to the right of her father. Had it not been for the moiety of barbarism in her nature, it is probable that lady would not have been there; but her intense and fervid soul would not allow her to be absent on an occasion in which she was so terribly interested. From the moment that the decree had gone forth, that her lover should decide his fate in the king's arena, she had thought of nothing, night or day, but this great event and the various subjects connected with it. Possessed of more power, influence, and force of character than any one who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done,—she had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms, that lay behind those doors, stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady. Through these thick doors, heavily curtained with skins on the inside, it was impossible that any noise or suggestion should come from within to the person who should approach to raise the latch of one of them; but gold, and the power of a woman's will, had brought the secret to the princess.

And not only did she know in which room stood the lady ready to emerge, all blushing and radiant, should her door be opened, but she knew who the lady was. It was one of the fairest and loveliest of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth, should he be proved innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him; and the princess hated her. Often had she seen, or imagined that she had seen, this fair creature throwing glances of admiration upon the person of her lover, and sometimes she thought

these glances were perceived and even returned. Now and then she had seen them talking together; it was but for a moment or two, but much can be said in a brief space; it may have been on most unimportant topics, but how could she know that? The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door.

When her lover turned and looked at her, and his eye met hers as she sat there paler and whiter than any one in the vast ocean of anxious faces about her, he saw, by that power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger, and behind which stood the lady. He had expected her to know it. He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had made plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers-on, even to the king. The only hope for the youth in which there was any element of certainty was based upon the success of the princess in discovering this mystery; and the moment he looked upon her, he saw she had succeeded, as in his soul he knew she would succeed.

Then it was that his quick and anxious glance asked the question: “Which?” It was as plain to her as if he shouted it from where he stood. There was not an instant to be lost. The question was asked in a rush; it must be answered in another.

Her right arm lay on the cushioned parapet before her. She raised her hand, and made a slight, quick movement toward the right. No one but her lover saw her. Every eye but his was fixed on the man in the arena.

He turned, and with a firm and rapid step he walked across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating, every breath was held, every eye was fixed immovably upon that man. Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right, and opened it.

Now, the point of the story is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady?

The more we reflect upon this question, the harder it is to answer. It involves a study of the human heart which leads us through devious mazes of passion, out of which it is difficult to find our way. Think of it, fair reader, not as if the decision of the question depended upon yourself, but upon that hot-blooded, semi-barbaric princess, her soul at a white heat beneath the combined fires of despair and jealousy. She had lost him, but who should have him?

How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands, as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger! But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady! How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman, with her flushing cheek and sparkling eye of triumph; when she had seen him lead her forth, his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life; when she had heard the glad shouts from the multitude, and the wild ringing of the happy bells; when she had seen the priest, with his joyous followers, advance to the couple, and make them man and wife

before her very eyes; and when she had seen them walk away together upon their path of flowers, followed by the tremendous shouts of the hilarious multitude, in which her one despairing shriek was lost and drowned!

Would it not be better for him to die at once, and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity?

And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!

Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation. She had known she would be asked, she had decided what she would answer, and, without the slightest hesitation, she had moved her hand to the right.

The question of her decision is one not to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one person able to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door,—the lady, or the tiger?

EXERCISES

1. Make an outline of the story for retelling.
2. Answer the final question of the story. Provide arguments for your choice.
3. Prepare at least six exercises for your students' reading and understanding of the story. Include questions to clarify the students' position on the fairness of the king's "trials" and on either of the princess's possible decision.

The outcasts of Poker Flat

By Bret Harte (1836-1902) (biography missing)

AS Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the twenty-third of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Mr. Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern in these indications. Whether he was conscious of any predisposing cause, was another question. "I reckon they're after somebody," he reflected; "likely it's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

In point of fact, Poker Flat was "after somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and

ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard of two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies. It is but due to the sex, however, to state that their impropriety was professional, and it was only in such easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment.

Mr. Oakhurst was right in supposing that he was included in this category. A few of the committee had urged hanging him as a possible example, and a sure method of reimbursing themselves from his pockets of the sums he had won from them. “It’s agin justice,” said Jim Wheeler, “to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp — an entire stranger — carry away our money.” But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr. Oakhurst overruled this narrower local prejudice.

Mr. Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less coolly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept Fate. With him life was at best an uncertain game, and he recognized the usual percentage in favor of the dealer.

A body of armed men accompanied the deported wickedness of Poker Flat to the outskirts of the settlement. Besides Mr. Oakhurst, who was known to be a coolly desperate man, and for whose intimidation the armed escort was intended, the expatriated party consisted of a young woman familiarly known as “The Duchess”; another, who had won the title of “Mother Shipton”; and “Uncle Billy,” a suspected sluice-robber and confirmed drunkard. The cavalcade provoked no comments from the spectators, nor was any word uttered by the escort. Only, when the gulch which marked the uttermost limit of Poker Flat was reached, the leader spoke briefly and to the point. The exiles were forbidden to return at the peril of their lives.

As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from Mother Shipton, and a Parthian volley of expletives from Uncle Billy. The philosophic Oakhurst alone remained silent. He listened calmly to Mother Shipton’s desire to cut somebody’s heart out, to the repeated statements of the Duchess that she would die in the road, and to the alarming oaths that seemed to be bumped out of Uncle Billy as he rode forward. With the easy good-humor characteristic of his class, he insisted upon exchanging his own riding-horse, “Five Spot,” for the sorry mule which the Duchess rode. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy. The young woman readjusted her somewhat draggled plumes with a feeble, faded coquetry; Mother Shipton eyed the possessor of “Five Spot” with malevolence, and Uncle Billy included the whole party in one sweeping anathema.

The road to Sandy Bar — a camp that, not having as yet experienced the regenerating influences of Poker Flat, consequently seemed to offer some invitation to the emigrants — lay over a steep mountain range. It was distant a day’s severe travel. In that advanced season, the party soon passed out of the moist, temperate regions of the foot-hills into the dry, cold, bracing air of the Sierras. The trail was narrow and difficult. At noon the

Duchess, rolling out of her saddle upon the ground, declared her intention of going no farther, and the party halted.

The spot was singularly wild and impressive. A wooded amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs of naked granite, sloped gently toward the crest of another precipice that overlooked the valley. It was, undoubtedly, the most suitable spot for a camp, had camping been advisable. But Mr. Oakhurst knew that scarcely half the journey to Sandy Bar was accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay. This fact he pointed out to his companions curtly, with a philosophic commentary on the folly of "throwing up their hand before the game was played out." But they were furnished with liquor, which in this emergency stood them in place of food, fuel, rest, and prescience. In spite of his remonstrances, it was not long before they were more or less under its influence. Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored. Mr. Oakhurst alone remained erect, leaning against a rock, calmly surveying them.

Mr. Oakhurst did not drink. It interfered with a profession which required coolness, impassiveness, and presence of mind, and, in his own language, he "could n't afford it." As he gazed at his recumbent fellow-exiles, the loneliness begotten of his pariah-trade, his habits of life, his very vices, for the first time seriously oppressed him. He bestirred himself in dusting his black clothes, washing his hands and face, and other acts characteristic of his studiously neat habits, and for a moment forgot his annoyance. The thought of deserting his weaker and more pitiable companions never perhaps occurred to him. Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious. He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him; at the sky, ominously clouded; at the valley below, already deepening into shadow. And, doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.

A horseman slowly ascended the trail. In the fresh, open face of the new-comer Mr. Oakhurst recognized Tom Simson, otherwise known as "The Innocent" of Sandy Bar. He had met him some months before over a "little game," and had, with perfect equanimity, won the entire fortune — amounting to some forty dollars — of that guileless youth. After the game was finished, Mr. Oakhurst drew the youthful speculator behind the door and thus addressed him: "Tommy, you're a good little man, but you can't gamble worth a cent. Don't try it over again." He then handed him his money back, pushed him gently from the room, and so made a devoted slave of Tom Simson.

There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr. Oakhurst. He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. "Alone?" No, not exactly alone; in fact (a giggle), he had run away with Piney Woods. Didn't Mr. Oakhurst remember Piney? She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House? They had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Woods had objected, and so they had run away, and were going to Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. And they were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found a place to camp and company. All this the Innocent delivered rapidly, while Piney, a stout, comely

damsel of fifteen, emerged from behind the pine-tree, where she had been blushing unseen, and rode to the side of her lover.

Mr. Oakhurst seldom troubled himself with sentiment, still less with propriety; but he had a vague idea that the situation was not fortunate. He retained, however, his presence of mind sufficiently to kick Uncle Billy, who was about to say something, and Uncle Billy was sober enough to recognize in Mr. Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavored to dissuade Tom Simson from delaying further, but in vain. He even pointed out the fact that there was no provision, nor means of making a camp. But, unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a log-house near the trail. "Piney can stay with Mrs. Oakhurst," said the Innocent, pointing to the Duchess, "and I can shift for myself."

Nothing but Mr. Oakhurst's admonishing foot saved Uncle Billy from bursting into a roar of laughter. As it was, he felt compelled to retire up the cañon until he could recover his gravity. There he confided the joke to the tall pine-trees, with many slaps of his leg, contortions of his face, and the usual profanity. But when he returned to the party, he found them seated by a fire — for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast — in apparently amicable conversation. Piney was actually talking in an impulsive, girlish fashion the Duchess, who was listening with an interest and animation she had not shown for many days. The Innocent was holding forth, apparently with equal effect, to Mr. Oakhurst and Mother Shipton, who was actually relaxing into amiability. "Is this yer a d—d picnic?" said Uncle Billy, with inward scorn, as he surveyed the sylvan group, the glancing firelight, and the tethered animals in the foreground. Suddenly an idea mingled with the alcoholic fumes that disturbed his brain. It was apparently of a jocular nature, for he felt impelled to slap his leg again and cram his fist into his mouth.

As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine-trees, and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine-boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted, they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave it, — snow!

He started to his feet with the intention of awakening the sleepers, for there was no time to lose. But turning to where Uncle Billy had been lying, he found him gone. A suspicion leaped to his brain and a curse to his lips. He ran to the spot where the mules had been tethered; they were no longer there. The tracks were already rapidly disappearing in the snow.

The momentary excitement brought Mr. Oakhurst back to the fire with his usual calm. He did not waken the sleepers. The Innocent slumbered peacefully, with a smile on his good-humored, freckled face; the virgin Piney

slept beside her frailer sisters as sweetly as though attended by celestial guardians, and Mr. Oakhurst, drawing his blanket over his shoulders, stroked his mustaches and waited for the dawn. It came slowly in a whirling mist of snow-flakes, that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed. He looked over the valley, and summed up the present and future in two words, — "snowed in!" A careful inventory of the provisions, which, fortunately for the party, had been stored within the hut, and so escaped the felonious fingers of Uncle Billy, disclosed the fact that with care and prudence they might last ten days longer. "That is," said Mr. Oakhurst, sotto voce to the Innocent, "if you're willing to board us. If you ain't — and perhaps you'd better not — you can wait till Uncle Billy gets back with provisions." For some occult reason, Mr. Oakhurst could not bring himself to disclose Uncle Billy's rascality, and so offered the hypothesis that he had wandered from the camp and had accidentally stampeded the animals. He dropped a warning to the Duchess and Mother Shipton, who of course knew the facts of their associate's defection. "They'll find out the truth about us all when they find out anything," he added, significantly, "and there's no good frightening them now."

Tom Simson not only put all his worldly store at the disposal of Mr. Oakhurst, but seemed to enjoy the prospect of their enforced seclusion. "We'll have a good camp for a week, and then the snow'll melt, and we'll all go back together." The cheerful gayety of the young man, and Mr. Oakhurst's calm infected the others. The Innocent, with the aid of pine-boughs, extemporized a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the rearrangement of the interior with a taste and tact that opened the blue eyes of that provincial maiden to their fullest extent. "I reckon now you're used to fine things at Poker Flat," said Piney. The Duchess turned away sharply to conceal something that reddened her cheeks through its professional tint, and Mother Shipton requested Piney not to "chatter." But when Mr. Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of happy laughter echoed from the rocks. He stopped in some alarm, and his thoughts first naturally reverted to the whiskey, which he had prudently cachéd. "And yet it don't somehow sound like whiskey," said the gambler. It was not until he caught sight of the blazing fire through the still-blinding storm and the group around it that he settled to the conviction that it was "square fun."

Whether Mr. Oakhurst had cachéd his cards with the whiskey as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. It was certain that, in Mother Shipton's words, he "didn't say cards once" during that evening. Haply the time was beguiled by an accordion, produced somewhat ostentatiously by Tom Simson from his pack. Notwithstanding some difficulties attending the manipulation of this instrument, Piney Woods managed to pluck several reluctant melodies from its keys, to an accompaniment by the Innocent on a pair of bone castinets. But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation. I fear that a certain defiant tone and Covenanter's swing to its chorus, rather than any devotional quality, caused it speedily to infect the others, who at last joined in the refrain:—

"I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,

And I'm bound to die in His army."

The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heavenward, as if in token of the vow.

At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp. Mr. Oakhurst, whose professional habits had enabled him to live on the smallest possible amount of sleep, in dividing the watch with Tom Simson, somehow managed to take upon himself the greater part of that duty. He excused himself to the Innocent, by saying that he had "often been a week without sleep." "Doing what?" asked Tom. "Poker!" replied Oakhurst, sententiously; "when a man gets a streak of luck, — nigger-luck, — he don't get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck," continued the gambler, reflectively, "is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it's bound to change. And it's finding out when it's going to change that makes you. We've had a streak of bad luck since we left Poker Flat, — you come along, and slap you get into it, too. If you can hold your cards right along you're all right. For," added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance, —

"I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
And I'm bound to die in His army."

The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provisions for the morning meal. It was one of the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful commiseration of the past. But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut, — a hopeless, uncharted, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. Through the marvellously clear air the smoke of the pastoral village of Poker Flat rose miles away. Mother Shipton saw it, and from a remote pinnacle of her rocky fastness, hurled in that direction a final malediction. It was her last vituperative attempt, and perhaps for that reason was invested with a certain degree of sublimity. It did her good she privately informed the Duchess. "Just you go out there and cuss, and see." She then set herself to the task of amusing "the child," as she and the Duchess were pleased to call Piney. Piney was no chicken, but it was a soothing and original theory of the pair thus to account for the fact that she didn't swear and was n't improper.

When night crept up again through the gorges, the reedy notes of the accordion rose and fell in fitful spasms and long-drawn gasps by the flickering camp-fire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney, — story-telling. Neither Mr. Oakhurst nor his female companions caring to relate their personal experiences, this plan would have failed, too, but for the Innocent. Some months before he had chanced upon a stray copy of Mr. Pope's ingenious translation of the Iliad. He now proposed to narrate the principal incidents of that poem — having thoroughly mastered the argument and fairly forgotten the words — in the current vernacular of Sandy Bar. And so for the rest of that night the Homeric

demigods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the cañon seemed to bow to the wrath of the son of Peleus. Mr. Oakhurst listened with quiet satisfaction. Most especially was he interested in the fate of "Ash-heels," as the Innocent persisted in denominating the "swift-footed Achilles."

So with small food and much of Homer and the accordion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts. The sun again forsook them, and again from leaden skies the snow-flakes were sifted over the land. Day by day closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white, that towered twenty feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. The lovers turned from the dreary prospect and looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. Mr. Oakhurst settled himself coolly to the losing game before him. The Duchess, more cheerful than she had been, assumed the care of Piney. Only Mother Shipton — once the strongest of the party — seemed to sicken and fade. At midnight on the tenth day she called Oakhurst to her side. "I'm going," she said, in a voice of querulous weakness, "but don't say anything about it. Don't waken the kids. Take the bundle from under my head and open it." Mr. Oakhurst did so. It contained Mother Shipton's rations for the last week, untouched. "Give 'em to the child," she said, pointing to the sleeping Piney. "You've starved yourself," said the gambler. "That's what they call it," said the woman, querulously, as she lay down again, and, turning her face to the wall, passed quietly away.

The accordion and the bones were put aside that day, and Homer was forgotten. When the body of Mother Shipton had been committed to the snow, Mr. Oakhurst took the Innocent aside, and showed him a pair of snow-shoes, which he had fashioned from the old pack-saddle. "There's one chance in a hundred to save her yet," he said, pointing to Piney; "but it's there," he added, pointing toward Poker Flat. "If you can reach there in two days she's safe." "And you?" asked Tom Simson. "I'll stay here," was the curt reply.

The lovers parted with a long embrace. "You are not going, too?" said the Duchess, as she saw Mr. Oakhurst apparently waiting to accompany him. "As far as the cañon," he replied. He turned suddenly, and kissed the Duchess, leaving her pallid face aflame, and her trembling limbs rigid with amazement.

Night came, but not Mr. Oakhurst. It brought the storm again and the whirling snow. Then the Duchess, feeding the fire, found that some one had quietly piled beside the hut enough fuel to last a few days longer. The tears rose to her eyes, but she hid them from Piney.

The women slept but little. In the morning, looking into each other's faces, they read their fate. Neither spoke; but Piney, accepting the position of the stronger, drew near and placed her arm around the Duchess's waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting pines, invaded the very hut.

Toward morning they found themselves unable to feed the fire, which gradually died away. As the embers slowly blackened, the Duchess crept closer to Piney, and broke the silence of many hours: "Piney, can you pray?" "No, dear," said Piney, simply. The Duchess, without knowing exactly why, felt relieved, and, putting her

head upon Piney's shoulder, spoke no more. And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.

The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine-boughs, flew like white-winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon through the rifted clouds looked down upon what had been the camp. But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told from the equal peace that dwelt upon them, which was she that had sinned. Even the law of Poker Flat recognized this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other's arms.

But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pine-trees, they found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife. It bore the following, written in pencil, in a firm hand:—

†
BENEATH THIS TREE
LIES THE BODY
OF
JOHN OAKHURST,
WHO STRUCK A STREAK OF BAD LUCK
ON THE 23D OF NOVEMBER, 1850,
AND
HANDED IN HIS CHECKS
ON THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1850.
‡

And pulseless and cold, with a Derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

EXERCISES

The miners' frontier in the 1850s provides the background for a story of excellent manufacture and ontological connotations. Harte was able to recreate the Western atmosphere and to shape conspicuously original characters that became stereotypes for thousands of stories and movies in the following decades and up to the present. From the very beginning, Harte's slanted glance reveals the weakness of small town morality with a sardonic mood. He, then, builds characters and situations with craftsmanship leading the reader into a critical

conflict in which the worst and the best of human soul are revealed. The theme deals with big issues of human nature, namely, its vocation of sacrifice when innocence and purity are at stake. Harte also challenges established values systems and confirms endless trust on the humane core of people.

EXERCISES

1. Poker Flat's small town morality made some people unacceptable. How does Harte build irony about that?
2. The camping in the mountains serves the writer as a proper scenario to characterize each member of the group. How is each character depicted?
3. Why did the "Innocent" join the group? Who was with him?
4. What events put the travelers in a situation of extreme danger in the mountains?
5. In the unfolding events, who committed suicide? Why?
6. Why was Oakhurst “the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat”?
7. What made these tough characters reveal the hidden stuff their harts were made of?

Editha

By William Dean Howells 1837-1920

THE air was thick with the war feeling, like the electricity of a storm which had not yet burst. Editha sat looking out into the hot spring afternoon, with her lips parted, and panting with the intensity of the question whether she could let him go. She had decided that she could not let him stay, when she saw him at the end of the still leafless avenue, making slowly up towards the house, with his head down and his figure relaxed. She ran impatiently out on the veranda, to the edge of the steps, and imperatively demanded greater haste of him with her will before she called aloud to him: “George!”

He had quickened his pace in mystical response to her mystical urgence, before he could have heard her; now he looked up and answered, “Well?”

“Oh, how united we are!” she exulted, and then she swooped down the steps to him, “What is it?” she cried.

“It’s war,” he said. And he pulled her up to him and kissed her.

She kissed him back intensely, but irrelevantly, as to their passion, and uttered from deep in her throat. “How glorious!”

“It’s war,” he repeated, without consenting to her sense of it; and she did not know just what to think at first. She never knew what to think of him; that made his mystery, his charm. All through their courtship, which was

contemporaneous with the growth of the war feeling, she had been puzzled by his want of seriousness about it. He seemed to despise it even more than he abhorred it. She could have understood his abhorring any sort of bloodshed; that would have been a survival of his old life when he thought he would be a minister, and before he changed and took up the law. But making light of a cause so high and noble seemed to show a want of earnestness at the core of his being. Not but that she felt herself able to cope with a congenital defect of that sort, and make his love for her save him from himself. Now perhaps the miracle was already wrought in him. In the presence of the tremendous fact that he announced, all triviality seemed to have gone out of him; she began to feel that. He sank down on the top step, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, while she poured out upon him her question of the origin and authenticity of his news.

All the while, in her duplex emotioning, she was aware that now at the very beginning she must put a guard upon herself against urging him, by any word or act, to take the part that her whole soul willed him to take, for the completion of her ideal of him. He was very nearly perfect as he was, and he must be allowed to perfect himself. But he was peculiar, and he might very well be reasoned out of his peculiarity. Before her reasoning went her emotioning: her nature pulling upon his nature, her womanhood upon his manhood, without her knowing the means she was using to the end she was willing. She had always supposed that the man who won her would have done something to win her; she did not know what, but something. George Gearson had simply asked her for her love, on the way home from a concert, and she gave her love to him, without, as it were, thinking. But now, it flashed upon her, if he could do something worthy to have won her—be a hero, her hero—it would be even better than if he had done it before asking her; it would be grander. Besides, she had believed in the war from the beginning.

“But don’t you see, dearest,” she said, “that it wouldn’t have come to this if it hadn’t been in the order of Providence? And I call any war glorious that is for the liberation of people who have been struggling for years against the cruelest oppression. Don’t you think so, too?”

“I suppose so,” he returned, languidly. “But war! Is it glorious to break the peace of the world?”

“That ignoble peace! It was no peace at all, with that crime and shame at our very gates.” She was conscious of parroting the current phrases of the newspapers, but it was no time to pick and choose her words. She must sacrifice anything to the high ideal she had for him, and after a good deal of rapid argument she ended with the climax: “But now it doesn’t matter about the how or why. Since the war has come, all that is gone. There are no two sides any more. There is nothing now but our country.”

He sat with his eyes closed and his head leant back against the veranda, and he remarked, with a vague smile, as if musing aloud, “Our country—right or wrong.”

“Yes, right or wrong!” she returned, fervidly. “I’ll go and get you some lemonade.” She rose rustling, and whisked away; when she came back with two tall glasses of clouded liquid on a tray, and the ice clucking in them, he still sat as she had left him, and she said, as if there had been no interruption: “But there is no question of wrong in

this case. I call it a sacred war. A war for liberty and humanity, if ever there was one. And I know you will see it just as I do, yet."

He took half the lemonade at a gulp, and he answered as he set the glass down: "I know you always have the highest ideal. When I differ from you I ought to doubt myself."

A generous sob rose in Editha's throat for the humility of a man, so very nearly perfect, who was willing to put himself below her.

Besides, she felt, more subliminally, that he was never so near slipping through her fingers as when he took that meek way.

"You shall not say that! Only, for once I happen to be right." She seized his hand in her two hands, and poured her soul from her eyes into his. "Don't you think so?" she entreated him.

He released his hand and drank the rest of his lemonade, and she added, "Have mine, too," but he shook his head in answering, "I've no business to think so, unless I act so, too."

Her heart stopped a beat before it pulsed on with leaps that she felt in her neck. She had noticed that strange thing in men: they seemed to feel bound to do what they believed, and not think a thing was finished when they said it, as girls did. She knew what was in his mind, but she pretended not, and she said, "Oh, I am not sure," and then faltered.

He went on as if to himself, without apparently heeding her: "There's only one way of proving one's faith in a thing like this."

She could not say that she understood, but she did understand.

He went on again. "If I believed—if I felt as you do about this war— Do you wish me to feel as you do?"

Now she was really not sure; so she said: "George, I don't know what you mean."

He seemed to muse away from her as before. "There is a sort of fascination in it. I suppose that at the bottom of his heart every man would like at times to have his courage tested, to see how he would act."

"How can you talk in that ghastly way?"

"It is rather morbid. Still, that's what it comes to, unless you're swept away by ambition or driven by conviction. I haven't the conviction or the ambition, and the other thing is what it comes to with me. I ought to have been a preacher, after all; then I couldn't have asked it of myself, as I must, now I'm a lawyer. And you believe it's a holy war, Editha?" he suddenly addressed her. "Oh, I know you do! But you wish me to believe so, too?"

She hardly knew whether he was mocking or not, in the ironical way he always had with her plainer mind. But the only thing was to be outspoken with him.

"George, I wish you to believe whatever you think is true, at any and every cost. If I've tried to talk you into anything, I take it all back."

"Oh, I know that, Editha. I know how sincere you are, and how— I wish I had your undoubting spirit! I'll think it over; I'd like to believe as you do. But I don't, now; I don't, indeed. It isn't this war alone; though this seems

peculiarly wanton and needless; but it's every war—so stupid; it makes me sick. Why shouldn't this thing have been settled reasonably?"

"Because," she said, very throatily again, "God meant it to be war."

"You think it was God? Yes, I suppose that is what people wi11 say."

"Do you suppose it would have been war if God hadn't meant it?"

"I don't know. Sometimes it seems as if God had put this world into men's keeping to work it as they pleased."

"Now, George, that is blasphemy."

"Well, I won't blaspheme. I'll try to believe in your pocket Providence," he said, and then he rose to go.

"Why don't you stay to dinner?" Dinner at Balcom's Works was at one o'clock.

"I'll come back to supper, if you'll let me. Perhaps I shall bring you a convert."

"Well, you may come back, on that condition."

"All right. If I don't come, you'll understand."

He went away without kissing her, and she felt it a suspension of their engagement. It all interested her intensely; she was undergoing a tremendous experience, and she was being equal to it. While she stood looking after him, her mother came out through one of the long windows onto the veranda, with a catlike softness and vagueness.

"Why didn't he stay to dinner?"

"Because—because—war has been declared," Editha pronounced, without turning.

Her mother said, "Oh, my!" and then said nothing more until she had sat down in one of the large Shaker chairs and rocked herself for some time. Then she closed whatever tacit passage of thought there had been in her mind with the spoken words: "Well, I hope he won't go."

"And I hope he will," the girl said, and confronted her mother with a stormy exaltation that would have frightened any creature less unimpressionable than a cat.

Her mother rocked herself again for an interval of cogitation. What she arrived at in speech was: "Well, I guess you've done a wicked thing, Editha Balcom."

The girl said, as she passed indoors through the same window her mother had come out by: "I haven't done anything—yet."

In her room, she put together all her letters and gifts from Gearson, down to the withered petals of the first flower he had offered, with that timidity of his veiled in that irony of his. In the heart of the packet she enshrined her engagement ring which she had restored to the pretty box he had brought it her in. Then she sat down, if not calmly yet strongly, and wrote:

"GEORGE:—I understood when you left me. But I think we had better emphasize your meaning that if we cannot be one in everything we had better be one in nothing. So I am sending these things for your keeping till you have made up your mind.

“I shall always love you, and therefore I shall never marry any one else. But the man I marry must love his country first of all, and be able to say to me,

“‘I could not love thee, dear, so much,

Loved I not honor more.’

“There is no honor above America with me. In this great hour there is no other honor.

“Your heart will make my words clear to you. I had never expected to say so much, but it has come upon me that I must say the utmost. Editha.”

She thought she had worded her letter well, worded it in a way that could not be bettered; all had been implied and nothing expressed.

She had it ready to send with the packet she had tied with red, white, and blue ribbon, when it occurred to her that she was not just to him, that she was not giving him a fair chance. He had said he would go and think it over, and she was not waiting. She was pushing, threatening, compelling. That was not a woman’s part. She must leave him free, free, free. She could not accept for her country or herself a forced sacrifice.

In writing her letter she had satisfied the impulse from which it sprang; she could well afford to wait till he had thought it over. She put the packet and the letter by, and rested serene in the consciousness of having done what was laid upon her by her love itself to do, and yet used patience, mercy, justice.

She had her reward. Gearson did not come to tea, but she had given him till morning, when, late at night there came up from the village the sound of a fife and drum, with a tumult of voices, in shouting, singing, and laughing. The noise drew nearer and nearer; it reached the street end of the avenue; there it silenced itself, and one voice, the voice she knew best, rose over the silence. It fell; the air was filled with cheers; the fife and drum struck up, with the shouting, singing, and laughing again, but now retreating; and a single figure came hurrying up the avenue.

She ran down to meet her lover and clung to him. He was very gay, and he put his arm round her with a boisterous laugh. “Well, you must call me Captain now; or Cap, if you prefer; that’s what the boys call me. Yes, we’ve had a meeting at the town-hall, and everybody has volunteered; and they selected me for captain, and I’m going to the war, the big war, the glorious war, the holy war ordained by the pocket Providence that blesses butchery. Come along; let’s tell the whole family about it. Call them from their downy beds, father, mother, Aunt Hitty, and all the folks!”

But when they mounted the veranda steps he did not wait for a larger audience; he poured the story out upon Editha alone.

“There was a lot of speaking, and then some of the fools set up a shout for me. It was all going one way, and I thought it would be a good joke to sprinkle a little cold water on them. But you can’t do that with a crowd that adores you. The first thing I knew I was sprinkling hell-fire on them. ’Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war.’ That was the style. Now that it had come to the fight, there were no two parties; there was one country, and the thing

was to fight to a finish as quick as possible. I suggested volunteering then and there, and I wrote my name first of all on the roster. Then they elected me—that's all. I wish I had some ice-water."

She left him walking up and down the veranda, while she ran for the ice-pitcher and a goblet, and when she came back he was still walking up and down, shouting the story he had told her to her father and mother, who had come out more sketchily dressed than they commonly were by day. He drank goblet after goblet of the ice-water without noticing who was giving it, and kept on talking, and laughing through his talk wildly. "It's astonishing," he said, "how well the worse reason looks when you try to make it appear the better. Why, I believe I was the first convert to the war in that crowd to-night! I never thought I should like to kill a man; but now I shouldn't care; and the smokeless powder lets you see the man drop that you kill. It's all for the country! What a thing it is to have a country that can't be wrong, but if it is, is right, anyway!"

Editha had a great, vital thought, an inspiration. She set down the ice-pitcher on the veranda floor, and ran up-stairs and got the letter she had written him. When at last he noisily bade her father and mother, "Well, good-night. I forgot I woke you up; I sha'n't want any sleep myself," she followed him down the avenue to the gate. There, after the whirling words that seemed to fly away from her thoughts and refuse to serve them, she made a last effort to solemnize the moment that seemed so crazy, and pressed the letter she had written upon him.

"What's this?" he said. "Want me to mail it?"

"No, no. It's for you. I wrote it after you went this morning. Keep it—keep it—and read it sometime—" She thought, and then her inspiration came: "Read it if ever you doubt what you've done, or fear that I regret your having done it. Read it after you've started."

They strained each other in embraces that seemed as ineffective as their words, and he kissed her face with quick, hot breaths that were so unlike him, that made her feel as if she had lost her old lover and found a stranger in his place. The stranger said: "What a gorgeous flower you are, with your red hair, and your blue eyes that look black now, and your face with the color painted out by the white moonshine! Let me hold you under the chin, to see whether I love blood, you tiger-lily!" Then he laughed Gearson's laugh, and released her, scared and giddy. Within her wilfulness she had been frightened by a sense of subtler force in him, and mystically mastered as she had never been before.

She ran all the way back to the house, and mounted the steps panting. Her mother and father were talking of the great affair. Her mother said: "Wa'n't Mr. Gearson in rather of an excited state of mind? Didn't you think he acted curious?"

"Well, not for a man who'd just been elected captain and had set 'em up for the whole of Company A," her father chuckled back.

"What in the world do you mean, Mr. Balcom? Oh! There's Editha!" She offered to follow the girl indoors.

"Don't come, mother!" Editha called, vanishing.

Mrs. Balcom remained to reproach her husband. "I don't see much of anything to laugh at."

“Well, it’s catching. Caught it from Gearson. I guess it won’t be much of a war, and I guess Gearson don’t think so either. The other fellows will back down as soon as they see we mean it. I wouldn’t lose any sleep over it. I’m going back to bed, myself.”

Gearson came again next afternoon, looking pale and rather sick, but quite himself, even to his languid irony. “I guess I’d better tell you, Editha, that I consecrated myself to your god of battles last night by pouring too many libations to him down my own throat. But I’m all right now. One has to carry off the excitement, somehow.”

“Promise me,” she commanded, “that you’ll never touch it again!”

“What! Not let the cannikin clink? Not let the soldier drink? Well, I promise.”

“You don’t belong to yourself now; you don’t even belong to me. You belong to your country, and you have a sacred charge to keep yourself strong and well for your country’s sake. I have been thinking, thinking all night and all day long.”

“You look as if you had been crying a little, too,” he said, with his queer smile.

“That’s all past. I’ve been thinking, and worshipping you. Don’t you suppose I know all that you’ve been through, to come to this? I’ve followed you every step from your old theories and opinions.”

“Well, you’ve had a long row to hoe.”

“And I know you’ve done this from the highest motives—”

“Oh, there won’t be much pettifogging to do till this cruel war is—”

“And you haven’t simply done it for my sake. I couldn’t respect you if you had.”

“Well, then we’ll say I haven’t. A man that hasn’t got his own respect intact wants the respect of all the other people he can corner. But we won’t go into that. I’m in for the thing now, and we’ve got to face our future. My idea is that this isn’t going to be a very protracted struggle; we shall just scare the enemy to death before it comes to a fight at all. But we must provide for contingencies, Editha. If anything happens to me—”

“Oh, George!” She clung to him, sobbing.

“I don’t want you to feel foolishly bound to my memory. I should hate that, wherever I happened to be.”

“I am yours, for time and eternity—time and eternity.” She liked the words; they satisfied her famine for phrases.

“Well, say eternity; that’s all right; but time’s another thing; and I’m talking about time. But there is something! My mother! If anything happens—”

She winced, and he laughed. “You’re not the bold soldier-girl of yesterday!” Then he sobered. “If anything happens, I want you to help my mother out. She won’t like my doing this thing. She brought me up to think war a fool thing as well as a bad thing. My father was in the Civil War; all through it; lost his arm in it.” She thrilled with the sense of the arm round her; what if that should be lost? He laughed as if divining her: “Oh, it doesn’t run in the family, as far as I know!” Then he added gravely: “He came home with misgivings about war, and they grew on him. I guess he and mother agreed between them that I was to be brought up in his final mind about it; but that was before my time. I only knew him from my mother’s report of him and his opinions; I don’t know whether they were hers first; but they were hers last. This will be a blow to her. I shall have to write and tell her—”

He stopped, and she asked: “Would you like me to write, too, George?”

“I don’t believe that would do. No, I’ll do the writing. She’ll understand a little if I say that I thought the way to minimize it was to make war on the largest possible scale at once—that I felt I must have been helping on the war somehow if I hadn’t helped keep it from coming, and I knew I hadn’t; when it came, I had no right to stay out of it.”

Whether his sophistries satisfied him or not, they satisfied her. She clung to his breast, and whispered, with closed eyes and quivering lips: “Yes, yes, yes!”

“But if anything should happen, you might go to her and see what you could do for her. You know? It’s rather far off; she can’t leave her chair—”

“Oh, I’ll go, if it’s the ends of the earth! But nothing will happen! Nothing can! I—”

She felt her lifted with his rising, and Gearson was saying, with his arm still round her, to her father: “Well, we’re off at once, Mr. Balcom. We’re to be formally accepted at the capital, and then bunched up with the rest somehow, and sent into camp somewhere, and got to the front as soon as possible. We all want to be in the van, of course; we’re the first company to report to the Governor. I came to tell Editha, but I hadn’t got round to it.”

She saw him again for a moment at the capital, in the station, just before the train started southward with his regiment. He looked well, in his uniform, and very soldierly, but somehow girlish, too, with his clean-shaven face and slim figure. The manly eyes and the strong voice satisfied her, and his preoccupation with some unexpected details of duty flattered her. Other girls were weeping and bemoaning themselves, but she felt a sort of noble distinction in the abstraction, the almost unconsciousness, with which they parted. Only at the last moment he said: “Don’t forget my mother. It mayn’t be such a walk-over as I supposed,” and he laughed at the notion.

He waved his hand to her as the train moved off—she knew it among a score of hands that were waved to other girls from the platform of the car, for it held a letter which she knew was hers. Then he went inside the car to read it, doubtless, and she did not see him again. But she felt safe for him through the strength of what she called her love. What she called her God, always speaking the name in a deep voice and with the implication of a mutual understanding, would watch over him and keep him and bring him back to her. If with an empty sleeve, then he should have three arms instead of two, for both of hers should be his for life. She did not see, though, why she should always be thinking of the arm his father had lost.

There were not many letters from him, but they were such as she could have wished, and she put her whole strength into making hers such as she imagined he could have wished, glorifying and supporting him. She wrote to his mother glorifying him as their hero, but the brief answer she got was merely to the effect that Mrs. Gearson was not well enough to write herself, and thanking her for her letter by the hand of someone who called herself “Yrs truly, Mrs. W. J. Andrews.”

Editha determined not to be hurt, but to write again quite as if the answer had been all she expected. Before it seemed as if she could have written, there came news of the first skirmish, and in the list of the killed, which was

telegraphed as a trifling loss on our side, was Gearson's name. There was a frantic time of trying to make out that it might be, must be, some other Gearson; but the name and the company and the regiment and the State were too definitely given.

Then there was a lapse into depths out of which it seemed as if she never could rise again; then a lift into clouds far above all grief, black clouds, that blotted out the sun, but where she soared with him, with George—George! She had the fever that she expected of herself, but she did not die in it; she was not even delirious, and it did not last long. When she was well enough to leave her bed, her one thought was of George's mother, of his strangely worded wish that she should go to her and see what she could do for her. In the exaltation of the duty laid upon her—it buoyed her up instead of burdening her—she rapidly recovered.

Her father went with her on the long railroad journey from northern New York to western Iowa; he had business out at Davenport, and he said he could just as well go then as any other time; and he went with her to the little country town where George's mother lived in a little house on the edge of the illimitable cornfields, under trees pushed to a top of the rolling prairie. George's father had settled there after the Civil War, as so many other old soldiers had done; but they were Eastern people, and Editha fancied touches of the East in the June rose overhanging the front door, and the garden with early summer flowers stretching from the gate of the paling fence.

It was very low inside the house, and so dim, with the closed blinds, that they could scarcely see one another: Editha tall and black in her crapes which filled the air with the smell of their dyes; her father standing decorously apart with his hat on his forearm, as at funerals; a woman rested in a deep arm-chair, and the woman who had let the strangers in stood behind the chair.

The seated woman turned her head round and up, and asked the woman behind her chair: "Who did you say?"

Editha, if she had done what she expected of herself, would have gone down on her knees at the feet of the seated figure and said, "I am George's Editha," for answer.

But instead of her own voice she heard that other woman's voice, saying: "Well, I don't know as I did get the name just right. I guess I'll have to make a little more light in here," and she went and pushed two of the shutters ajar.

Then Editha's father said, in his public will-now-address-a-few-remarks tone: "My name is Balcom, ma'am—Junius H. Balcom, of Balcom's Works, New York; my daughter—"

"Oh!" the seated woman broke in, with a powerful voice, the voice that always surprised Editha from Gearson's slender frame. "Let me see you. Stand round where the light can strike on your face," and Editha dumbly obeyed. "So, you're Editha Balcom," she sighed.

"Yes," Editha said, more like a culprit than a comforter.

"What did you come for?" Mrs. Gearson asked.

Editha's face quivered and her knees shook. "I came—because—because George—" She could go no further.

“Yes,” the mother said, “he told me he had asked you to come if he got killed. You didn’t expect that, I suppose, when you sent him.”

“I would rather have died myself than done it!” Editha said, with more truth in her deep voice than she ordinarily found in it. “I tried to leave him free—”

“Yes, that letter of yours, that came back with his other things, left him free.”

Editha saw now where George’s irony came from.

“It was not to be read before—unless—until— I told him so,” she faltered.

“Of course, he wouldn’t read a letter of yours, under the circumstances, till he thought you wanted him to. Been sick?” the woman abruptly demanded.

“Very sick,” Editha said, with self-pity.

“Daughter’s life,” her father interposed, “was almost despaired of, at one time.”

Mrs. Gearson gave him no heed. “I suppose you would have been glad to die, such a brave person as you! I don’t believe he was glad to die. He was always a timid boy, that way; he was afraid of a good many things; but if he was afraid he did what he made up his mind to. I suppose he made up his mind to go, but I knew what it cost him by what it cost me when I heard of it. I had been through one war before. When you sent him you didn’t expect he would get killed.”

The voice seemed to compassionate Editha, and it was time. “No,” she huskily murmured.

“No, girls don’t; women don’t, when they give their men up to their country. They think they’ll come marching back, somehow, just as gay as they went, or if it’s an empty sleeve, or even an empty pantaloon, it’s all the more glory, and they’re so much the prouder of them, poor things!”

The tears began to run down Editha’s face; she had not wept till then; but it was now such a relief to be understood that the tears came.

“No, you didn’t expect him to get killed,” Mrs. Gearson repeated, in a voice which was startlingly like George’s again. “You just expected him to kill some one else, some of those foreigners, that weren’t there because they had any say about it, but because they had to be there, poor wretches—conscripts, or whatever they call ’em. You thought it would be all right for my George, your George, to kill the sons of those miserable mothers and the husbands of those girls that you would never see the faces of.” The woman lifted her powerful voice in a psalmlike note. “I thank my God he didn’t live to do it! I thank my God they killed him first, and that he ain’t livin’ with their blood on his hands!” She dropped her eyes, which she had raised with her voice, and glared at Editha. “What you got that black on for?” She lifted herself by her powerful arms so high that her helpless body seemed to hang limp its full length. “Take it off, take it off, before I tear it from your back!”

The lady who was passing the summer near Balcom’s Works was sketching Editha’s beauty, which lent itself wonderfully to the effects of a colorist. It had come to that confidence which is rather apt to grow between artist and sitter, and Editha had told her everything.

“To think of your having such a tragedy in your life!” the lady said. She added: “I suppose there are people who feel that way about war. But when you consider the good this war has done—how much it has done for the country! I can’t understand such people, for my part. And when you had come all the way out there to console her—got up out of a sick-bed! Well!”

“I think,” Editha said, magnanimously, “she wasn’t quite in her right mind; and so did papa.”

“Yes,” the lady said, looking at Editha’s lips in nature and then at her lips in art, and giving an empirical touch to them in the picture. “But how dreadful of her! How perfectly—excuse me—how vulgar!”

A light broke upon Editha in the darkness which she felt had been without a gleam of brightness for weeks and months. The mystery that had bewildered her was solved by the word; and from that moment she rose from grovelling in shame and self-pity, and began to live again in the ideal.

EXERCISES

1. Write an outline of the main hints of the story. On those bases, get ready for a retelling.
2. What was George's disposition towards the war?
3. What did Editha do to change his mind?
4. What arguments did she use to sustain her ardent patriotism? To judge those arguments keep in mind that this was the 1898 War on Spain.
5. Why did she want him to go to war? For love for her country? For she thought she deserved such sacrifice?
6. Scrutinize the brief interview between Editha and Mrs. Gearson. Did Editha's pain come from regret for her behavior of from self-pity?
7. What was Mrs. Gearson's position towards war? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

By Ambrose Bierce 1842-1914

I

A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man’s hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners—two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as “support,” that is to say,

vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest—a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the center of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot planking that traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground—a gentle acclivity topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loopholed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Midway of the slope between the bridge and fort were the spectators—a single company of infantry in line, at "parade rest," the butts of the rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the center of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good—a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well-fitting frock coat. He wore a mustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the cross-ties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgment as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his "unsteadfast footing," then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move, What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift—all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by—it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and—he knew not why—apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer, the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. "If I could free my hands," he thought, "I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader's farthest advance."

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man's brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

II

Peyton Farquhar was a well-to-do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with the gallant army that had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only toe, happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

"The Yanks are repairing the railroads," said the man, "and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has

issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order."

"How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?" Farquhar asked.

"About thirty miles."

"Is there no force on this side the creek?"

"Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge."

"Suppose a man—a civilian and student of hanging—should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel," said Farquhar, smiling, "what could he accomplish?"

The soldier reflected. "I was there a month ago," he replied. "I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tow."

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

III

As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened—ages later, it seemed to him—by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fiber of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well-defined lines of ramification and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fulness—of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud splash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river!—the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface—knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. "To be hanged and drowned," he thought? "that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair."

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort!—what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water snake. “Put it back, put it back!” He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire; his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the grey spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon flies’ wings, the strokes of the water-spiders’ legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, spattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a grey eye and remembered having read that grey eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counter-swirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking into the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came

across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning's work. How coldly and pitilessly—with what an even, calm intonation, presaging, and enforcing tranquillity in the men—with what accurately measured intervals fell those cruel words:

"Attention, company! . . Shoulder arms! . . . Ready! . . . Aim! . . . Fire!"

Farquhar dived—dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dulled thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther down stream nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

The officer," he reasoned, "will not make that martinet's error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!"

An appalling plash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, diminuendo, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps!

A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken a hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

"They will not do that again," he thought; "the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me—the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun."

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round—spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort and men—all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color—that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration that made him giddy and sick. In a few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream—the southern bank—and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls

and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange, roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of Æolian harps. He had no wish to perfect his escape—was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

A whiz and rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman's road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famishing. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Overhead, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone great garden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which—once, twice, and again—he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untraveled avenue—he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene—perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forward with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon—then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.

EXERCISES

1. The scene of the execution is described in details. Provide the most significant elements for a brief portrait. See that no essential element is omitted.
2. Why was Peyton Farquhar sentenced to hanging?
3. The escape of the man is punctured by several moments of delirium. Find some of such moments.
4. The unexpected end gives a new meaning to the whole story. What happened to Payton Farquhar?

The Lost Phoebe

By Theodore Dreiser 1871-1945

THEY lived together in a part of the country which was not so prosperous as it had once been, about three miles from one of those small towns that, instead of increasing in population, is steadily decreasing. The territory was not very thickly settled; perhaps a house every other mile or so, with large areas of corn- and wheat-land and fallow fields that at odd seasons had been sown to timothy and clover. Their particular house was part log and part frame, the log portion being the old original home of Henry's grandfather. The new portion, of now rain-beaten, time-worn slabs, through which the wind squeaked in the chinks at times, and which several overshadowing elms and a butternut-tree made picturesque and reminiscently pathetic, but a little damp, was erected by Henry when he was twenty-one and just married.

That was forty-eight years before. The furniture inside, like the house outside, was old and mildewy and reminiscent of an earlier day. You have seen the what-not of cherry wood, perhaps, with spiral legs and fluted top. It was there. The old-fashioned four poster bed, with its ball-like protuberances and deep curving incisions, was there also, a sadly alienated descendant of an early Jacobean ancestor. The bureau of cherry was also high and wide and solidly built, but faded-looking, and with a musty odor. The rag carpet that underlay all these sturdy examples of enduring furniture was a weak, faded, lead-and-pink-colored affair woven by Phoebe Ann's own hands, when she was fifteen years younger than she was when she died. The creaky wooden loom on which it had been done now stood like a dusty, bony skeleton, along a broken rocking-chair, a worm-eaten clothes-press—Heaven knows how old—a lime-stained bench that had once been used to keep flowers on outside the door, and other decrepit factors of household utility, in an east room that was a lean-to against this so-called main portion. All sorts of other broken-down furniture were about this place; an antiquated clothes-horse, cracked in two of its ribs; a broken mirror in an old cherry frame, which had fallen from a nail and cracked itself three days before their youngest son, Jerry, died; an extension hat-rack, which once had had porcelain

knobs on the ends of its pegs; and a sewing-machine, long since outdone in its clumsy mechanism by rivals of a newer generation.

The orchard to the east of the house was full of gnarled old apple-trees, worm-eaten as to trunks and branches, and fully ornamented with green and white lichens, so that it had a sad, greenish-white, silvery effect in moonlight. The low outhouses, which had once housed chickens, a horse or two, a cow, and several pigs, were covered with patches of moss as their roof, and the sides had been free of paint for so long that they, were blackish gray as to color, and a little spongy. The picket-fence in front, with its gate squeaky and askew, and the side fences of the stake-and-rider type were in an equally run-down condition. As a matter of fact, they had aged synchronously with the persons who lived here, old Henry Reifsneider and his wife Phoebe Ann.

They had lived here, these two, ever since their marriage, forty-eight years before, and Henry had lived here before that from his childhood up. His father and mother, well along in years when he was a boy, had invited him to bring his wife here when he had first fallen in love and decided to marry; and he had done so. His father and mother were the companions of himself and his wife for ten years after they were married, when both died; and then Henry and Phoebe were left with their five children growing lustily apace. But all sorts of things had happened since then. Of the seven children, all told, that had been born to them, three had died; one girl had gone to Kansas; one boy had gone to Sioux Falls, never even to be heard of after; another boy had gone to Washington; and the last girl lived five counties away in the same State, but was so burdened with cares of her own that she rarely gave them a thought. Time and a commonplace home life that had never been attractive had weaned them thoroughly, so that, wherever they were, they gave little thought as to how it might be with their father and mother.

Old Henry Reifsneider and his wife Phoebe were a loving couple. You perhaps know how it is with simple natures that fasten themselves like lichens on the stones of circumstance and weather their days to a crumbling conclusion. The great world sounds widely, but it has no call for them. They have no soaring intellect. The orchard, the meadow, the cornfield, the pig-pen, and the chicken-lot measure the range of their human activities. When the wheat is headed it is reaped and threshed; when the corn is browned and frosted it is cut and shocked; when the timothy is in full head it is cut, and the hay-cock erected. After that comes winter, with the hauling of grain to market, the sawing and splitting of wood, the simple chores of fire-building, meal-getting, occasional repairing, and visiting. Beyond these and the changes of weather—the snows, the rains, and the fair days—there are no immediate, significant things. All the rest of life is a far-off, clamorous phantasmagoria flickering like Northern lights in the night, and sounding as faintly as cow-bells tinkling in the distance.

Old Henry and his wife Phoebe were as fond of each other as it is possible for two old people to be who have nothing else in this life to be fond of. He was a thin old man, seventy when she died, a queer, crotchety person with coarse gray-black hair and beard, quite straggly and unkempt. He looked at you out of dull, fishy, watery eyes that had deep-brown crow's-feet at the sides. His clothes, like the clothes of many farmers, were aged and angular and baggy, standing out at the pockets, not fitting about the neck, protuberant and worn at elbow and

knee. Phoebe Ann was thin and shapeless, a very umbrella of a woman, clad in shabby black, and with a black bonnet for her best wear. As time had passed, and they had only themselves to look after, their movements had come slower and slower, their activities fewer and fewer. The annual keep of pigs had been reduced from five to one grunting porker, and the single horse which Henry now retained was a sleepy animal, not over-nourished and not very clean. The chickens, of which formerly there was a large flock, had almost disappeared, owing to ferrets, foxes, and the lack of proper care, which produces disease. The former healthy garden was now a straggling memory of itself, and the vines and flower-beds that formerly ornamented the windows and dooryard had now become choking thickets. A will had been made which divided the small tax-eaten property equally among the remaining four, so that it was really of no interest to any of them. Yet these two lived together in peace and sympathy, only that now and then old Henry would become unduly cranky, complaining almost invariably that something had been neglected or mislaid which was of no importance at all.

“Phoebe, where's my corn-knife? You ain't never minded to let my things alone no more.”

“Now you hush, Henry,” his wife would caution him in a cracked and squeaky voice. “If you don't, I'll leave yuh. I'll git up and walk out of here some day, and then where would y' be? Y' ain't got anybody but me to look after yuh, so yuh just behave yourself. Your corn knife's on the mantel where it's allus been unless you've gone an' put it summers else.”

Old Henry, who knew his wife would never leave him in any circumstances, used to speculate at times as to what he would do if she were to die. That was the one leaving that he really feared. As he climbed on the chair at night to wind the old, long-pendulumed, double-weighted clock, or went finally to the front and the back door to see that they were safely shut in, it was a comfort to know that Phoebe was there, properly ensconced on her side of the bed, and that if he stirred restlessly in the night, she would be there to ask what he wanted.

“Now, Henry, do lie still! You're as restless as a chicken.”

“Well, I can't sleep, Phoebe.”

“Well, yuh needn't roll so, anyhow. Yuh kin let me sleep.”

This usually reduced him to a state of somnolent ease. If she wanted a pail of water, it was a grumbling pleasure for him to get it; and if she did rise first to build the fires, he saw that the wood was cut and placed within easy reach. They divided this simple world nicely between them.

As the years had gone on, however, fewer and fewer people had called. They were well-known for a distance of as much as ten square miles as old Mr. and Mrs. Reifsneider, honest, moderately Christian, but too old to be really interesting any longer. The writing of letters had become an almost impossible burden too difficult to continue or even negotiate via others, although an occasional letter still did arrive from the daughter in Pemberton County. Now and then some old friend stopped with a pie or cake or a roasted chicken or duck, or merely to see that they were well; but even these kindly reminded visits were no longer frequent.

One day in the early spring of her sixty-fourth year Mrs. Reifsneider took sick, and from a low fever passed into some indefinable ailment which, because of her age, was no longer curable. Old Henry drove to Swinnerton, the

neighboring town, and procured a doctor. Some friends called, and the immediate care of her was taken off his hands. Then one chill spring night she died, and old Henry, in a fog of sorrow and uncertainty, followed her body to the nearest graveyard, an unattractive space with a few pines growing in it. Although he might have gone to the daughter in Pemberton or sent for her, it was really too much trouble and he was too weary and fixed. It was suggested to him at once by one friend and that he come to stay with them awhile, but he did not see fit. He was so old and so fixed in his notions and so accustomed to the exact surroundings he had known all his days, that he could not think of leaving. He wanted to remain near where they had put his Phoebe; and the fact that he would have to live alone did not trouble him in the least. The living children were notified and the care of him offered if he would leave, but he would not.

“I kin make a shift for myself,” he continually announced to old Dr. Morrow, who had attended his wife in this case. “I kin cook a little, and, besides, it don't take much more'n coffee and bread in the mornin's to satisfy me. I'll get along now well enough. Yuh just let me be.” And after many pleadings and proffers of advice, with supplies of coffee and bacon and baked bread duly offered and accepted, he was left to himself. For a while he sat idly outside his door brooding in the spring sun. He tried to revive his interest in farming, and to keep himself busy and free from thought by looking after the fields, which of late had been much neglected. It was a gloomy thing to come in of an evening, however, or in the afternoon and find no shadow of Phoebe where everything suggested her. By degrees he put a few of her things away. At night he sat beside his lamp and read in the papers that were left him occasionally or in a Bible that he had neglected for years, but he could get little solace from these things. Mostly he held his hand over his mouth and looked at the floor as he sat and growing in it. Although he might have thought of what had become of her, and how soon he himself would die. He made a great business of making his coffee in the morning and frying himself a little bacon at night; but his appetite was gone. The shell in which he had been housed so long seemed vacant, and its shadows were suggestive of immedicable griefs. So he lived quite dolefully for five long months, and then a change began.

It was one night, after he had looked after the front and the back door, wound the clock, blown out the light, and gone through all the selfsame, notions that he had indulged in for years, that he went to bed not so much to sleep as to think. It was a moonlight night. The green-lichen-covered orchard just outside and to be seen from his bed where he now lay was a silvery affair, sweetly spectral. The moon shone through the east windows, throwing the pattern of the panes on the wooden floor, and making the old furniture, to which he was accustomed, stand out dimly in the room. As usual he had been thinking of Phoebe and the years when they had been young together, and of the children who had gone, and the poor shift he was making of his present days. The house was coming to be in a very bad state indeed. The bedclothes were in disorder and not clean, for he made a wretched shift of washing. It was a terror to him. The roof leaked, causing things, some of them, to remain damp for weeks at a time, but he was getting into that brooding state where he would accept anything rather than exert himself. He preferred to pace slowly to and fro or to sit and think.

By twelve o'clock of this particular night he was asleep, however, and by two had waked again. The moon by this time had shifted to a position on the western side of the house, and it now shone in through the windows of the living-room and those of the while his kitchen beyond. A certain combination of furniture-a chair near a table, with his coat on it, the half-open kitchen door casting a shadow, and the position of a lamp near a paper-gave him an exact representation of Phoebe leaning over the table as he had often seen her do in life. It gave him a great start. Could it be she—or her ghost? He had scarcely ever believed in spirits; and still— He looked at her fixedly in the feeble half-light, his old hair tingling odd at the roots, and then sat up. The figure did not move. He put his thin legs out of the bed and sat looking at her, wondering if this could really be Phoebe. They had talked of ghosts often in their lifetime, of apparitions and omens; but they had never agreed that such things could be. It had never been a part of his wife's creed that she could have a spirit that could return to walk the earth. Her after-world was quite a different affair, a vague heaven, no less, from which the righteous did not trouble to return. Yet here she was now, bending over the table in her black skirt and gray shawl, her pale profile outlined against the moonlight.

"Phoebe," he called, thrilling from head to toe and putting out one bony hand, "have yuh come back?"

The figure did not stir, and he arose and walked uncertainly to the door, looking at it fixedly the while. As he drew near, however, the apparition resolved itself into its primal content-his old coat over the backed chair, the lamp by the paper, the half-open door. "Well," he said to himself, his mouth open, "I thought shore I saw her." And he ran his hand strangely and vaguely through his hair, the nervous tension relaxed. Vanished as it had, it gave him the idea that she might return.

Another night, because of this first illusion, and because his mind was now constantly on her and he was old, he looked out of the window that was nearest his bed and commanded a hen-coop and pig-pen and a part of the wagon-shed, and there, a faint mist exuding from the damp of the ground, he thought he saw her again. It was one of those little wisps of mist, one of those faint exhalations of the earth that rise in a cool night after a warm day, and flicker like small white cypresses of fog before they disappear. In life it had been a custom of hers to cross this lot from her kitchen door to the pig-pen to throw in any scrap that was left from her cooking, and here she was again. He sat up and watched it strangely, doubtfully, because of his previous experience, but inclined, because of the nervous titillation that passed over his body, to believe that spirits really were, and that Phoebe, who would be concerned because of his lonely state, must be thinking about him, and hence returning. What other way would she have? How otherwise could she express herself? It would be within the province of her charity so to do, and like her loving interest in him. He quivered and watched it eagerly; but, a faint breath of air stirring, it wound away toward the fence and disappeared.

A third night, as he was actually dreaming, some ten days later, she came to his bedside and put her hand on his head.

"Poor Henry!" she said. "It's too bad."

He roused out of his sleep, actually to see her, he thought, moving from his bed-room into the one living-room, her figure a shadowy mass of black. The weak straining of his eyes caused little points of light to flicker about the outlines of her form. He arose greatly astonished, walked the floor in the cool room, convinced that Phoebe was coming back to him. If he only thought sufficiently, if he made it perfectly clear by his feeling that he needed her greatly, she would come back, this kindly wife, and tell him what to do. She would perhaps be with him much of the time, in the night, anyhow; and that would make him less lonely, this state more endurable.

In age and with the feeble it is not such a far cry from the subtleties of illusion to actual hallucination, and in due time this transition was made for Henry. Night after night he waited, expecting her return. Once in his weird mood —he thought he saw a pale light moving about the room, and another time he thought he saw her walking in the orchard after dark. It was virtually unendurable that he woke with the thought that she was not dead. How he had arrived at this conclusion it is hard to say. His mind had gone. In its place was a fixed illusion. He and Phoebe had had a senseless quarrel. He had reproached her for not leaving his pipe where he was accustomed to find it, and she had left. It was an aberrated fulfillment of her old jesting threat that if he did not behave himself she would leave him.

“I guess I could find yuh ag'in,” he had always said. But her cackling threat had always been:

“Yuh'll not find me if I ever leave yuh. I guess I kin git some place where yuh can't find me.”

This morning when he arose he did not think to build the fire in the customary way or to grind his coffee and cut his bread, as was his wont, but solely meditate as to where he should search for her and should induce her to come back. Recently the one horse had been dispensed with because he found it cumbersome and beyond his needs. He took down his soft crush hat after he had dressed himself, a new glint of interest and determination in his eye, and taking his black crook cane from behind the door, where he had always placed it, started out briskly to look for her among the nearest neighbors. His old shoes clumped soundly in the dust as he walked, and his gray-black locks, now grown rather long, straggled out in a dramatic fringe or halo from under his hat. His short coat stirred busily as he walked, and his hands and face were peaked and pale.

“Why, hello, Henry! Where're yuh goin' this mornin'?” inquired Farmer Dodge, who, hauling a load of wheat to market, encountered him on the public road. He had not seen the aged farmer in months, not since his wife's death, and he wondered now, seeing him looking so spry.

“Yuh ain't seen Phoebe, have yuh?” inquired the old man, looking up quizzically.

“Phoebe who?” inquired Farmer Dodge, not for the moment connecting the name with Henry's dead wife.

“Why, my wife Phoebe, o' course. Who do yuh s'pose I mean?” He stared up with a pathetic sharpness of glance from under his shaggy, gray eyebrows.

“Wall, I'll swan, Henry, yuh ain't jokin', are yuh?” said the solid Dodge, a pursy man, with a smooth, hard, red face. “It can't be your-wife yuh're talkin' about. She's dead.”

“Dead! Shucks!” retorted the demented Reifsneider. “She left me early this mornin', while I was sleepin'. She allus got up to build the fire, but she's gone now. We had a little spat last night, an' I guess that's the reason. But I guess I kin find her. She's gone over to Matilda Race's; that's where she's gone.”

He started briskly up the road, leaving the amazed Dodge to stare in wonder after him.

“Well, I'll be switched!” he said aloud to himself, “He's clean out'n his head. That poor old feller's been livin' down there till he's gone outen his mind. I'll have to notify the authorities.” And he flicked his whip With great enthusiasm. “Geddapi” he said, and was off.

Reifsneider met no one else in this poorly populated region until he reached the whitewashed fence of Matilda Race and her husband three miles away. He had passed several other houses en route, but these not being within the range of his illusion were not considered. His wife, who had known Matilda well, must be here. He opened the picket-gate which guarded the walk, and stamped briskly up to the door.

“Why, Mr. Reifsneider,” exclaimed old Matilda herself, a stout woman, looking out of the door in answer to his knock, “what brings yuh here this mornin'?” “Is Phoebe here?” he demanded eagerly.

“Phoebe who? What Phoebe?” replied Mrs. Race, curious as to this sudden development of energy on his part.

“Why, my Phoebe, o' course. My wife Phoebe. Who do yuh s'pose? Ain't she here now?”

“Lawsy me!' exclaimed Mrs. Race, opening her mouth. “Yuh pore man! So you're clean out'n your mind now. Yuh come right in and sit down. I'll git yuh a cup o' coffee. O' course your wife ain't here; but yuh come in an' sit down. I'll find her fer yuh after a while. I know where she is.”

The old farmer's eyes softened, and he entered. He was so thin and pale a specimen, pantalooned and patriarchal, that he aroused Mrs. Race's extremist sympathy as he took off his hat and laid it on his knees quite softly and mildly.

“We had a quarrel last night, an' she left me,” he volunteered.

“Laws! laws!” sighed Mrs. Race, there being no one present with whom to share her astonishment as she went to her kitchen. “The pore man! Now somebody's just got to look after him. He can't be allowed to run around the country this way lookin' for his dead wife. It's turrible.”

She boiled him a pot of coffee and brought in some of her new-baked bread and fresh butter. She set out some of her best jam and put a couple of eggs to boil, lying wholeheartedly the while.

“Now yuh stay right there, Uncle Henry, till Jake comes in, an' I'll send him to look for Phoebe. I think it's more'n likely she's over to Swinnerton with some of her friends. Anyhow, we'll find out. Now yuh just drink this coffee an' eat this bread. Yuh must be tired. Yuh've had a long walk this mornin'.” Her idea was to take counsel with Jake, “her man,” and perhaps have him notify the authorities.

She bustled about, meditating on the uncertainties of life, while old Reifsneider thrummed on the rim of his hat with his pale fingers and later ate abstractedly of what she offered. His mind was on his wife, however, and since she was not here, or did not appear, it wandered vaguely away to a family by the name of Murray, miles away in

another direction. He decided after a time that he would not wait for Jake Race to hunt his wife but would seek her for himself. He must be on, and urge her to come back.

“Well, I'll be goin',” he said, getting up and looking strangely about him. “I guess she didn't come here after all. She went over to the Murrays', I guess. I'll not wait any longer, Mis' Race. There's a lot to do over to the house to-day.” And out he marched in the face of her protests taking to the dusty road again in the warm spring sun, his cane striking the earth as he went.

It was two hours later that this pale figure of a man appeared in the Murrays' doorway, dusty, perspiring, eager. He had tramped all of five miles, and it was noon. An amazed husband and wife of sixty heard his strange query, and realized also that he was mad. They begged him to stay to dinner, intending to notify the authorities later and see what could be done; but though he stayed to partake of a little something, he did not stay long, and was off again to another distant farmhouse, his idea of many things to do and his need of Phoebe impelling him. So it went for that day and the next and the next, the circle of his inquiry ever widening.

The process by which a character assumes the significance of being peculiar, his antics weird, yet harmless, in such a community is often involute and pathetic. This day, as has been said, saw Reifsneider at other doors, eagerly asking his unnatural question, and leaving a trail of amazement, sympathy, and pity in his wake. Although the authorities were informed-the county sheriff, no less-it was not deemed advisable to take him into custody; for when those who knew old Henry, and had for so long, reflected on the condition of the county insane asylum, a place which, because of the poverty of the district, was of staggering aberration and sickening environment, it was decided to let him remain at large; for, strange to relate, it was found on investigation that at night he returned peaceably enough to his lonesome domicile there to discover whether his wife had returned, and to brood in loneliness until the morning. Who would lock up a thin, eager, seeking old man with iron-gray hair and an attitude of kindly, innocent inquiry, particularly when he was well known for a past of only kindly servitude and reliability? Those who had known him best rather agreed that he should be allowed to roam at large. He could do no harm. There were many who were willing to help him as to food, old clothes, the odds and ends of his daily life-at least at first. His figure after a time became not so much a common-place as an accepted curiosity, and the replies, “Why, no, Henry; I ain't see her,” or “No, Henry; she ain't been here to-day,” more customary.

For several years thereafter then he was an odd figure in the sun and rain, on dusty roads and muddy ones, encountered occasionally in strange and unexpected places, pursuing his endless search. Undernourishment, after a time, although the neighbors and those who knew his history gladly contributed from their store, affected his body; for he walked much and ate little. The longer he roamed the public highway in this manner, the deeper became his strange hallucination; and finding it harder and harder to return from his more and more distant pilgrimages he finally began taking a few utensils with him from his home, making a small package of them, in order that he might not be compelled to return, in an old tin coffee-pot of large size he placed a small tin cup, a knife, fork, and spoon, some salt and pepper and to the outside of it, by a string forced through a pierced hole,

he fastened a plate, which could be released, and which was his woodland table. It was no trouble for him to secure the little food that he needed and with a strange, almost religious dignity, he had hesitation in asking for that much. By degrees his hair became longer and longer, his once black hat became an earthen brown, and his clothes threadbare and dusty.

For all of three years he walked, and none knew how wide were his perambulations, nor how he survived the storms and cold. They could not see him, with homely rural understanding and forethought, sheltering himself in hay-cocks, or by the sides of cattle, whose warm bodies protected him from the cold, and whose dull understandings were not opposed to his harmless presence. Overhanging rocks and trees kept him at times from the rain, and a friendly hay-loft or corn-crib was not above his humble consideration.

The involute progression of hallucination is strange. From asking at doors and being constantly rebuffed or denied, he finally came to the conclusion that although his Phoebe might not be in any of the houses at the doors of which he inquired, she might nevertheless be thin the sound of his voice. And so, from patient inquiry, he began to call sad, occasional cries, that ever and anon waked the quiet landscapes and ragged hill regions, and set to echoing his thin “O-o-o Phoebe! O-o-o Phoebe!” It had a pathetic, albeit insane, ring, and many a farmer or plowboy came to know it even from afar and say, “There goes old Reifsneider.”

Another thing that puzzled him greatly after a time and after many hundreds of inquiries was, when he no longer had any particular dooryard in view and no special inquiry to make, which way to go. These cross-roads, which occasionally led in four or even six directions, came after a time to puzzle him. But to solve this knotty problem, which became more and more of a puzzle, there came to his aid another hallucination. Phoebe's spirit or some power of the air or wind or nature would tell him. If he stood at the center of the parting of the ways, closed his eyes, turned thrice about, and called “O-o-o Phoebe!” twice, and then threw his cane straight before him, that would surely indicate which way to go for Phoebe, or one of these mystic powers would surely govern its direction and fall! In whichever direction it went, even though, as was not infrequently the case, it took him back along the path he had already come, or across fields, he was not so far gone in his mind but that he gave himself ample time to search before he called again. Also the hallucination seemed to persist that at some time he would surely find her. There were hours when his feet were sore, and his limbs weary, when he would stop in the heat to wipe his seamed brow, or in the cold to beat his arms. Sometimes, after throwing away his cane, and finding it indicating the direction from which he had just come, he would shake his head wearily and philosophically, as if contemplating the unbelievable or an untoward fate, and then start briskly off. His strange figure came finally to be known in the farthest reaches of three or four counties. Old Reifsneider was a pathetic character. His fame was wide.

Near a little town called Watersville, in Green County, perhaps four miles from that minor center of human activity, there was a place or precipice locally known as the Red Cliff, a sheer wall of red sandstone, perhaps a hundred feet high, which raised its sharp face for half a mile or more above the fruitful cornfields and orchards that lay beneath, and which was surmounted by a thick grove of trees. The slope that slowly led up to it from the

opposite side was covered by a rank growth of beech, hickory, and ash, through which threaded a number of wagon-tracks crossing various angles. In fair weather it had become old Reifsneider's habit, so inured was he by now to the open, to make his bed in some such patch of trees as this to fry his bacon or boil his eggs at the foot of some tree before laying himself down for the night. Occasionally, so light and inconsequential was his sleep, he would walk at night. More often, the moonlight or some sudden wind stirring in the trees or a reconnoitering animal arousing him, he would sit up and think, or pursue his quest in the moonlight or the dark, a strange, unnatural, half wild, half savage-looking but utterly harmless creature, calling at lonely road crossings, staring at dark and shuttered houses, and wondering where, where Phoebe could really be.

That particular full that comes in the systole-diastole of this earthly ball at two o'clock in the morning invariably aroused him, and though he might not go any farther he would sit up and contemplate the darkness or the stars, wondering. Sometimes in the strange processes of his mind he would fancy that he saw moving among the trees the figure of his lost wife, and then he would get up to follow, taking his utensils, always on a string, and his cane. If she seemed to evade him too easily he would run, or plead, or, suddenly losing track of the fancied figure, stand awed or disappointed, grieving for the moment over the almost insurmountable difficulties of his search.

It was in the seventh year of these hopeless peregrinations, in the dawn of a similar springtime to that in which his wife had died, that he came at last one night to the vicinity of this self-same patch that crowned the rise to the Red Cliff. His far-flung cane, used as a divining-rod at the last cross-roads, had brought him hither. He had walked many, many miles. It was after ten o'clock at night, and he was very weary. Long wandering and little eating had left him but a shadow of his former self. It was a question now not so much of physical strength but of spiritual endurance which kept him up. He had scarcely eaten this day, and now exhausted he set himself down in the dark to rest and possibly to sleep.

Curiously on this occasion a strange suggestion of the presence of his wife surrounded him. It would not be long now, he counseled with himself, although the long months had brought him nothing, until he should see her, talk to her. He fell asleep after a time, his head on his knees. At midnight the moon began to rise, and at two in the morning, his wakeful hour, was a large silver disk shining through the trees to the east. He opened his eyes when the radiance came strong, making a silver pattern at his feet and lighting the woods with strange lusters and silvery, shadowy forms. As usual, his old notion that his wife must be near occurred to him on this occasion and he looked about him with a speculative, anticipatory eye. What was it that moved in the distant shadows along the path by which he had entered-a pale, flickering will-o'-the-wisp that bobbed gracefully among the trees and riveted his expectant gaze? Moonlight and shadows combined to give it a strange form and a stranger reality, this fluttering of bog-fire or dancing of wandering fire-flies. Was it truly his lost Phoebe? By a circuitous route it passed about him, and in his fevered state he fancied that he could see the very eyes of her, not as she was when he last saw her in the black dress and shawl but now a strangely younger Phoebe, gayer, sweeter, the one whom he had known years before as a girl. Old Reifsneider got up. He had been expecting and

dreaming of this hour all these years, and now as he saw the feeble, light dancing lightly before him he peered at it questioningly, one thin hand in his gray hair.

Of a sudden there came to him now for the first time in many years the full charm of her girlish figure as he had known it in boyhood, the pleasing, sympathetic smile, the brown hair, the blue sash she had once worn about her waist at a picnic, her gay, graceful movements. He walked around the base of the tree, straining with his eyes, forgetting for once his cane and utensils, and following eagerly after. On she moved before him, a will-o'-the-wisp of the spring, a little flame above her head, and it seemed as though among the small saplings of ash and beech and the thick trunks of hickory and elm that she signaled with a young, a lightsome hand.

“O Phoebe! Phoebe!” he called. “Have yuh really come? Have yuh really answered me?” And hurrying faster, he fell once, scrambling lamely to his feet, only to see the light in the distance dancing illusively on. On and on he hurried until he was fairly running, brushing his ragged arms against the trees, striking his hands and face against impeding twigs. His hat was gone, his lungs were breathless, his reason quite astray, when coming to the edge of the cliff he saw her below among a silvery bed of apple-trees now blooming in the spring.

“O Phoebe!” he called. “O Phoebe! Oh, no, don't leave me!” And feeling the lure of a world where love was young and Phoebe as this vision presented her, a delightful epitome of their quondam youth, he gave a gay cry of “Oh, wait, Phoebe!” and leaped.

Some farmer-boys, reconnoitering this region of bounty and prospect some few days afterward, found first the tin utensils tied together under the tree where he had left them, and then later at the foot of the cliff, pale, broken, but elate, a molded smile of peace and delight upon his lips, his body. His old hat was discovered lying under some low-growing saplings the twigs of which had held it back. No one of all the simple population knew how eagerly and joyously he had found his lost mate.

EXERCISES

1. Describe Henry and Phoebe and their surrounding, their solitude.
2. Their pleasant relationship was the result of habit. Or, was it love? Provide arguments to substantiate your point of view.
3. Do you know of anybody living like that? Get ready to tell about them.
4. Once Phoebe was gone, how did Henry assume his new condition?
5. How did Henry’s mind change in the following months? Outline the events that led him to his search.
6. What was the reaction of the neighbors to Henry’s condition?
7. Collect some of the many ways in which Henry would feel Phoebe’s presence.
8. Describe the last event of the story. What do you think that really happened? Write briefly about this idea.

To Build a Fire

By Jack London (1876-1916)

Day had broken cold and grey, exceedingly cold and grey, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-travelled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the skyline and dip immediately from view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice-jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hair-line that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hair-line was the trail—the main trail—that led south five hundred miles to the Chilcoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this—the mysterious, far-reaching hairline trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all—made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a new-comer in the land, a chechaquo, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear-flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle crackled on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below—how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork

of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, travelling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numbed nose and cheek-bones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect the high cheek-bones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf-dog, grey-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing-point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition of very cold such as was in the man's brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man's heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek-bed. The furrow of the old sled-trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice-muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheek-bones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheek-bones

went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose-strap of the sort Bud wore in cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks, as well, and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all; they were never serious

Empty as the man's mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber-jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek he knew was frozen clear to the bottom—no creek could contain water in that arctic winter—but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice-skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.

That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice-skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek-bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait.

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice-particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the ear-flaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork. The dog was

disappointed and yearned back toward the fire. This man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing-point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it had inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space whence this cold came. On the other hand, there was keen intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the toil-slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whip-lash and of harsh and menacing throat-sounds that threatened the whip-lash. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled, and spoke to it with the sound of whip-lashes, and the dog swung in at the man's heels and followed after.

All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulphur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow. The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold. So long as he walked four miles an hour, he pumped that blood, willy-nilly, to the surface; but now it ebbed away and sank down into the recesses of his body. The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully freighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree—an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned was a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

After a time he was aware of the first far-away signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch-bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulphur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He

tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet; and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side the bunch, he closed them—that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were drawn, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch-bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire-provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hands he could neither draw nor hold his sheath-knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its legs, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward. The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. He began threshing his arms back and forth, beating the mittened hands against his sides. He did this for five minutes, violently, and his heart pumped enough blood up to the surface to put a stop to his shivering. But no sensation was aroused in the hands. He had an impression that they hung like weights on the ends of his arms, but when he tried to run the impression down, he could not find it.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it: he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw them out. Nor would it thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came

to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself, and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him facing him curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off—such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new-found peace of mind came the first glimmerings of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. It was like taking an anaesthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. It certainly was cold, was his thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what real cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek. He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable, and smoking a pipe.

“You were right, old hoss; you were right,” the man mumbled to the old-timer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing him and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog’s experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. As the twilight drew on, its eager yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened its ears down in anticipation of being chidden by the man. But the man remained silent. Later, the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man and caught the scent of death. This made the animal bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food-providers and fire-providers.

EXERCISES

1. Describe the landscape where the man was walking.
2. How cold was it? Did the man know how cold it was? Did the dog know?
3. How did the man escape the danger of water under the ice?
4. What happened when the man built a fire under a tree?
5. What happened to the man's hands?
6. Outline the last things the man and the dog did.

The Law of Life

By Jack London 1876-1916

Old Koskoosh listened greedily. Though his sight had long since faded, his hearing was still acute, and the slightest sound penetrated to the glimmering intelligence which yet abode behind the withered forehead, but which no longer gazed forth upon the things of the world. Ah! That was Sit-cum-to-ha, shrilly anathematizing the dogs as she cuffed and beat them into the harnesses. Sit-cum-to-ha was his daughter's daughter, but she was too busy to waste a thought upon her broken grandfather, sitting alone there in the snow, forlorn and helpless. Camp must be broken. The long trail waited while the short day refused to linger. Life called her, and the duties of life, not death. And he was very close to death now.

The thought made the old man panicky for the moment, and he stretched forth a palsied hand which wandered tremblingly over the small heap of dry wood beside him. Reassured that it was indeed there, his hand returned to the shelter of his mangy furs, and he again fell to listening. The sulky crackling of half-frozen hides told him that the chief's moose-skin lodge had been struck, and even then was being rammed and jammed into portable compass. The chief was his son, stalwart and strong, head man of the tribesmen, and a mighty hunter. As the women toiled with the camp luggage, his voice rose, chiding them for their slowness. Old Koskoosh strained his ears. It was the last time he would hear that voice. There went Geehow's lodge! And Tusken's! Seven, eight, nine; only the shaman's could be still standing. There! They were at work upon it now. He could hear the shaman grunt as he piled it on the sled. A child whimpered, and a woman soothed it with soft, crooning gutturals. Little Koo-tee, the old man thought, a fretful child, and not overstrong. It would die soon, perhaps, and they would burn a hole through the frozen tundra and pile rocks above to keep the wolverines away. Well, what did it matter? A few years at best, and as many an empty belly as a full one. And in the end, Death waited, ever-hungry and hungriest of them all.

What was that? Oh, the men lashing the sleds and drawing tight the thongs. He listened, who would listen no more. The whip-lashes snarled and bit among the dogs. Hear them whine! How they hated the work and the

trail! They were off! Sled after sled churned slowly away into the silence. They were gone. They had passed out of his life, and he faced the last bitter hour alone. No. The snow crunched beneath a moccasin; a man stood beside him; upon his head a hand rested gently. His son was good to do this thing. He remembered other old men whose sons had not waited after the tribe. But his son had. He wandered away into the past, till the young man's voice brought him back.

"Is it well with you?" he asked.

And the old man answered, "It is well."

"There be wood beside you," the younger man continued, "and the fire burns bright. The morning is gray, and the cold has broken. It will snow presently. Even now is it snowing."

"Ay, even now is it snowing."

"The tribesmen hurry. Their bales are heavy, and their bellies flat with lack of feasting. The trail is long and they travel fast. I go now. It is well?"

"It is well. I am as a last year's leaf, clinging lightly to the stem. The first breath that blows, and I fall. My voice is become like an old woman's. My eyes no longer show me the way of my feet, and my feet are heavy, and I am tired. It is well."

He bowed his head in content till the last noise of the complaining snow had died away, and he knew his son was beyond recall. Then his hand crept out in haste to the wood. It alone stood between him and the eternity that yawned in upon him. At last the measure of his life was a handful of fagots. One by one they would go to feed the fire, and just so, step by step, death would creep upon him. When the last stick had surrendered up its heat, the frost would begin to gather strength. First his feet would yield, then his hands; and the numbness would travel, slowly, from the extremities to the body. His head would fall forward upon his knees, and he would rest. It was easy. All men must die.

He did not complain. It was the way of life, and it was just. He had been born close to the earth, close to the earth had he lived, and the law thereof was not new to him. It was the law of all flesh. Nature was not kindly to the flesh. She had no concern for that concrete thing called the individual. Her interest lay in the species, the race. This was the deepest abstraction old Koskoosh's barbaric mind was capable of, but he grasped it firmly. He saw it exemplified in all life. The rise of the sap, the bursting greenness of the willow bud, the fall of the yellow leaf — in this alone was told the whole history. But one task did Nature set the individual. Did he not perform it, he died. Did he perform it, it was all the same, he died. Nature did not care; there were plenty who were obedient, and it was only the obedience in this matter, not the obedient, which lived and lived always. The tribe of Koskoosh was very old. The old men he had known when a boy, had known old men before them. Therefore it was true that the tribe lived, that it stood for the obedience of all its members, way down into the forgotten past, whose very resting-places were unremembered. They did not count; they were episodes. They had passed away like clouds from a summer sky. He also was an episode, and would pass away. Nature did not care. To life she set one task, gave one law. To perpetuate was the task of life, its law was death. A maiden was a good

creature to look upon, full-breasted and strong, with spring to her step and light in her eyes. But her task was yet before her. The light in her eyes brightened, her step quickened, she was now bold with the young men, now timid, and she gave them of her own unrest. And ever she grew fairer and yet fairer to look upon, till some hunter, able no longer to withhold himself, took her to his lodge to cook and toil for him and to become the mother of his children. And with the coming of her offspring her looks left her. Her limbs dragged and shuffled, her eyes dimmed and bleared, and only the little children found joy against the withered cheek of the old squaw by the fire. Her task was done. But a little while, on the first pinch of famine or the first long trail, and she would be left, even as he had been left, in the snow, with a little pile of wood. Such was the law. He placed a stick carefully upon the fire and resumed his meditations. It was the same everywhere, with all things. The mosquitoes vanished with the first frost. The little tree-squirrel crawled away to die. When age settled upon the rabbit it became slow and heavy, and could no longer outfoot its enemies. Even the big bald-face grew clumsy and blind and quarrelsome, in the end to be dragged down by a handful of yelping huskies. He remembered how he had abandoned his own father on an upper reach of the Klondike one winter, the winter before the missionary came with his talk-books and his box of medicines. Many a time had Koskoosh smacked his lips over the recollection of that box, though now his mouth refused to moisten. The “painkiller” had been especially good. But the missionary was a bother after all, for he brought no meat into the camp, and he ate heartily, and the hunters grumbled. But he chilled his lungs on the divide by the Mayo, and the dogs afterwards nosed the stones away and fought over his bones.

Koskoosh placed another stick on the fire and harked back deeper into the past. There was the time of the Great Famine, when the old men crouched empty-bellied to the fire, and let fall from their lips dim traditions of the ancient day when the Yukon ran wide open for three winters, and then lay frozen for three summers. He had lost his mother in that famine. In the summer the salmon run had failed, and the tribe looked forward to the winter and the coming of the caribou. Then the winter came, but with it there were no caribou. Never had the like been known, not even in the lives of the old men. But the caribou did not come, and it was the seventh year, and the rabbits had not replenished, and the dogs were naught but bundles of bones. And through the long darkness the children wailed and died, and the women, and the old men; and not one in ten of the tribe lived to meet the sun when it came back in the spring. That was a famine!

But he had seen times of plenty, too, when the meat spoiled on their hands, and the dogs were fat and worthless with overeating — times when they let the game go unkilled, and the women were fertile, and the lodges were cluttered with sprawling men-children and women-children. Then it was the men became high-stomached, and revived ancient quarrels, and crossed the divides to the south to kill the Pellys, and to the west that they might sit by the dead fires of the Tananas. He remembered, when a boy, during a time of plenty, when he saw a moose pulled down by the wolves. Zing-ha lay with him in the snow and watched — Zing-ha, who later became the craftiest of hunters, and who, in the end, fell through an air-hole on the Yukon. They found him, a month afterward, just as he had crawled halfway out and frozen stiff to the ice.

But the moose. Zing-ha and he had gone out that day to play at hunting after the manner of their fathers. On the bed of the creek they struck the fresh track of a moose, and with it the tracks of many wolves. “An old one,” Zing-ha, who was quicker at reading the sign, said — “an old one who cannot keep up with the herd. The wolves have cut him out from his brothers, and they will never leave him.” And it was so. It was their way. By day and by night, never resting, snarling on his heels, snapping at his nose, they would stay by him to the end. How Zing-ha and he felt the blood-lust quicken! The finish would be a sight to see!

Eager-footed, they took the trail, and even he, Koskoosh, slow of sight and an unversed tracker, could have followed it blind, it was so wide. Hot were they on the heels of the chase, reading the grim tragedy, fresh-written, at every step. Now they came to where the moose had made a stand. Thrice the length of a grown man’s body, in every direction, had the snow been stamped about and uptossed. In the midst were the deep impressions of the splay-hoofed game, and all about, everywhere, were the lighter footmarks of the wolves. Some, while their brothers harried the kill, had lain to one side and rested. The full-stretched impress of their bodies in the snow was as perfect as though made the moment before. One wolf had been caught in a wild lunge of the maddened victim and trampled to death. A few bones, well picked, bore witness.

Again, they ceased the uplift of their snowshoes at a second stand. Here the great animal had fought desperately. Twice had he been dragged down, as the snow attested, and twice had he shaken his assailants clear and gained footing once more. He had done his task long since, but none the less was life dear to him. Zing-ha said it was a strange thing, a moose once down to get free again; but this one certainly had. The shaman would see signs and wonders in this when they told him.

And yet again, they come to where the moose had made to mount the bank and gain the timber. But his foes had laid on from behind, till he reared and fell back upon them, crushing two deep into the snow. It was plain the kill was at hand, for their brothers had left them untouched. Two more stands were hurried past, brief in time-length and very close together. The trail was red now, and the clean stride of the great beast had grown short and slovenly. Then they heard the first sounds of the battle — not the full-throated chorus of the chase, but the short, snappy bark which spoke of close quarters and teeth to flesh. Crawling up the wind, Zing-ha bellied it through the snow, and with him crept he, Koskoosh, who was to be chief of the tribesmen in the years to come. Together they shoved aside the under branches of a young spruce and peered forth. It was the end they saw.

The picture, like all of youth’s impressions, was still strong with him, and his dim eyes watched the end played out as vividly as in that far-off time. Koskoosh marvelled at this, for in the days which followed, when he was a leader of men and a head of councillors, he had done great deeds and made his name a curse in the mouths of the Pellys, to say naught of the strange white man he had killed, knife to knife, in open fight.

For long he pondered on the days of his youth, till the fire died down and the frost bit deeper. He replenished it with two sticks this time, and gauged his grip on life by what remained. If Sit-cum-to-ha had only remembered her grandfather, and gathered a larger armful, his hours would have been longer. It would have been easy. But she was ever a careless child, and honored not her ancestors from the time the Beaver, son of the son of Zing-

ha, first cast eyes upon her. Well, what mattered it? Had he not done likewise in his own quick youth? For a while he listened to the silence. Perhaps the heart of his son might soften, and he would come back with the dogs to take his old father on with the tribe to where the caribou ran thick and the fat hung heavy upon them.

He strained his ears, his restless brain for the moment stilled. Not a stir, nothing. He alone took breath in the midst of the great silence. It was very lonely. Hark! What was that? A chill passed over his body. The familiar, long-drawn howl broke the void, and it was close at hand. Then on his darkened eyes was projected the vision of the moose — the old bull moose — the torn flanks and bloody sides, the riddled mane, and the great branching horns, down low and tossing to the last. He saw the flashing forms of gray, the gleaming eyes, the lolling tongues, the slavered fangs. And he saw the inexorable circle close in till it became a dark point in the midst of the stamped snow.

A cold muzzle thrust against his cheek, and at its touch his soul leaped back to the present. His hand shot into the fire and dragged out a burning faggot. Overcome for the nonce by his hereditary fear of man, the brute retreated, raising a prolonged call to his brothers; and greedily they answered, till a ring of crouching, jaw-slobbered gray was stretched round about. The old man listened to the drawing in of this circle. He waved his brand wildly, and sniffs turned to snarls; but the panting brutes refused to scatter. Now one wormed his chest forward, dragging his haunches after, now a second, now a third; but never a one drew back. Why should he cling to life? he asked, and dropped the blazing stick into the snow. It sizzled and went out. The circle grunted uneasily, but held its own. Again he saw the last stand of the old bull moose, and Koskoosh dropped his head wearily upon his knees. What did it matter after all? Was it not the law of life?

EXERCISES

A glimpse into the last moments of a life is always of interest. Here, there is enough time to look back in search for an understanding of the sense of life, of the reasons for the expected end. The story opens a realistic window into one of the most painful traditions of northernmost American tribes, perhaps a couple of centuries ago. However, the view opens as well a space for a reflection on the way we face parallel problems in our societies today.

1. What could the old man hear as the tribe prepared to leave the camp? What did these sounds mean to him?
2. Is it true that nature is concerned with the species but it disregards the individual? Look for examples in the story and in your life.
3. For the old man, his destiny was just. What do you think?
4. As he waits, Koskoosh recollects graphic moments of his life. Outline them. Which is most impressive to you? Why?
5. How does the story end? Why, do you think, Jack London dos not describe the last scene in details as he did in the previous story (*To Build a Fire*)?

6. In the harsh conditions of the tundra, these tribes had probably no choice but to dispose of the old people in this way. In contemporary societies, the elderly are sometimes doomed to loneliness and undignified death. Substantiate this point with arguments and make a proposal as to what to do about it.

The Body of an American

By John Dos Passos (1896-1970)

Whereasthe Congressoftheunitedstates byaconcurrentresolutionadoptedon the4thdayofmarch last- authorizedthe Secretaryofwar to cause to be brought to theunitedstatesthe body of an American whowasa- memberoftheAmericanexpeditionaryforceineuropewholosthis lifeduringtheworldwarandwhoseidentityhas- not beenestablish for burial inthememorialamphitheatreofthe nationalcemeteryatarlingtonvirginia

In the tarpaper morgue at Chalons-sur-Marne in the reek of chloride of lime and the dead, they picked out the pine box that held all that was left of

enie menie minie moe plenty of other pine boxes stacked up there containing what they'd scraped up of Richard Roe

and other person or persons unknown. Only one can go. How did they pick John Doe?

Make sure he aint a dinge, boys,

make sure he aint a guinea or a kike,[24]

how can you tell a guy's a hundredpercent when all you've got's a gunnysack full of bones, bronze buttons stamped with the screaming eagle and a pair of roll puttees?

. . . and the gagging chloride and the puky dirtstench of the yearold dead . . .

The day withal was too meaningful and tragic for applause. Silence, tears, songs and prayer, muffled drums and soft music were the instrumentalities today of national approbation.

John Doe was born (thudding din of blood of love into the shuddering soar of a man and a woman alone indeed together lurching into

and ninemonths sick drowse waking into scared agony and the pain and blood and mess of birth). John Doe was born

and raised in Brooklyn, in Memphis, near the lakefront in Cleveland, Ohio, in the stench of the stockyards in Chi, on Beacon Hill, in an old brick house in Alexandria Virginia, on Telegraph Hill, in a halftimbered Tudor cottage in Portland the city of roses,

in the Lying-In Hospital old Morgan[25] endowed on Stuyvesant Square,

[24] Derogatory terms for African-American, Italian, and Jew.
[25] J. Pierpont Morgan (1873-1913), powerful U. S. financier.

across the railroad tracks, out near the country club, in a shack cabin tenement apartmenthouse exclusive residential suburb;

scion of one of the best families in the social register, won first prize in the baby parade at Coronado Beach, was marbles champion of the Little Rock grammarschools, crack basketballplayer at the Booneville High, quarterback at the State Reformatory, having saved the sheriff's kid from drowning in the Little Missouri River was invited to Washington to be photographed shaking hands with the President on the White House steps;—

* * *

though this was a time of morning, such an assemblage necessarily has about it a touch of color. In the boxes are seen the court uniforms of foreign diplomats, the gold braid of our own and foreign fleets and armies, the black of the conventional morning dress of American statesmen, the varicolored furs and outdoor wrapping garments of mothers and sisters come to mourn, the drab and blue of soldiers and sailors, the glitter of musical instruments and the white and black of a vested choir

—busboy harveststiff hogcaller boyscout champeen cornshucker of Western Kansas bellhop at the United States Hotel at Saratoga Springs office boy callboy fruiter telephone lineman longshoreman lumberjack plumber's helper,

worked for an exterminating company in Union City, filled pipes in an opium joint in Trenton, N.J.

Y.M.C.A. secretary, express agent, truckdriver, fordmechanic, sold books in Denver Colorado: Madam would you be willing to help a young man work his way through college?

President Harding, with a reverence seemingly more significant because of his high temporal station, concluded his speech:

We are met today to pay the impersonal tribute;
the name of him whose body lies before us took flight with his imperishable soul…

as a typical soldier of this representative democracy he fought and died believing in the indisputable justice of his country's cause . . .

by raising his right hand and asking the thousands with the sound of his voice to join in the prayer:

Our Father which art in heaven hallowed by thy name . . .

Naked he went into the army;

they weighed you, measured you, looked for flat feet, squeezed your penis to see if you had clap, looked up your anus to see if you had piles, counted your teeth, made you cough, listened to your heart and lungs, made you read the letters on the card, charted your urine and your intelligence,

gave you a service record for a future (imperishable soul)
and an identification tag stamped with your serial number to hang around your neck, issued O D[26] regulation equipment, a condiment can and a copy of the articles of war:
Attn'SHUN suck in your gut you c——r[27] wipe that smile off your face eyes right wattja tink dis is a choirch-social? For-war-D'ARCH.

* * *

John Doe
and Richard Roe and other person or persons unknown
drilled hiked, manual of arms, ate slum,[28] learned to salute, to soldier, to loaf in the latrines, forbidden to smoke on deck, overseas guard duty, forty men and eight horses,[29] shortarm inspection[30] and the ping of shrapnel and the shrill bullets combing the air and the sorehead woodpeckers the machineguns mud cooties gasmasks and the itch.
Say feller tell me how I can get back to my outfit.
John Doe had a head
for twentyodd years intensely the nerves of the eyes the ears the palate the tongue the fingers the toes the armpits, the nerves warmfeeling under the skin charged the coiled brain with hurt sweet warm cold mine must don't sayings print headlines:
Thou shalt not the multiplication table long division, Now is the time for all good men knocks but once at a young man's door, It's a great life if Ish gebibbel,[31] The first five years'll be the Safety First, Suppose a hun tried to rape you're my country right or wrong, Catch 'em young, What he don't know wont treat 'em rough, Tell 'm nothing, He got what was coming to him he got his, This is a white man's country, Kick the bucket, Gone west, If you don't like it you can croaked him
Say buddy cant you tell me how I can get back to my outfit?
Cant help jumpin when them things go off, give me the trots[32] them things do. I lost my identification tag swimmin in the Marne, roughhousin with a guy while we was waitin to be deloused, in bed with a girl name Jeanne (Love moving picture wet French postcard dream began with saltpeter[33] in the coffee and ended at the propho[34] station);—
Say soldier for chrissake cant you tell me how I can get back to my outfit?
John Doe's

[26] Olive drab, military green.
[27] Cocksucker, in 1932 publishers still routinely censored "profane" language, so writers sometimes blanked out letters.
[28] Slumgullion, or watery stew.
[29] Troop train capacity.
[30] Inspection for venereal disease.
[31] It doesn't matter to me (pseudo-Yiddish).
[32] Diarrhea.
[33] Chemical given to soldiers in an effort to reduce their sexual desire.
[34] Prophylactic.

heart pumped blood:

alive thudding silence of blood in your ears

down in the clearing in the Oregon forest[35] where the punkins were punkincolor pouring into the blood through the eyes and the fallcolored trees and the bronze hoppers were hopping through the dry grass, where tiny striped snails hung on the underside of the blades and the flies hummed, wasps droned, bumble-bees buzzed, and the woods smelt of wine and mushrooms and apples, homey smell of fall pouring into the blood,

and I dropped the tin hat and the sweaty pack and lay flat with the dogday sun licking my throat and adamsapple and the tight skin over the breastbone.

The shell had his number on it.

* * *

The blood ran into the ground.

The service record dropped out of the filing cabinet when the quartermaster sergeant got blotto that time they had to pack up and leave the billets in a hurry.

The identification tag was in the bottom of the Marne.

The blood ran into the ground, the brains oozed out of the cracked skull and were licked up by the trenchrats, the belly swelled and raised a generation of blue-bottle flies.

and the incorruptible skeleton,

and the scraps of dried viscera and skin bundled in khaki

they took to Chalons-sur-Marne

and laid it out neat in a pine coffin

and took it home to God's Country on a battleship

and buried in a sarcophagus in the Memorial Amphitheatre in the Arlington National Cemetery

and draped the Old Glory over it

and the bugler played taps

and Mr. Harding prayed to God and the diplomats and the generals and the admirals and the brass-hats and the politicians and the handsomely dressed ladies out of the society column of the *Washington Post* stood up solemn

and thought how beautiful sad Old Glory God's Country it was go have the bugler play taps and the three volleys made their ears ring.

Where his chest ought to have been they pinned

the Congressional Medal, the D.S.C.,[36] the Medaille Militaire, the Belgian Croix de Guerre, the Italian gold medal, the Vitutea Militara sent by Queen Marie of Rumania, the Czechoslovak war cross, the Virtuti Militari

[35] Argonne Forest, in northeastern France; scene of major World War I battle.
[36] Distinguished Service Cross.

of the Poles, a wreath sent by Hamilton Fish, Jr., of New York,[37] and a little wampum presented by a deputation of Arizona redskins in warpaint and feathers. All the Washingtonians brought flowers.

Woodrow Wilson brought a bouquet of poppies.

EXERCISES

1. Look up the meaning of "John Doe."
2. What does the Congressional order read?
3. How was John Doe chosen?
4. The short story is a collage of fragments apparently taken from different sources: newspaper articles, speeches, official reports, and the author's "voice." Could you find examples of each of these sources?
5. How does Dos Passos express the people's origin of the soldiers?
6. Recruitment and training were dehumanizing, weren't they Explain substantiate your opinion with examples.
7. In some fragment, life's vitality is contrasted to death's brutality. Where?
8. Why does the government build this tomb to the Unknown Soldier?
9. Dos Passos implies that the whole ceremonial is hypocritical. What do you think?

A Rose for Emily

By William Faulkner 1897-1962

I

WHEN Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant—a combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years.

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps-an eyesore among eyesores. And now Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedar-bemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson.

[37] Member of U.S. Congress who promoted Un-Known Soldier memorial.

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor—he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron—remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity. Not that Miss Emily would have accepted charity. Colonel Sartoris invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of business, preferred this way of repaying. Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it.

When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction. On the first of the year they mailed her a tax notice. February came, and there was no reply. They wrote her a formal letter, asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience. A week later the mayor wrote her himself, offering to call or to send his car for her, and received in reply a note on paper of an archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all. The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment.

They called a special meeting of the Board of Aldermen. A deputation waited upon her, knocked at the door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china-painting lessons eight or ten years earlier. They were admitted by the old Negro into a dim hall from which a stairway mounted into still more shadow. It smelled of dust and disuse—a close, dank smell. The Negro led them into the parlor. It was furnished in heavy, leather-covered furniture. When the Negro opened the blinds of one window, they could see that the leather was cracked; and when they sat down, a faint dust rose sluggishly about their thighs, spinning with slow motes in the single sun-ray. On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father.

They rose when she entered—a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand.

She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened quietly until the spokesman came to a stumbling halt. Then they could hear the invisible watch ticking at the end of the gold chain.

Her voice was dry and cold. “I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and satisfy yourselves.”

“But we have. We are the city authorities, Miss Emily. Didn't you get a notice from the sheriff, signed by him?”

“I received a paper, yes,” Miss Emily said. “Perhaps he considers himself the sheriff . . . I have no taxes in Jefferson.”

“But there is nothing on the books to show that, you see We must go by the—”

“See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson.”

“But, Miss Emily—”
“See Colonel Sartoris.” (Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.) “I have no taxes in Jefferson. Tobe!” The Negro appeared. “Show these gentlemen out.”

II

SO SHE vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell.
That was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart—the one we believed would marry her —had deserted her. After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all. A few of the ladies had the temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man—a young man then—going in and out with a market basket.
“Just as if a man—any man—could keep a kitchen properly, “the ladies said; so they were not surprised when the smell developed. It was another link between the gross, teeming world and the high and mighty Griersons.
A neighbor, a woman, complained to the mayor, Judge Stevens, eighty years old.
“But what will you have me do about it, madam?” he said.
“Why, send her word to stop it,” the woman said. “Isn't there a law? “
“I'm sure that won't be necessary,” Judge Stevens said. “It's probably just a snake or a rat that nigger of hers killed in the yard. I'll speak to him about it.”
The next day he received two more complaints, one from a man who came in diffident deprecation. “We really must do something about it, Judge. I'd be the last one in the world to bother Miss Emily, but we've got to do something.” That night the Board of Aldermen met—three graybeards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation.
“It's simple enough,” he said. “Send her word to have her place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don't. ..”
“Dammit, sir,” Judge Stevens said, “will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?”
So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack slung from his shoulder. They broke open the cellar door and sprinkled lime there, and in all the outbuildings. As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol. They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away.
That was when people had begun to feel really sorry for her. People in our town, remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt, had gone completely crazy at last, believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We

had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door. So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances if they had really materialized.

When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad. At last they could pity Miss Emily. Being left alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized. Now she too would know the old thrill and the old despair of a penny more or less.

The day after his death all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. Just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and they buried her father quickly.

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

III

SHE WAS SICK for a long time. When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows—sort of tragic and serene.

The town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks, and in the summer after her father's death they began the work. The construction company came with riggers and mules and machinery, and a foreman named Homer Barron, a Yankee—a big, dark, ready man, with a big voice and eyes lighter than his face. The little boys would follow in groups to hear him cuss the riggers, and the riggers singing in time to the rise and fall of picks. Pretty soon he knew everybody in town. Whenever you heard a lot of laughing anywhere about the square, Homer Barron would be in the center of the group. Presently we began to see him and Miss Emily on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable.

At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because the ladies all said, “Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer.” But there were still others, older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget noblesse oblige—without calling it noblesse oblige. They just said, “Poor Emily. Her kinsfolk should come to her.” She had some kin in Alabama; but years ago her father had fallen out with them over the estate of old lady Wyatt, the crazy woman, and there was no communication between the two families. They had not even been represented at the funeral.

And as soon as the old people said, “Poor Emily,” the whispering began. “Do you suppose it's really so?” they said to one another. “Of course it is. What else could . . .” This behind their hands; rustling of craned silk and satin behind jalousies closed upon the sun of Sunday afternoon as the thin, swift clop-clop-clop of the matched team passed: “Poor Emily.”

She carried her head high enough—even when we believed that she was fallen. It was as if she demanded more than ever the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson; as if it had wanted that touch of earthiness to reaffirm her imperviousness. Like when she bought the rat poison, the arsenic. That was over a year after they had begun to say “Poor Emily,” and while the two female cousins were visiting her.

“I want some poison,” she said to the druggist. She was over thirty then, still a slight woman, though thinner than usual, with cold, haughty black eyes in a face the flesh of which was strained across the temples and about the eyesockets as you imagine a lighthouse-keeper's face ought to look. “I want some poison,” she said.

“Yes, Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I'd recom—”

“I want the best you have. I don't care what kind.”

The druggist named several. “They'll kill anything up to an elephant. But what you want is—”

“Arsenic,” Miss Emily said. “Is that a good one?”

“Is . . . arsenic? Yes, ma'am. But what you want—”

“I want arsenic.”

The druggist looked down at her. She looked back at him, erect, her face like a strained flag. “Why, of course,” the druggist said. “If that's what you want. But the law requires you to tell what you are going to use it for.”

Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The Negro delivery boy brought her the package; the druggist didn't come back. When she opened the package at home there was written on the box, under the skull and bones: “For rats.”

IV

SO THE NEXT day we all said, “She will kill herself”; and we said it would be the best thing. When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, “She will marry him.” Then we said, “She will persuade him yet,” because Homer himself had remarked—he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks' Club—that he was not a marrying man. Later we said, “Poor Emily” behind the jalousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove.

Then some of the ladies began to say that it was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people. The men did not want to interfere, but at last the ladies forced the Baptist minister—Miss Emily's people were Episcopal— to call upon her. He would never divulge what happened during that interview, but he refused to go

back again. The next Sunday they again drove about the streets, and the following day the minister's wife wrote to Miss Emily's relations in Alabama.

So she had blood-kin under her roof again and we sat back to watch developments. At first nothing happened. Then we were sure that they were to be married. We learned that Miss Emily had been to the jeweler's and ordered a man's toilet set in silver, with the letters H. B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men's clothing, including a nightshirt, and we said, “They are married.” We were really glad. We were glad because the two female cousins were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been.

So we were not surprised when Homer Barron—the streets had been finished some time since—was gone. We were a little disappointed that there was not a public blowing-off, but we believed that he had gone on to prepare for Miss Emily's coming, or to give her a chance to get rid of the cousins. (By that time it was a cabal, and we were all Miss Emily's allies to help circumvent the cousins.) Sure enough, after another week they departed. And, as we had expected all along, within three days Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbor saw the Negro man admit him at the kitchen door at dusk one evening.

And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron. And of Miss Emily for some time. The Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed. Now and then we would see her at a window for a moment, as the men did that night when they sprinkled the lime, but for almost six months she did not appear on the streets. Then we knew that this was to be expected too; as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die.

When we next saw Miss Emily, she had grown fat and her hair was turning gray. During the next few years it grew grayer and grayer until it attained an even pepper-and-salt iron-gray, when it ceased turning. Up to the day of her death at seventy-four it was still that vigorous iron-gray, like the hair of an active man.

From that time on her front door remained closed, save for a period of six or seven years, when she was about forty, during which she gave lessons in china-painting. She fitted up a studio in one of the downstairs rooms, where the daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries were sent to her with the same regularity and in the same spirit that they were sent to church on Sundays with a twenty-five-cent piece for the collection plate. Meanwhile her taxes had been remitted.

Then the newer generation became the backbone and the spirit of the town, and the painting pupils grew up and fell away and did not send their children to her with boxes of color and tedious brushes and pictures cut from the ladies' magazines. The front door closed upon the last one and remained closed for good. When the town got free postal delivery, Miss Emily alone refused to let them fasten the metal numbers above her door and attach a mailbox to it. She would not listen to them.

Daily, monthly, yearly we watched the Negro grow grayer and more stooped, going in and out with the market basket. Each December we sent her a tax notice, which would be returned by the post office a week later, unclaimed. Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows—she had evidently shut up the

top floor of the house—like the carven torso of an idol in a niche, looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which. Thus she passed from generation to generation—dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse.

And so she died. Fell ill in the house filled with dust and shadows, with only a doddering Negro man to wait on her. We did not even know she was sick; we had long since given up trying to get any information from the Negro

He talked to no one, probably not even to her, for his voice had grown harsh and rusty, as if from disuse.

She died in one of the downstairs rooms, in a heavy walnut bed with a curtain, her gray head propped on a pillow yellow and moldy with age and lack of sunlight.

V

THE NEGRO met the first of the ladies at the front door and let them in, with their hushed, sibilant voices and their quick, curious glances, and then he disappeared. He walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again.

The two female cousins came at once. They held the funeral on the second day, with the town coming to look at Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers, with the crayon face of her father musing profoundly above the bier and the ladies sibilant and macabre; and the very old men —some in their brushed Confederate uniforms— on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent decade of years.

Already we knew that there was one room in that region above stairs which no one had seen in forty years, and which would have to be forced. They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it.

The violence of breaking down the door seemed to fill this room with pervading dust. A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: upon the valance curtains of faded rose color, upon the rose-shaded lights, upon the dressing table, upon the delicate array of crystal and the man's toilet things backed with tarnished silver, silver so tarnished that the monogram was obscured. Among them lay a collar and tie, as if they had just been removed, which, lifted, left upon the surface a pale crescent in the dust. Upon a chair hung the suit, carefully folded; beneath it the two mute shoes and the discarded socks.

The man himself lay in the bed.

For a long while we just stood there, looking down at the profound and fleshless grin. The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust.

Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair.

EXERCISES

1. The story is told by some “we”. Who is it? The town? Explain.
2. Describe Miss Grierson and her house.
3. Miss Grierson represented the old, decaying Southern aristocracy. What elements express that?
4. What problem did she face about taxes? How did she handle that?
5. How did she face her father’s death?
6. What affair did she have with a Northerner? How did it end?
7. Write your impressions of the end of the story.

The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio

By Ernest Hemingway 1899-1961

THEY brought them in around midnight and then, all night long, everyone along the corridor heard the Russian.
“Where is he shot?” Mr. Frazer asked the night nurse.
“In the thigh, I think.”
“What about the other one?”
“Oh, he’s going to die, I’m afraid.” “Where is he shot?”
“Twice in the abdomen. They only found one of the bullets.”
They were both beet workers, a Mexican and a Russian, and they were sitting drinking coffee in an all-night restaurant when someone came in the door and started shooting at the Mexican. The Russian crawled under a table and was hit, finally, by a stray shot fired at the Mexican as he lay on the floor with two bullets in his abdomen. That was what the paper said.
The Mexican told the police he had no idea who shot him. He believed it to be an accident.
“An accident that he fired eight shots at you and hit you twice,
there?”
“Si, señor,” said the Mexican, who was named Cayetano Ruiz.
“An accident that he hit me at all, the cabron,” he said to the interpreter.
“What does he say? “asked the detective sergeant, looking across the bed at the interpreter.
“He says it was an accident.”

“Tell him to tell the truth, that he is going to die,” the detective said. “Na,” said Cayetano. “But tell him that I feel very sick and would prefer not to talk so much.”

“He says that he is telling the truth,” the interpreter said. Then, speaking confidently, to the detective, “He don’t know who shot him. They shot him in the back.”

“Yes,” said the detective. “I understand that, but why did the bullets all go in the front?”

“Maybe he is spinning around,” said the interpreter.

“Listen,” said the detective, shaking his finger almost at Cayetano’s nose, which projected, waxen yellow, from his dead-man’s face in which his eyes were alive as a hawk’s. “I don’t give a damn who shot you, but I’ve got to clear this thing up. Don’t you want the man who shot you to be punished? Tell him that,” he said to the interpreter.

“He says to tell who shot you.”

“Mandarlo al carajo,” said Cayetano, who was very tired.

“He says he never saw the fellow at all,” the interpreter said. “I tell you straight they shot him in the back.”

“Ask him who shot the Russian.”

“Poor Russian,” said Cayetano. “He was on the floor with his head enveloped in his arms. He started to give cries when they shoot him and he is giving cries ever since. Poor Russian.”

“He says some fellow that he doesn’t know. Maybe the same fellow that shot him.”

“Listen,” the detective said. “This isn’t Chicago. You’re not a gangster. You don’t have to act like a moving picture. It’s all right to tell who shot you. Anybody would tell who shot them. That’s all right to do. Suppose you don’t tell who he is and he shoots somebody else. Suppose he shoots a woman or a child. You can’t let him get away with that. You tell him,” he said to Mr. Frazer. “I don’t trust that damn interpreter .”

“I am very reliable,” the interpreter said. Cayetano looked at Mr. Frazer.

“Listen, amigo,” said Mr. Frazer. “The policeman says that we are not in Chicago but in Hailey, Montana. You are not a bandit and this has nothing to do with the cinema.”

“I believe him,” said Cayetano softly; “Ya lo creo.”

“One can, with honor, denounce one’s assailant. Everyone does it here, he says. He says what happens if after shooting you, this man shoots a woman or a child?”

“I am not married,” Cayetano said. “He says any woman, any child.”

“The man is not crazy, Cayetano said.

“He says you should denounce him,” Mr. Frazer finished.

“Thank you,” Cayetano said. “You are of the great translators. I speak English, but badly. I understand it all right. How did you break your leg?”

“A fall off a horse.”

“What bad luck. I am very sorry. Does it hurt much?” “Not now. At first, yes.”

“Listen, amigo,” Cayetano began, “I am very weak. You will pardon me. Also I have much pain; enough pain. It is very possible that I die. “Please get this policeman out of here because I am very tired.” He made as though to roll to one side; then held himself still.

“I told him everything exactly as you said and he said to tell you, truly, that he doesn’t know who shot him and that he is very weak and wishes you would question him later on,” Mr. Frazer said.

“He’ll probably be dead later on.” “That’s quite possible.”

“That’s why I want to question him now.”

“Somebody shot him in the back, I tell you,” the interpreter said.

“Oh, for Chrisake,” the detective sergeant said, and put his notebook in his pocket.

Outside in the corridor the detective sergeant stood with the interpreter beside Mr. Frazer’s wheeled chair.

“I suppose you think somebody shot him in the back too?”

“Yes,” Frazer said. “Somebody shot him in the back. What’s it to you?”

”Don’t get sore,” the sergeant said. “I wish I could talk spik.” “Why don’t you learn?”

“You don’t have to get sore. I don’t get any fun out of asking that spik questions. 1f I could talk spik it would be different.”

“You don’t need to talk Spanish,” the interpreter said. “I am a very reliable interpreter.”

“Oh, for Chrisake,” the sergeant said. “Well, so long. I’ll come up and see you.”

“Thanks. I’m always in.”

“I guess you are all right. That was bad luck all right. Plenty bad luck.”

“It’s coming along good now since he spliced the bone.” “Yes, but it’s a long time. A long, long time.” “Don’t let anybody shoot you in the back.”

“That’s right,” he said. “That’s right. Well, I’m glad you’re not sore.”

“So long,” said Mr. Frazer.

Mr. Frazer did not see Cayetano again for a long time, but each morning Sister Cecilia brought news of him. He was so uncomplaining she said and he was very bad now. He had peritonitis and they thought he could not live. Poor Cayetano, she said. He had such beautiful hands and such a fine face and he never complains. The odor, now, was really terrific. He would point toward his nose with one finger and smile and shake his head, she said. He felt badly about the odor. It embarrassed him, Sister Cecilia said. Oh, he was such a fine patient. He always smiled. He wouldn’t go to confession to Father but he promised to say his prayers, and not a Mexican had been to see him since he had been brought in. The Russian was going out at the end of the week. I could never feel anything about the Russian, Sister Cecilia said. Poor fellow, he suffered too. It was a greased bullet and dirty and the wound infected, but he made so much noise and then I always like the bad ones. That Cayetano, he’s a bad one. Oh, he must really be a bad one, a thoroughly bad one, he’s so fine and delicately made and he’s never done any work with his hands. He’s not a beet worker. I know he’s not a beet worker. His hands are as

smooth and not a callus on them. I know he's a bad one of some sort. I'm going down and pray for him now. Poor Cayetano, he's having a dreadful time and he doesn't make a sound. What did they have to shoot him for ? Oh, that poor Cayetano! I'm going right down and pray for him.

She went right down and prayed for him.

In that hospital a radio did not work very well until it was dusk. They said it was because there was so much ore in the ground or something about the mountains, but anyway it did not work well at all until it began to get dark outside; but all night it worked beautifully and when one station stopped you could go farther west and pick up another. The last one that you could get was Seattle, Washington, and due to the difference in time, when they signed off at four o'clock in the morning it was five o'clock in the morning in the hospital; and at six o'clock you could get the morning revelers in Minneapolis. That was on account of the difference in time, too, and Mr. Frazer used to like to think of the morning revelers arriving at the studio and picture how they would look getting off a street car before daylight in the morning carrying their instruments. Maybe that was wrong and they kept their instruments at the place they reveled, but he always pictured them with their instruments. He had never been in Minneapolis and believed he probably would never go there, but he knew what it looked like that early in the morning.

Out of the window of the hospital you could see a field with tumbleweed coming out of the snow, and a bare clay butte. One morning the doctor wanted to show Mr. Frazer two pheasants that were out there in the snow, and pulling the bed toward the window, the reading light fell off the iron bedstead and hit Mr. Frazer on the head. This does not sound so funny now but it was very funny then. Everyone was looking out the window, and the doctor, who was a most excellent doctor, was pointing at the pheasants and pulling the bed toward the window, and then, just as in a comic section, Mr. Frazer was knocked out by the leaded base of the lamp hitting the top of his head. It seemed the antithesis of healing or whatever people were in the hospital for, and everyone thought it was very funny, as a joke on Mr. Frazer and on the doctor. Everything is much simpler in a hospital, including the jokes.

From the other window, if the bed was turned, you could see the town, with a little smoke above it, and the Dawson mountains looking like real mountains with the winter snow on them. Those were the two views since the wheeled chair had proved to be premature. It is really best to be in bed if you are in a hospital; since two views, with time to observe them, from a room the temperature of which you control, are much better than any number of views seen for a few minutes from hot, empty rooms that are waiting for someone else, or just abandoned, which you are wheeled in and out of. If you stay long enough in a room the view, whatever it is, acquires a great value and becomes very important and you would not change it, not even by a different angle. Just as, with the radio, there are certain things that you become fond of; and you welcome them and resent the new things. The best tunes they had that winter were "Sing Something Simple," "Singsong Girl," and "Little White Lies." No other tunes were as satisfactory, Mr. Frazer felt. "Betty Co-ed" was a good tune too, but the parody of

the words which came unavoidably into Mr. Frazer's mind, grew so steadily and increasingly obscene that there being no one to appreciate it, he finally abandoned it and let the song go back to football.

About nine o'clock in the morning they would start using the X-ray machine, and then the radio, which, by then, was only getting Hailey, became useless. Many people in Hailey who owned radios protested about the hospital's X-ray machine which ruined their morning reception, but there was never any action taken, although many felt it was a shame the hospital could not use their machine at a time when people were not using their radios.

About the time when it became necessary to turn off the radio Sister Cecilia came in.

"How's Cayetano, Sister Cecilia?" Mr. Frazer asked.

"Oh, he's very bad:'

"Is he out of his head?"'

"No, but I'm afraid he's going to die.

"How are you?"

"I'm very worried about him, and do you know that absolutely no one has come to see him? He could die just like a dog for all those Mexicans care. They're really dreadful."

"Do you want to come up and hear the game this afternoon?"

"Oh, no," she said. "I'd be too excited. I'll be in the chapel praying."

"We ought to be able to hear it pretty well," Mr. Frazer said. "They're playing out on the coast and the difference in time will bring it late enough so we can get it all right."

"Oh, no. I couldn't do it. The world series nearly finished me. When the Athletics were at bat I was praying right out loud: 'Oh, Lord, direct their batting eyes! Oh, Lord, may he hit one! Oh, Lord, may he hit safely!' Then when they filled the bases in the third game, you remember, it was too much for me. 'Oh, Lord, may he hit it out of the lot! Oh, Lord, may he drive it clean over the fence!' Then you know when the Cardinals would come to bat it was simply dreadful. 'Oh, Lord, may they not see it! Oh, Lord, don't let them even catch a glimpse of it! Oh, Lord, may they fan!' And this game is even worse. It's Notre Dame. Our Lady. No, I'll be in the chapel. For Our Lady. They're playing for Our Lady. I wish you'd write something sometime for Our Lady. You could do it. You know you could do it, Mr. Frazer."

"I don't know anything about her that I could write. It's mostly been written already," Mr. Frazer said. "You wouldn't like the way I write. She wouldn't care for it either."

"You'll write about her sometime," Sister said. "I know you will. You must write about Our Lady."

"You'd better come up and hear the game."

"It would be too much for me. No, I'll be in the chapel doing what I can."

That afternoon they had been playing about five minutes when a probationer came into the room and said, "Sister Cecilia wants to know how the game is going?"

“Tell her they have a touchdown already.” In a little while the probationer came into the room again. “Tell her they’re playing them off their feet,” Mr. Frazer said. A little later he rang the bell for the nurse who was on floor duty. “Would you mind going down to the chapel or sending word down to Sister Cecilia that Notre Dame has them fourteen to nothing at the end of the first quarter and that it’s all right ? She can stop praying.”

In a few minutes Sister Cecilia came into the room. She was very excited. “What does fourteen to nothing mean? I don’t know anything about this game. That’s a nice safe lead in baseball but I don’t know anything about football. It may not mean a thing. I’m going right back down to the chapel and pray until it’s finished.”

“They have them beaten,” Frazer said. “I promise you. Stay and listen with me.”

“No. No. No. No. No. No. No,” she said. “I’m going right down to the chapel to pray.”

Mr. Frazer sent down word whenever Notre Dame scored, and finally, when it had been dark a long time, the final result.

“How’s Sister Cecilia?”

“They’re all at chapel,” she said.

The next morning Sister Cecilia came in. She was very pleased and confident.

“I knew they couldn’t beat Our Lady,” she said. “They couldn’t. Cayetano’s better too. He’s much better. He’s going to have visitors. He can’t see them yet, but they are going to come and that will make him feel better and know he’s not forgotten by his own people. I went down and saw that O’Brien boy at Police Headquarters and told him that he’s got to send some Mexicans up to see poor Cayetano. He’s going to send some this afternoon. Then that poor man will feel better. It’s wicked the way no one has come to see him.”

That afternoon about five o’clock three Mexicans came into the room.

“Can one?” asked the biggest one, who had very thick lips and was quite fat.

“Why not?” Mr. Frazer answered. “Sit down, gentlemen. Will you take something?”

“Many thanks,” said the big one.

“Thanks,” said the darkest and smallest one.

“Thanks, no,” said the thin one. “It mounts to my head.” He tapped his head.

The nurse brought some glasses. “Please give them the bottle,” Frazer said. “It is from Red Lodge,” he explained.

“That of Red Lodge is the best,” said the big one. “Much better than that of Big Timber.”

“Clearly,” said the smallest one, “and costs more too.” “In Red Lodge it is of all prices,” said the big one.

“How many tubes has the radio?” asked the one who did not drink.

“Seven.”

“Very beautiful,” he said. “What does it cost?”

“I don’t know,” Mr. Frazer said. “It is rented.” “You gentlemen are friends of Cayetano?”

“No,” said the big one. “We are friends of he who wounded him.” “We were sent here by the police,” the smallest one said.

“We have a little place,” the big one said. “He and I,” indicating the one who did not drink. “He has a little place too,” indicating the small, dark one. “The police tell us we have to come—so we come.”

“I am very happy you have come.” “Equally,” said the big one.

“Will you have another little cup?” “Why not?” said the big one.

“With your permission,” said the smallest one.

“Not me,” said the thin one. “It mounts to my head.”

“It is very good,” said the smallest one.

“Why not try some?” Mr. Frazer asked the thin one. “Let a little mount to your head.”

“Afterwards comes the headache,” said the thin one.

“Could you not send friends of Cayetano to see him?” Frazer asked. “He has no friends.”

“Every man has friends.” “This one, no.”

“What does he do?” “He is a card-player.”

“Is he good?”

“I believe it.”

“From me,” said the smallest one, “he won one hundred and eighty dollars. Now there is no longer one hundred and eighty dollars in the world.”

“From me,” said the thin one, “he won two hundred and eleven dollars. Fix yourself on that figure.”

“I never played with him,” said the fat one.

“He must be very rich,” Mr. Frazer suggested.

“He is poorer than we,” said the little Mexican. “He has no more than the shirt on his back.”

“And that shirt is of little value now,” Mr. Frazer said. “Perforated as it is.”

“Clearly.”

“The one who wounded him was a card-player?”

“No, a beet worker. He has had to leave town.”

“Fix yourself on this,” said the smallest one. “He was the best guitar player ever in this town. The finest.” “What a shame.”

“I believe it,” said the biggest one. “How he could touch the guitar.” “There are no good guitar players left?” “Not the shadow of a guitar player.”

“There is an accordion player who is worth something,” the thin man said.

“There are a few who touch various instruments,” the big one said. “You like music?”

“How would I not?”

“We will come one night with music? You think the sister would allow it? She seems very amiable.”

“I am sure she would permit it when Cayetano is able to hear it.”

“Is she a little crazy? “asked the thin one.

“Who?”

“That sister?”

“No,” Mr. Frazer said. “She is a fine woman of great intelligence and sympathy.”

“I distrust all priests, monks, and sisters,” said the thin one.

“He had bad experiences when a boy,” the smallest one said.

“I was acolyte,” the thin one said proudly. “Now I believe in nothing. Neither do I go to mass.”

“Why ? Does it mount to your head?”

“No,” said the thin one. “It is alcohol that mounts to my head. Religion is the opium of the poor.”

“I thought mariajuana was the opium of the poor,” Frazer said. “Did you ever smoke opium?” the big one asked.

“

“No.”

“Nor I,” he said. “It seems it is very bad. One commences and cannot stop. It is a vice.”

“Like religion,” said the thin one.

“This one,” said the smallest Mexican, “is very strong against religion.”

“It is necessary to be very strong against something,” Mr. Frazer said politely”

“I respect those who have faith even though they are ignorant,” the thin one said.

“Good,” said Mr. Frazer.

“What can we bring you?” asked the big Mexican. “Do you lack for anything?”

“I would be glad to buy some beer if there is good beer:”

“We will bring beer.”

“Another copita before you go?” “It is very good.”

“We are robbing you.”

“I can’t take it. It goes to my head. Then I have a bad headache and sick at the stomach.”

“Good-by, gentlemen.”

“Good-by and thanks.”

They went out and there was supper and then the radio, turned to be as quiet as possible and still be heard, and the stations finally signing off in this order: Denver, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, and Seattle. Mr. Frazer received no picture of Denver from the radio. He could see Denver from the Denver Post, and correct the picture from the Rocky Mountain News. Nor did he ever have any feel of Salt Lake City or Los Angeles from what he heard from those places. All he felt about Salt Lake City was that it was clean, but dull, and there were too many ballrooms mentioned in too many big hotels for him to see Los Angeles. He could not feel it for the ballrooms. But Seattle he came to know very well, the taxicab company with the big white cabs (each cab equipped with radio itself) he rode in every night out to the roadhouse on the Canadian side where he followed the course of parties by the musical selections they phoned for. He lived in Seattle from two o’clock on, each night, hearing the pieces that all the different people asked for, and it was as real as Minneapolis, where the revelers left their beds each morning to make that trip down to the studio. Mr. Frazer grew very fond of Seattle, Washington.

The Mexicans came and brought beer but it was not good beer. Mr. Frazer saw them but he did not feel like talking, and when they went he knew they would not come again. His nerves had become tricky and he disliked seeing people while he was in this condition. His nerves went bad at the end of five weeks, and while he was pleased they lasted that long yet he resented being forced to make the same experiment when he already knew the answer. Mr. Frazer had been through this all before. The only thing which was news to him was the radio. He played it all night long, turned so low he could barely hear it, and he was learning to listen to it without thinking.

Sister Cecilia came into the room about ten o'clock in the morning on that day and brought the mail. She was very handsome, and Mr. Frazer liked to see her and to hear her talk, but the mail, supposedly coming from a different world, was more important. However, there was nothing in the mail of any interest.

"You look so much better," she said. "You'll be leaving us soon." "Yes," Mr. Frazer said. "You look very happy this morning."

"Oh, I am. This morning I feel as though I might be a saint." Mr. Frazer was a little taken aback at this.

"Yes," Sister Cecilia went on. "That's what I want to be. A saint. Ever since I was a little girl I've wanted to be a saint. When I was a girl I thought if I renounced the world and went into the convent I would be a saint. That was what I wanted to be and that was what I thought I had to do to be one. I expected I would be a saint. I was absolutely sure I would be one. For just a moment I thought I was one. I was so happy and it seemed so simple and easy. When I awoke in the morning I expected I would be a saint, but I wasn't. I've never become one. I want to be one. All I want is to be a saint. That is all I've ever wanted. And this morning I feel as though I might be one. Oh, I hope I will get to be one."

"You'll be one. Everybody gets what they want. That's what they always tell me."

"I don't know now. When I was a girl it seemed so simple. I knew I would be a saint. Only I believed it took time when I found it did not happen suddenly. Now it seems almost impossible."

"I'd say you had a good chance."

"Do you really think so? No, I don't want just to be encouraged. Don't just encourage me. I want to be a saint. I want so to be a saint."

"Of course you'll be a saint," Mr. Frazer said.

"No, probably I won't be. But, oh, if I could only be a saint! I'd be perfectly happy."

"You're three to one to be a saint."

"No, don't encourage me. But, oh, if I could only be a saint! If I could only be a saint!"

"How's your friend Cayetano?"

"He's going to get well but he's paralyzed. One of the bullets hit the big nerve that goes down through his thigh and that leg is paralyzed. They only found it out when he got well enough so that he could move."

"Maybe the nerve will regenerate."

“I’m praying that it will,” Sister Cecilia said. “You ought to see him.”

“I don’t feel like seeing anybody.”

“You know you’d like to see him. They could wheel him in here.”

“All right.”

They wheeled him in, thin, his skin transparent, his hair black and needing to be cut, his eyes very laughing, his teeth bad when he smiled.

“Hola, amigo! Qué tal?”

“As you see,” said Mr. Frazer. “And thou?”

“Alive and with the leg paralyzed.”

“Bad,” Mr. Frazer said. “But the nerve can regenerate and be as good as new.”

“So they tell me.”

“What about the pain?”

“Not now. For a while I was crazy with it in the belly. I thought the pain alone would kill me.”

Sister Cecilia was observing them happily.

“She tells me you never made a sound,” Mr. Frazer said.

“So many people in the ward,” the Mexican said deprecatingly. “What class of pain do you have? “

“Big enough. Clearly not as bad as yours. When the nurse goes out I cry an hour, two hours. It rests me. My nerves are bad now.”

“You have the radio. 1f I had a private room and a radio I would be crying and yelling all night long.”

“I doubt it.”

“Hombre, si. It’s very healthy. But you cannot do it with so many people.”

“At least,” Mr. Frazer said, “the hands are still good. They tell me you make your living with the hands.”

“And the head,” he said, tapping his forehead. “But the head isn’t worth as much.”

“Three of your countrymen were here.”

“Sent by the police to see me”

“They brought some beer.”

“It probably was bad”

“It was bad.”

“Tonight, sent by the police, they come to serenade me.” He laughed, then tapped his stomach. “I cannot laugh yet. As musicians they are fatal.”

“And the one who shot you?”

“ Another fool. I won thirty-eight dollars from him at cards. That is not to kill about.”

“The three told me you win much money.”

“And am poorer than the birds.”

“How?”

“I am a poor idealist. I am the victim of illusions.” He laughed, then grinned and tapped his stomach. “I am a professional gambler but I like to gamble. To really gamble. Little gambling is all crooked. For real gambling you need luck. I have no luck.”

“Never?”

“Never. I am completely without luck. Look, this cabron who shoots me just now. Can he shoot? No. The first shot he fires into nothing. The second is intercepted by a poor Russian. That would seem to be luck. What happens ? He shoots me twice in the belly. He is a lucky man. I have no luck. He could not hit a horse if he were holding the stirrup. All luck.”

“I thought he shot you first and the Russian after.”

“No, the Russian first, me after. The paper was mistaken.” “Why didn’t you shoot him?”

“‘I never carry a gun. With my luck, if I carried a gun I would be hanged ten times a year. I am a cheap card player, only that.” He stopped, then continued. “When I make a sum of money I gamble and when I gamble I lose. I have passed at dice for three thousand dollars and crapped out for the six. With good dice. More than once.”

“Why continue?”

“If I live long enough the luck will change. I have bad luck now for fifteen years. If I ever get any good luck I will be rich.” He grinned. “I am a good gambler, really I would enjoy being rich.”

“Do you have bad luck with all games?”

“With everything and with women.” He smiled again, showing his bad teeth.

“Truly ?”

“Truly.”

“And what is there to do?”

“Continue, slowly, and wait for luck to change.”

“But with women?”

“No gambler has luck with women. He is too concentrated. He works nights. When he should be with the woman. No man who works nights can hold a woman if the woman is worth anything.”

“You are a philosopher.”

“No, hombre. A gambler of the small towns. One small town, then another, then a big town, then start over again.”

“Then shot in the belly.”

“The first time,” he said. “That has only happened once.”

“I tire you talking?” Mr. Frazer suggested.

“No,” he said. “I must tire you.”

“And the leg?”

“I have no great use for the leg. I am all right with the leg or not. I will be able to circulate.”

“I wish you luck, truly, and with all my heart,” Mr. Frazer said.
“Equally,” he said. “And that the pain stops.”
“It will not last, certainly. It is passing. It is of no importance.”
“That it passes quickly.”
“Equally.”

That night the Mexicans played the accordion and other instruments in the ward and it was cheerful and the noise of the inhalations and exhalations of the accordion, and of the bells, the traps, and the drum came down the corridor. In that ward there was a rodeo rider who had come out of the chutes on Midnight on a hot dusty afternoon with a big crowd watching, and now, with a broken back, was going to learn to work in leather and to cane chairs when he got well enough to leave the hospital. There was a carpenter who had fallen with a scaffolding and broken both ankles and both wrists. He had lit like could fix him up so that he could work again but it would take a long time. There was a boy from a farm, about sixteen years old, with a broken leg that had been badly set and was to be rebroken. There was Cayetano Ruiz, a small-town gambler with a paralyzed leg. Down the corridor Mr. Frazer could hear them all laughing and merry with the music made by the Mexicans who had been sent by the police. The Mexicans were having a good time. They came in, very excited, to see Mr. Frazer and wanted to know if there was anything he wanted them to play, and they came twice more to play at night of their own accord.

The last time they played Mr. Frazer lay in his room with the, door open and listened to the noisy, bad music and could not keep from thinking. When they wanted to know what he wished played, he asked for the Cucaracha, which has the sinister lightness and deftness of so many of the tunes men have gone to die to. They played noisily and with emotion. The tune was better than most of such tunes, to Mr. Frazer’s mind, but the effect was all the same.

In spite of this introduction of emotion, Mr. Frazer went on thinking. Usually he avoided thinking all he could, except when he was writing, but now he was thinking about those who were playing and what the little one had said.

Religion is the opium of the people. He believed that, that dyspeptic little joint-keeper. Yes, and music is the opium of the people. Old mount-to-the-head hadn’t thought of that. And now economics is the opium of the people; along with patriotism the opium of the people in Italy and Germany. What about sexual intercourse; was that an opium of the people? Of some of the people. Of some of the best of the people. But drink was a sovereign opium of the people, oh, an excellent opium. Although some prefer the radio, another opium of the people, a cheap one he had just been using. Along with these went gambling, an opium of the people if there ever was one, one of the oldest. Ambition was another, an opium of the people, along with a belief in any new form of government. What you wanted was the minimum of government, always less government. Liberty, what we believed in, now the name of a McFadden publication. We believed in that although they had not found a

new name for it yet. But what was the real one? What was the real, the actual, opium of the people? He knew it very well. It was gone just a little way around the corner in that well-lighted part of his mind that was there after two or more drinks in the evening; that he knew was there (it was not really there of course). What was it? He knew very well. What was it? Of course; bread was the opium of the people. Would he remember that and would it make sense in the daylight? Bread is the opium of the people.

"Listen," Mr. Frazer said to the nurse when she came. "Get that little thin Mexican in here, will you, please?"

"How did you like it?" the Mexican said at the door.

"Very much."

"It is a historic tune," the Mexican said. "It is the tune of the real revolution."

"Listen," said Mr. Frazer. "Why should the people be operated on without an anesthetic?"

"I do not understand."

"Why are not all the opiums of the people good? What do you want to do with the people?"

"They should be rescued from ignorance."

"Don't talk nonsense. Education is an opium of the people. You ought
to know that. You've had a little."

"You do not believe in education?"

"No," said Mr. Frazer. "In knowledge, yes."

"I do not follow you."

"Many times I do not follow myself with pleasure."

"You want to hear the Cucaracha another time? "asked the Mexican
worriedly.

"Yes," said Mr. Frazier. "Play the Cucaracha another time. It's better than the radio."

Revolution, Mr. Frazer thought, is no opium. Revolution is a catharsis; an ecstasy which can only be prolonged by tyranny. The opiums are for before and for after. He was thinking well, a little too well.

They would go now in a little while, he thought, and they would take the Cucaracha with them. Then he would have a little spot of the giant killer and play the radio, you could play the radio so that you could hardly hear it.

EXERCISES

1. Make a chart with hints to make a full characterization of Cayetano Ruiz and Sister Cecilia.
2. Mr. Frazer looks at them from a detached, mostly sympathetic position, sometimes with irony, sometimes with a little envy. Why?
3. Skim for the main events that happened to Mr. Frazer.
4. The 'Mr. Frazer' is probably an impersonation of Hemingway himself. Look for information about the author's life that may help explain why he needed the radio not to think. Write briefly about it.
5. Give your judgment on each of the opiums Mr. Frazer thought of in the end.

The Killers

By Ernest Hemingway 1899-1961

The door of Henry's lunchroom opened and two men came in. They sat down at the counter.

"What's yours?" George asked them.

"I don't know," one of the men said. "What do you want to eat, Al?"

"I don't know," said Al. "I don't know what I want to eat."

Outside it was getting dark. The streetlight came on outside the window. The two men at the counter read the menu. From the other end of the counter Nick Adams watched them. He had been talking to George when they came in.

"I'll have a roast pork tenderloin with apple sauce and mashed potatoes," the first man said.

"It isn't ready yet."

"What the hell do you put it on the card for?"

"That's the dinner," George explained. "You can get that at six o'clock."

George looked at the clock on the wall behind the counter.

"It's five o'clock."

"The clock says twenty minutes past five," the second man said.

"It's twenty minutes fast."

"Oh, to hell with the clock," the first man said. "What have you got to eat?"

"I can give you any kind of sandwiches," George said. "You can have ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver and bacon, or a steak."

"Give me chicken croquettes with green peas and cream sauce and mashed potatoes."

"That's the dinner."

"Everything we want's the dinner, eh? That's the way you work it."

"I can give you ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver—"

"I'll take ham and eggs," the man called Al said. He wore a derby hat and a black overcoat buttoned across the chest. His face was small and white and he had tight lips. He wore a silk muffler and gloves.

"Give me bacon and eggs," said the other man. He was about the same size as Al. Their faces were different, but they were dressed like twins. Both wore overcoats too tight for them. They sat leaning forward, their elbows on the counter.

"Got anything to drink?" Al asked.

"Silver beer, bevo, ginger-ale," George said.

"I mean you got anything to drink?"

“Just those I said.”

“This is a hot town,” said the other. “What do they call it?”

“Summit.”

“Ever hear of it?” Al asked his friend.

“No,” said the friend.

“What do they do here nights?” Al asked.

“They eat the dinner,” his friend said. “They all come here and eat the big dinner.”

“That’s right,” George said.

“So you think that’s right?” Al asked George.

“Sure.”

“You’re a pretty bright boy, aren’t you?”

“Sure,” said George.

“Well, you’re not,” said the other little man. “Is he, Al?”

“He’s dumb,” said Al. He turned to Nick. “What’s your name?”

“Adams.”

“Another bright boy,” Al said. “Ain’t he a bright boy, Max?”

“The town’s full of bright boys,” Max said.

George put the two platters, one of ham and eggs, the other of bacon and eggs, on the counter. He set down two side dishes of fried potatoes and closed the wicket into the kitchen.

“Which is yours?” he asked Al.

“Don’t you remember?”

“Ham and eggs.”

“Just a bright boy,” Max said. He leaned forward and took the ham and eggs. Both men ate with their gloves on. George watched them eat.

“What are you looking at?” Max looked at George.

“Nothing.”

“The hell you were. You were looking at me.”

“Maybe the boy meant it for a joke, Max,” Al said.

George laughed.

“You don’t have to laugh,” Max said to him. “You don’t have to laugh at all, see?’

“All right,” said George.

“So he thinks it’s all right.” Max turned to Al. “He thinks it’s all right. That’s a good one.”

“Oh, he’s a thinker,” Al said. They went on eating.

“What’s the bright boy’s name down the counter?” Al asked Max.

“Hey, bright boy,” Max said to Nick. “You go around on the other side of the counter with your boy friend.”

“What’s the idea?” Nick asked.

“There isn’t any idea.”

“You better go around, bright boy,” Al said. Nick went around behind the counter.

“What’s the idea?” George asked.

“None of your damned business,” Al said. “Who’s out in the kitchen?”

“The nigger.”

“What do you mean the nigger?”

“The nigger that cooks.”

“Tell him to come in.”

“What’s the idea?”

“Tell him to come in.”

“Where do you think you are?”

“We know damn well where we are,” the man called Max said. “Do we look silly?”

“You talk silly,” A1 said to him. “What the hell do you argue with this kid for? Listen,” he said to George, “tell the nigger to come out here.”

“What are you going to do to him?”

“Nothing. Use your head, bright boy. What would we do to a nigger?”

George opened the slit that opened back into the kitchen. “Sam,” he called. “Come in here a minute.”

The door to the kitchen opened and the nigger came in. “What was it?” he asked. The two men at the counter took a look at him.

“All right, nigger. You stand right there,” Al said.

Sam, the nigger, standing in his apron, looked at the two men sitting at the counter. “Yes, sir,” he said. Al got down from his stool.

“I’m going back to the kitchen with the nigger and bright boy,” he said. “Go on back to the kitchen, nigger. You go with him, bright boy.” The little man walked after Nick and Sam, the cook, back into the kitchen. The door shut after them. The man called Max sat at the counter opposite George. He didn’t look at George but looked in the mirror that ran along back of the counter. Henry’s had been made over from a saloon into a lunch counter.

“Well, bright boy,” Max said, looking into the mirror, “why don’t you say something?”

“What’s it all about?”

“Hey, Al,” Max called, “bright boy wants to know what it’s all about.”

“Why don’t you tell him?” Al’s voice came from the kitchen.

“What do you think it’s all about?”

“I don’t know.”

“What do you think?”

Max looked into the mirror all the time he was talking.

“I wouldn’t say.”

“Hey, Al, bright boy says he wouldn’t say what he thinks it’s all about.”

“I can hear you, all right,” Al said from the kitchen. He had propped open the slit that dishes passed through into the kitchen with a catsup bottle. “Listen, bright boy,” he said from the kitchen to George. “Stand a little further along the bar. You move a little to the left, Max.” He was like a photographer arranging for a group picture.

“Talk to me, bright boy,” Max said. “What do you think’s going to happen?”

George did not say anything.

“I’ll tell you,” Max said. “We’re going to kill a Swede. Do you know a big Swede named Ole Anderson?”

“Yes.”

“He comes here to eat every night, don’t he?”

“Sometimes he comes here.”

“He comes here at six o’clock, don’t he?”

“If he comes.”

“We know all that, bright boy,” Max said. “Talk about something else. Ever go to the movies?”

“Once in a while.”

“You ought to go to the movies more. The movies are fine for a bright boy like you.”

“What are you going to kill Ole Anderson for? What did he ever do to you?”

“He never had a chance to do anything to us. He never even seen us.”

“And he’s only going to see us once,” Al said from the kitchen:

“What are you going to kill him for, then?” George asked.

“We’re killing him for a friend. Just to oblige a friend, bright boy.”

“Shut up,” said Al from the kitchen. “You talk too goddamn much.”

“Well, I got to keep bright boy amused. Don’t I, bright boy?”

“You talk too damn much,” Al said. “The nigger and my bright boy are amused by themselves. I got them tied up like a couple of girl friends in the convent.”

“I suppose you were in a convent.”

“You never know.”

“You were in a kosher convent. That’s where you were.”

George looked up at the clock.

“If anybody comes in you tell them the cook is off, and if they keep after it, you tell them you’ll go back and cook yourself. Do you get that, bright boy?”

“All right,” George said. “What you going to do with us afterward?”

“That’ll depend,” Max said. “That’s one of those things you never know at the time.”

George looked up at the dock. It was a quarter past six. The door from the street opened. A streetcar motorman came in.

“Hello, George,” he said. “Can I get supper?”

“Sam’s gone out,” George said. “He’ll be back in about half an hour.”

“I’d better go up the street,” the motorman said. George looked at the clock. It was twenty minutes, past six.

“That was nice, bright boy,” Max said. “You’re a regular little gentleman.”

“He knew I’d blow his head off,” Al said from the kitchen.

“No,” said Max. “It ain’t that. Bright boy is nice. He’s a nice boy. I like him.”

At six-fifty-five George said: “He’s not coming.”

Two other people had been in the lunchroom. Once George had gone out to the kitchen and made a ham-and-egg sandwich “to go” that a man wanted to take with him. Inside the kitchen he saw Al, his derby hat tipped back, sitting on a stool beside the wicket with the muzzle of a sawed-off shotgun resting on the ledge. Nick and the cook were back to back in the corner, a towel tied in each of their mouths. George had cooked the sandwich, wrapped it up in oiled paper, put it in a bag, brought it in, and the man had paid for it and gone out.

“Bright boy can do everything,” Max said. “He can cook and everything. You’d make some girl a nice wife, bright boy.”

“Yes?” George said, “Your friend, Ole Anderson, isn’t going to come.”

“We’ll give him ten minutes,” Max said.

Max watched the mirror and the clock. The hands of the clock marked seven o’clock, and then five minutes past seven.

“Come on, Al,” said Max. “We better go. He’s not coming.”

“Better give him five minutes,” Al said from the kitchen.

In the five minutes a man came in, and George explained that the cook was sick.

“Why the hell don’t you get another cook?” the man asked. “Aren’t you running a lunch-counter?” He went out.

“Come on, Al,” Max said.

“What about the two bright boys and the nigger?”

“They’re all right.”

“You think so?”

“Sure. We’re through with it.”

“I don’t like it,” said Al. “It’s sloppy. You talk too much.”

“Oh, what the hell,” said Max. “We got to keep amused, haven’t we?”

“You talk too much, all the same,” Al said. He came out from the kitchen. The cut-off barrels of the shotgun made a slight bulge under the waist of his too tight-fitting overcoat. He straightened his coat with his gloved hands.

“So long, bright boy,” he said to George. “You got a lot of luck.”

“That’s the truth,” Max said. “You ought to play the races, bright boy.”

The two of them went out the door. George watched them, through the window, pass under the arc-light and across the street. In their tight overcoats and derby hats they looked like a vaudeville team. George went back through the swinging door into the kitchen and untied Nick and the cook.

"I don't want any more of that," said Sam, the cook. "I don't want any more of that."

Nick stood up. He had never had a towel in his mouth before.

"Say," he said. "What the hell?" He was trying to swagger it off.

"They were going to kill Ole Anderson," George said. "They were going to shoot him when he came in to eat."

"Ole Anderson?"

"Sure."

The cook felt the corners of his mouth with his thumbs.

"They all gone?" he asked.

"Yeah," said George. "They're gone now."

"I don't like it," said the cook. "I don't like any of it at all"

"Listen," George said to Nick. "You better go see Ole Anderson."

"All right."

"You better not have anything to do with it at all," Sam, the cook, said. "You better stay way out of it."

"Don't go if you don't want to," George said.

"Mixing up in this ain't going to get you anywhere," the cook said. "You stay out of it."

"I'll go see him," Nick said to George. "Where does he live?"

The cook turned away.

"Little boys always know what they want to do," he said.

"He lives up at Hirsch's rooming-house," George said to Nick.

"I'll go up there."

Outside the arc-light shone through the bare branches of a tree. Nick walked up the street beside the car-tracks and turned at the next arc-light down a side-street. Three houses up the street was Hirsch's rooming-house. Nick walked up the two steps and pushed the bell. A woman came to the door.

"Is Ole Anderson here?"

"Do you want to see him?"

"Yes, if he's in."

Nick followed the woman up a flight of stairs and back to the end of a corridor. She knocked on the door.

"Who is it?"

"It's somebody to see you, Mr. Anderson," the woman said.

"It's Nick Adams."

"Come in."

Nick opened the door and went into the room. Ole Anderson was lying on the bed with all his clothes on. He had been a heavyweight prizefighter and he was too long for the bed. He lay with his head on two pillows. He did not look at Nick.

"What was it?" he asked.

"I was up at Henry's," Nick said, "and two fellows came in and tied up me and the cook, and they said they were going to kill you."

It sounded silly when he said it. Ole Anderson said nothing.

"They put us out in the kitchen," Nick went on. "They were going to shoot you when you came in to supper."

Ole Anderson looked at the wall and did not say anything.

"George thought I better come and tell you about it."

"There isn't anything I can do about it," Ole Anderson said.

"I'll tell you what they were like."

"I don't want to know what they were like," Ole Anderson said. He looked at the wall. "Thanks for coming to tell me about it."

"That's all right."

Nick looked at the big man lying on the bed.

"Don't you want me to go and see the police?"

"No," Ole Anderson said. "That wouldn't do any good."

"Isn't there something I could do?"

"No. There ain't anything to do."

"Maybe it was just a bluff."

"No. It ain't just a bluff."

Ole Anderson rolled over toward the wall.

"The only thing is," he said, talking toward the wall, "I just can't make up my mind to go out. I been here all day."

"Couldn't you get out of town?"

"No," Ole Anderson said. "I'm through with all that running around."

He looked at the wall.

"There ain't anything to do now."

"Couldn't you fix it up some way?"

"No. I got in wrong." He talked in the same flat voice. "There ain't anything to do. After a while I'll make up my mind to go out."

"I better go back and see George," Nick said.

"So long," said Ole Anderson. He did not look toward Nick. "Thanks for coming around."

Nick went out. As he shut the door he saw Ole Anderson with all his clothes on, lying on the bed looking at the wall.

“He’s been in his room all day,” the landlady said downstairs. “I guess he don’t feel well. I said to him: ‘Mr. Anderson, you ought to go out and take a walk on a nice fall day like this,’ but he didn’t feel like it.”
“He doesn’t want to go out.”

EXERCISES

1. How does Hemingway describe the two men who came into the lunchroom?
2. Violence seemed to be quite normal in the two men’s behavior. Look for examples of such violence in the way they treated George and the others in the lunchroom.
3. What preparations did the killers make in the lunchroom? What for?
4. Were the workers of the lunchroom in any danger during the whole episode? Explain
5. What was Ole Anderson’s reaction when Nick told him of the event? Why do you think he reacted like that?
6. Why possibly did those men want to kill Mr. Anderson?
7. How did this story illustrate Hemingway’s “tip of the iceberg” technique?

Kneel to the Rising Sun

By Erskine Caldwell 1903-1987 (Biography missing)

I

A SHIVER went through Lonnie. He drew his hand away from his sharp chin, remembering what Clem had said. It made him feel now as if he were committing a crime by standing in Arch Gunnard’s presence and allowing his face to be seen.

He and Clem had been walking up the road together that afternoon on their way to the filling station when he told Clem how much he needed rations. Clem stopped a moment to kick a rock out of the road, and said that if you worked for Arch Gunnard long enough, your face would be sharp enough to split the boards for your own coffin.

As Lonnie turned away to sit down on an empty box beside the gasoline pump, he could not help wishing that he could be as unafraid of Arch Gunnard as Clem was. Even if Clem was a Negro, he never hesitated to ask for rations when he needed something to eat; and when he and his family did not get enough, Clem came right out and told Arch so. Arch stood for that, but he swore that he was going to run Clem out of the country the first chance he got.

Lonnie knew without turning around that Clem was standing at the corner of the filling station with two or three other Negroes and looking at him, but for some reason he was unable to meet Clem’s eyes.

Arch Gunnard was sitting in the sun, honing his jack-knife blade on his boot top. He glanced once or twice at Lonnie’s hound, Nancy, who was lying in the middle of the road waiting for Lonnie to go home.

“That your dog, Lonnie?”

Jumping with fear, Lonnie’s hand went to his chin to hide the lean face that would accuse Arch of shortrationing.

Arch snapped his fingers and the hound stood up, wagging her tail. She waited to be called.

“Mr. Arch, I—”

Arch called the dog. She began crawling towards them on her belly, wagging her tail a little faster each time Arch’s fingers snapped. When she was several feet away, she turned over on her back and lay on the ground with her four paws in the air.

Dudley Smith and Jim Weaver, who were lounging around the filling station, laughed. They had been leaning against the side of the building, but they straightened up to see what Arch was up to.

Arch spat some more tobacco juice on his boot top and whetted the jack-knife blade some more.

“What kind of a hound dog is that, anyway, Lonnie?” Arch said. “Looks like to me it might be a ketch hound.”

Lonnie could feel Clem Henry’s eyes boring into the back of his head. He wondered what Clem would do if it had been his dog Arch Gunnard was snapping his fingers at and calling like that.

“His tail’s way too long for a coon hound or a bird dog, ain’t it, Arch?” somebody behind Lonnie said, laughing out loud.

Everybody laughed then, including Arch. They looked at Lonnie, waiting to hear what he was going to say to Arch.

“Is he a ketch hound, Lonnie?” Arch said, snapping his finger again.

“Mr. Arch, I—”

“Don’t be ashamed of him, Lonnie, if he don’t show signs of turning out to be a bird dog or a fox hound. Everybody needs a hound around the house that can go out and catch pigs and rabbits when you are in a hurry for them. A ketch hound is a mighty respectable animal. I’ve known the time when I was mighty proud to own one.”

Everybody laughed.

Arch Gunnard was getting ready to grab Nancy by the tail. Lonnie sat up, twisting his neck until he caught a glimpse of Clem Henry at the other corner of the filling station. Clem was staring at him with unmistakable meaning, with the same look in his eyes he had had that afternoon when he said that nobody who worked for Arch Gunnard ought to stand for short-rationing. Lonnie lowered his eyes. He could not figure out how a Negro could be braver than he was. There were a lot of times like that when he would have given anything he had to be able to jump into Clem’s shoes and change places with him.

“The trouble with this hound of yours, Lonnie, is that he’s too heavy on his feet. Don’t you reckon it would be a pretty slick little trick to lighten the load some, being as how he’s a ketch hound to begin with?”

Lonnie remembered then what Clem Henry had said he would do if Arch Gunnard ever tried to cut off his dog’s tail. Lonnie knew, and Clem knew, and everybody else knew, that that would give Arch the chance he was waiting for. All Arch asked, he had said, was for Clem Henry to overstep his place just one little half-inch, or to

talk back to him with just one little short word, and he would do the rest. Everybody knew what Arch meant by that, especially if Clem did not turn and run. And Clem had not been known to run from anybody, after fifteen years in the country.

Arch reached down and grabbed Nancy's tail while Lonnie was wondering about Clem. Nancy acted as if she thought Arch were playing some kind of a game with her. She turned her head around until she could reach Arch's hand to lick it. He cracked her on the bridge of the nose with the end of the jackknife.

"He's a mighty playful dog, Lonnie," Arch said, catching up a shorter grip on the tail, "but his wagpole is way too long for a dog his size, especially when he wants to be a ketch hound."

Lonnie swallowed hard.

" Mr. Arch, she's a mighty fine rabbit tracker. I—"

"Shucks, Lonnie," Arch said, whetting the knife blade on the dog's tail, "I aint never seen a hound in all my life that needed a tail that long to hunt rabbits with. It's way too long for just a common, ordinary, everyday ketch hound."

Lonnie looked up hopefully at Dudley Smith and the others. None of them offered any help. It was useless for him to try to stop Arch, because Arch Gunnard would let nothing stand in his way when once he had set his head on what he wished to do. Lonnie knew that if he should let himself show any anger or resentment, Arch would drive him off the farm before sundown that night. Clem Henry was the only person there who would help him, but Clem . . .

The white men and the Negroes at both corners of the filling station waited to see what Lonnie was going to do about it. All of them hoped he would put up a fight for his hound. If anyone ever had the nerve to stop Arch Gunnard from cutting off a dog's tail, it might put an end to it. It was plain, though, that Lonnie, who was one of Arch's share-croppers, was afraid to speak up. Clem Henry might; Clem was the only one who might try to stop Arch, even if it meant trouble. And all of them knew that Arch would insist on running Clem out of the country, or filling him full of lead.

"I reckon it's all right with you, aint it, Lonnie?" Arch said. "I don't seem to hear no objections."

Clem Henry stepped forward several paces, and stopped.

Arch laughed, watching Lonnie's face, and jerked Nancy to her feet. The hound cried out in pain and surprise, but Arch made her be quiet by kicking her in the belly.

Lonnie winced. He could hardly bear to see anybody kick his dog like that.

"Mr. Arch, I . . ."

A contraction in his throat almost choked him for several moments, and he had to open his mouth wide and fight for breath. The other white men around him were silent. Nobody liked to see a dog kicked in the belly like that.

Lonnie could see the other end of the filling station from the corner of his eye. He saw a couple of Negroes go up behind Clem and grasp his overalls. Clem spat on the ground, between outspread feet, but he did not try to break away from them.

“Being as how I don’t hear no objections, I reckon it’s all right to go ahead and cut it off,” Arch said, spitting.

Lonnie’s head went forward and all he could see of Nancy was her hind feet. He had come to ask for a slab of sowbelly and some molasses, or something. Now he did not know if he could ever bring himself to ask for rations, no matter how much hungrier they became at home.

“I always make it a habit of asking a man first,” Arch said. “I wouldn’t want to go ahead and cut off a tail if a man had any objections. That wouldn’t be right. No, sir, it just wouldn’t be fair and square.”

Arch caught a shorter grip on the hound’s tail and placed the knife blade on it two or three inches from the rump. It looked to those who were watching as if his mouth were watering, because tobacco juice began to trickle down the corners of his lips. He brought up the back of his hand and wiped his mouth.

A noisy automobile came plowing down the road through the deep red dust. Everyone looked up as it passed in order to see who was in it.

Lonnie glanced at it, but he could not keep his eyes raised. His head fell downward once more until he could feel his sharp chin cutting into his chest. He wondered then if Arch had noticed how lean his face was.

“I keep two or three ketch hounds around my place,” Arch said, honing the blade on the tail of the dog as if it were a razor strop until his actions brought smiles to the faces of the men grouped around him, “but I never could see the sense of a ketch hound having a long tail. It only gets in their way when I send them out to catch a pig or a rabbit for my supper.”

Pulling with his left hand and pushing with his right, Arch Gunnard docked the hound’s tail as quickly and as easily as if he were cutting a willow switch in the pasture to drive the cows home with. The dog sprang forward with the release of her tail until she was far beyond Arch’s reach, and began howling so loud she could be heard half a mile away. Nancy stopped once and looked back at Arch, and then she sprang to the middle of the road and began leaping and twisting in circles. All that time she was yelping and biting at the bleeding stub of her tail.

Arch leaned backward and twirled the severed tail in one hand while he wiped the jack-knife blade on his boot sole. He watched Lonnie’s dog chasing herself around in circles in the red dust.

Nobody had anything to say then. Lonnie tried not to watch his dog’s agony, and he forced himself to keep from looking at Clem Henry. Then, with his eyes shut, he wondered why he had remained on Arch Gunnard’s plantation all those past years, sharecropping for a mere living on short-rations, and becoming leaner and leaner all the time. He knew then how true it was what Clem had said about Arch’s sharecroppers’ faces becoming sharp enough to hew their own coffins. His hands went to his chin before he knew what he was doing. His hand dropped when he had felt the bones of jaw and the exposed tendons of his cheeks.

As hungry as he was, he knew that even if Arch did give him some rations then, there would not be nearly enough for them to eat for the following week. Hattie, his wife, was already broken down from hunger and work in the fields, and his father, Mark Newsome, stone-deaf for the past twenty years, was always asking him why there was never enough food in the house for them to have a solid meal. Lonnie’s head fell forward a little more, and he could feel his eyes becoming damp.

The pressure of his sharp chin against his chest made him so uncomfortable that he had to raise his head at last in order to ease the pain of it.

The first thing he saw when he looked up was Arch Gunnard twirling Nancy's tail in his left hand. Arch Gunnard had a trunk full of dogs' tails at home. He had been cutting off tails ever since anyone could remember, and during all those years he had accumulated a collection of which he was so proud that he kept the trunk locked and the key tied around his neck on a string. On Sunday afternoons when the preacher came to visit, or when a crowd was there to loll on the front porch and swap stories, Arch showed them off, naming each tail from memory just as well as if he had had a tag on it.

Clem Henry had left the filling station and was walking alone down the road towards the plantation. Clem Henry's house was in a cluster of Negro cabins below Arch's big house, and he had to pass Lonnie's house to get there. Lonnie was on the verge of getting up and leaving when he saw Arch looking at him. He did not know whether Arch was looking at his lean face, or whether he was watching to see if he were going to get up and go down the road with Clem.

The thought of leaving reminded him of his reason for being there. He had to have some rations before suppertime that night, no matter how short they were.

"Mr. Arch, I . . ."

Arch stared at him for a moment, appearing as if he had turned to listen to some strange sound unheard of before that moment.

Lonnie bit his lips, wondering if Arch was going to say anything about how lean and hungry he looked. But Arch was thinking about something else. He slapped his hand on his leg and laughed out loud.

"I sometimes wish niggers had tails," Arch said, coiling Nancy's tail into a ball and putting it into his pocket. "I'd a heap rather cut off nigger tails than dog tails. There'd be more to cut, for one thing."

Dudley Smith and somebody else behind them laughed for a brief moment. The laughter died out almost as suddenly as it had risen.

The Negroes who had heard Arch shuffled their feet in the dust and moved backwards. It was only a few minutes until not one was left at the filling station. They went up the road behind the red wooden building until they were out of sight.

Arch got up and stretched. The sun was getting low, and it was no longer comfortable in the October air. "Well, I reckon I'll be getting on home to get me some supper," he said.

He walked slowly to the middle of the road and stopped to look at Nancy retreating along the ditch.

"Nobody going my way?" he asked. "What's wrong with you, Lonnie? Going home to supper, aint you?"

"Mr. Arch, I . . ."

Lonnie found himself jumping to his feet. His first thought was to ask for the sowbelly and molasses, and maybe some corn meal; but when he opened his mouth, the words refused to come out. He took several steps forward and shook his head. He did not know what Arch might say or do if he said "no."

“Hattie’ll be looking for you,” Arch said, turning his back and walking off.

He reached into his hip pocket and took out Nancy’s tail. He began twirling it as he walked down the road towards the big house in the distance.

Dudley Smith went inside the filling station, and the others walked away.

After Arch had gone several hundred yards, Lonnie sat down heavily on the box beside the gas pump from which he had got up when Arch spoke to him. He sat down heavily, his shoulders drooping, his arms falling between his outspread legs.

Lonnie did not know how long his eyes had been closed, but when he opened them, he saw Nancy lying between his feet, licking the docked tail. While he watched her, he felt the sharp point of his chin cutting into his chest again. Presently the door behind him was slammed shut, and a minute later he could hear Dudley Smith walking away from the filling station on his way home.

II

Lonnie had been sleeping fitfully for several hours when he suddenly found himself wide awake. Hattie shook him again. He raised himself on his elbow and tried to see into the darkness of the room. Without knowing what time it was, he was able to determine that it was still nearly two hours until sunrise.

“Lonnie,” Hattie said again, trembling in the cold night air, “Lonnie, your pa aint in the house.”

Lonnie sat upright in bed.

“How do you know he aint?” he said.

“I’ve been lying here wide awake ever since I got in bed, and I heard him when he went out. He’s been gone all that time.”

“Maybe he just stepped out for a while,” Lonnie said, turning and trying to see through the bedroom window.

“I know what I’m saying, Lonnie,” Hattie insisted. “Your pa’s been gone a heap too long.”

Both of them sat without a sound for several minutes while they listened for Mark Newsome.

Lonnie got up and lit a lamp. He shivered while he was putting on his shirt, overalls, and shoes. He tied his shoelaces in hard knots because he couldn’t see in the faint light. Outside the window it was almost pitch-dark, and Lonnie could feel the damp October air blowing against his face.

“I’ll go help look,” Hattie said, throwing the covers off and starting to get up.

Lonnie went to the bed and drew the covers back over her and pushed her back into place.

“You try to get some sleep, Hattie,” he said; “you can’t stay awake the whole night. I’ll go bring Pa back.”

He left Hattie, blowing out the lamp, and stumbled through the dark hall, feeling his way to the front porch by touching the wall with his hands. When he got to the porch, he could still barely see any distance ahead, but his eyes were becoming more accustomed to the darkness. He waited a minute, listening.

Feeling his way down the steps into the yard, he walked around the corner of the house and stopped to listen again before calling his father.

“Oh, Pa!” he said loudly. “Oh, Pa!”

He stopped under the bedroom window when he realized what he had been doing.

“Now that’s a fool thing for me to be out here doing,” he said, scolding himself. “Pa couldn’t hear it thunder.”

He heard a rustling of the bed.

“He’s been gone long enough to get clear to the crossroads, or more,” Hattie said, calling through the window.

“Now you lay down and try to get a little sleep, Hattie,” Lonnie told her. “I’ll bring him back in no time.”

He could hear Nancy scratching fleas under the house, but he knew she was in no condition to help look for Mark. It would be several days before she recovered from the shock of losing her tail.

“He’s been gone a long time,” Hattie said, unable to keep still.

“That don’t make no difference,” Lonnie said. “I’ll find him sooner or later. Now you go on to sleep like I told you, Hattie.”

Lonnie walked towards the barn, listening for some sound. Over at the big house he could hear the hogs grunting and squealing, and he wished they would be quiet so he could hear other sounds. Arch Gunnard’s dogs were howling occasionally, but they were not making any more noise than they usually did at night, and he was accustomed to their howling.

Lonnie went to the barn, looking inside and out. After walking around the barn, he went into the field as far as the cotton shed. He knew it was useless, but he could not keep from calling his father time after time.

“Oh, Pa!” he said, trying to penetrate the darkness. He went further into the field.

“Now, what in the world could have become of Pa?” he said, stopping and wondering where to look next.

After he had gone back to the front yard, he began to feel uneasy for the first time. Mark had not acted any more strangely during the past week than he ordinarily did, but Lonnie knew he was upset over the way Arch Gunnard was giving out short-rations. Mark had even said that, at the rate they were being fed, all of them would starve to death inside another three months.

Lonnie left the yard and went down the road towards the Negro cabins. When he got to Clem’s house, he turned in and walked up the path to the door. He knocked several times and waited. There was no answer, and he rapped louder.

“Who’s that?” he heard Clem say from bed.

“It’s me,” Lonnie said. “I’ve got to see you a minute, Clem. I’m out in the front yard.”

He sat down and waited for Clem to dress and come outside. While he waited, he strained his ears to catch any sound that might be in the air. Over the fields towards the big house he could hear the fattening hogs grunt and squeal.

Clem came out and shut the door. He stood on the doorsill a moment speaking to his wife in bed, telling her he would be back and not to worry.

“Who’s that?” Clem said, coming down into the yard.

Lonnie got up and met Clem half-way.

“What’s the trouble?” Clem asked then, buttoning up his overall jumper.

“Pa’s not in his bed,” Lonnie said, “and Hattie says he’s been gone from the house most all night. I went out in the field, and all around the barn, but I couldn’t find a trace of him anywhere.”

Clem then finished buttoning his jumper and began rolling a cigarette. He walked slowly down the path to the road. It was still dark, and it would be at least an hour before dawn made it any lighter.

“Maybe he was too hungry to stay in the bed any longer,” Clem said. “When I saw him yesterday, he said he was so shrunk up and weak he didn’t know if he could last much longer. He looked like his skin and bones couldn’t shrivel much more.”

“I asked Arch last night after suppertime for some rations—just a little piece of sowbelly and some molasses. He said he’d get around to letting me have some the first thing this morning.”

“Why don’t you tell him to give you full rations or none?” Clem said. “If you knew you wasn’t going to get none at all, you could move away and find a better man to share-crop for, couldn’t you?”

“I’ve been loyal to Arch Gunnard for a long time now,” Lonnie said. “I’d hate to haul off and leave him like that.”

Clem looked at Lonnie, but he did not say anything more just then. They turned up the road towards the driveway that led up to the big house. The fattening hogs were still grunting and squealing in the pen, and one of Arch’s hounds came down a cotton row beside the driveway to smell their shoes.

“Them fattening hogs always get enough to eat,” Clem said. “There’s not a one of them that don’t weigh seven hundred pounds right now, and they’re getting bigger every day. Besides taking all that’s thrown to them, they make a lot of meals off the chickens that get in there to peck around.”

Lonnie listened to the grunting of the hogs as they walked up the driveway towards the big house.

“Reckon we’d better get Arch up to help look for Pa?” Lonnie said. “I’d hate to wake him up, but I’m scared Pa might stray off into the swamp and get lost for good. He couldn’t hear it thunder, even. I never could find him back there in all that tangle if he got into it.”

Clem said something under his breath and went on towards the barn and hog pen. He reached the pen before Lonnie got there.

“You’d better come here quick,” Clem said, turning around to see where Lonnie was.

Lonnie ran to the hog pen. He stopped and climbed half-way up the wooden-and-wire sides of the fence. At first he could see nothing, but gradually he was able to see the moving mass of black fattening hogs on the other side of the pen. They were biting and snarling at each other like a pack of hungry hounds turned loose on a dead rabbit.

Lonnie scrambled to the top of the fence, but Clem caught him and pulled him back.

“Don’t go in that hog pen that way,” he said. “Them hogs will tear you to pieces, they’re that wild. They’re fighting over something.”

Both of them ran around the corner of the pen and got to the side where the hogs were. Down under their feet on the ground Lonnie caught a glimpse of a dark mass splotched with white. He was able to see it for a moment only, because one of the hogs trampled over it.

Clem opened and closed his mouth several times before he was able to say anything at all. He clutched at Lonnie's arm, shaking him.

"That looks like it might be your pa," he said. "I swear before goodness, Lonnie, it does look like it."

Lonnie still could not believe it. He climbed to the top of the fence and began kicking his feet at the hogs, trying to drive them away. They paid no attention to him.

While Lonnie was perched there, Clem had gone to the wagon shed, and he ran back with two singletrees he had somehow managed to find there in the dark. He handed one to Lonnie, poking it at him until Lonnie's attention was drawn from the hogs long enough to take it.

Clem leaped over the fence and began swinging the singletree at the hogs. Lonnie slid down beside him, yelling at them. One hog turned on Lonnie and snapped at him, and Clem struck it over the back of the neck with enough force to drive it off momentarily.

By then Lonnie was able to realize what had happened. He ran to the mass of hogs, kicking them with his heavy stiff shoes and striking them on their heads with the iron-tipped singletree. Once he felt a stinging sensation, and looked down to see one of the hogs biting the calf of his leg. He had just enough time to hit the hog and drive it way before his leg was torn. He knew most of his overall leg had been ripped away, because he could feel the night air on his bare wet calf.

Clem had gone ahead and had driven the hogs back. There was no other way to do anything. They were in a snarling circle around them, and both of them had to keep the singletrees swinging back and forth all the time to keep the hogs off. Finally Lonnie reached down and got a grip on Mark's leg. With Clem helping, Lonnie carried his father to the fence and lifted him over to the other side.

They were too much out of breath for a while to say anything, or to do anything else. The snarling, fattening hogs were at the fence, biting the wood and wire, and making more noise than ever.

While Lonnie was searching in his pockets for a match, Clem struck one. He held the flame close to Mark Newsome's head.

They both stared unbelievingly, and then Clem blew out the match. There was nothing said as they stared at each other in the darkness.

Clem walked several steps away, and turned and came back beside Lonnie.

"It's him, though," Clem said, sitting down on the ground. "It's him, all right."

"I reckon so," Lonnie said. He could think of nothing else to say then.

They sat on the ground, one on each side of Mark, looking at the body. There had been no sign of life in the body beside them since they had first touched it. The face, throat, and stomach had been completely devoured.

"You'd better go wake up Arch Gunnard," Clem said after a while.

“What for?” Lonnie said. “He can’t help none now. It’s too late for help.”

“Makes no difference,” Clem insisted. “You’d better go wake him up and let him see what there is to see. If you wait till morning, he might take it into his head to say the hogs didn’t do it. Right now is the time to get him up so he can see what his hogs did.”

Clem turned around and looked at the big house. The dark outline against the dark sky made him hesitate.

“A man who short-rations tenants ought to have to sit and look at that till it’s buried.”

Lonnie looked at Clem fearfully. He knew Clem was right, but he was scared to hear a Negro say anything like that about a white man.

“You oughtn’t talk like that about Arch,” Lonnie said. “He’s in bed asleep. He didn’t have a thing to do with it. He didn’t have no more to do with it than I did.”

Clem laughed a little, and threw the singletree on the ground between his feet. After letting it lie there a little while, he picked it up and began beating the ground with it.

Lonnie got to his feet slowly. He had never seen Clem act like that before, and he did not know what to think about it. He left without saying anything and walked stiffly to the house in the darkness to wake up Arch Gunnard.

III

Arch was hard to wake up. And even after he was awake, he was in no hurry to get up. Lonnie was standing outside the bedroom window, and Arch was lying in bed six or eight feet away. Lonnie could hear him toss and grumble.

“Who told you to come and wake me up in the middle of the night?” Arch said.

“Well, Clem Henry’s out here, and he said maybe you’d like to know about it.”

Arch tossed around on the bed, flailing the pillow with his fists.

“You tell Clem Henry I said that one of these days he’s going to find himself turned inside out, like a coat-sleeve.”

Lonnie waited doggedly. He knew Clem was right in insisting that Arch ought to wake up and come out there to see what had happened. Lonnie was afraid to go back to the barnyard and tell Clem that Arch was not coming. He did not know, but he had a feeling that Clem might go into the bedroom and drag Arch out of bed. He did not like to think of anything like that taking place.

“Are you still out there, Lonnie?” Arch shouted.

“I’m right here, Mr. Arch. I—”

“If I wasn’t so sleepy, I’d come out there and take a stick and—I don’t know what I wouldn’t do!”

Lonnie met Arch at the back step. On the way out to the hog pen Arch did not speak to him. Arch walked heavily ahead, not even waiting to see if Lonnie was coming. The lantern that Arch was carrying cast long flat beams of

yellow light over the ground; and when they got to where Clem was waiting beside Mark's body, the Negro's face shone in the night like a highly polished plowshare.

"What was Mark doing in my hog pen at night, anyway?" Arch said, shouting at them both.

Neither Clem nor Lonnie replied. Arch glared at them for not answering. But no matter how many times he looked at them, his eyes returned each time to stare at the torn body of Mark Newsome on the ground at his feet.

"There's nothing to be done now," Arch said finally. "We'll just have to wait till daylight and send for the undertaker." He walked a few steps away. "Looks like you could have waited till morning in the first place. There wasn't no sense in getting me up.

He turned his back and looked sideways at Clem. Clem stood up and looked him straight in the eyes.

"What do you want, Clem Henry?" he said. "Who told you to be coming around my house in the middle of the night? I don't want niggers coming here except when I send for them."

"I couldn't stand to see anybody eaten up by the hogs, and not do anything about it," Clem said.

"You mind your own business," Arch told him. "And when you talk to me, take off your hat, or you'll be sorry for it. It wouldn't take much to make me do you up the way you belong."

Lonnie backed away. There was a feeling of uneasiness around them. That was how trouble between Clem and Arch always began. He had seen it start that way dozens of times before. As long as Clem turned and went away, nothing happened, but sometimes he stayed right where he was and talked up to Arch just as if he had been a white man, too.

Lonnie hoped it would not happen this time. Arch was already mad enough about being waked up in the middle of the night, and Lonnie knew there was no limit to what Arch would do when he got good and mad at a Negro. Nobody had ever seen him kill a Negro, but he had said he had, and he told people that he was not scared to do it again.

"I reckon you know how he came to get eaten up by the hogs like that," Clem said, looking straight at Arch.

Arch whirled around.

"Are you talking to me . . . ?"

"I asked you that," Clem stated.

"God damn you, yellow-blooded . . ." Arch yelled.

He swung the lantern at Clem's head. Clem dodged, but the bottom of it hit his shoulder, and it was smashed to pieces. The oil splattered on the ground, igniting in the air from the flaming wick. Clem was lucky not to have it splash on his face and overalls.

"Now, look here . . ." Clem said.

"You yellow-blooded nigger," Arch said, rushing at him. "I'll teach you to talk back to me. You've got too big for your place for the last time. I've been taking too much from you, but I aint doing it no more."

"Mr. Arch, I . . ." Lonnie said, stepping forward partly between them. No one heard him.

Arch stood back and watched the kerosene flicker out on the ground.

"You know good and well why he got eaten up by the fattening hogs," Clem said, standing his ground. "He was so hungry he had to get up out of bed in the middle of the night and come up here in the dark trying to find something to eat. Maybe he was trying to find the smokehouse. It makes no difference, either way. He's been on short-rations like everybody else working on your place, and he was so old he didn't know where else to look for food except in your smokehouse. You know good and well that's how he got lost u' here in the dark and fell in the hog pen."

The kerosene had died out completely. In the last faint flare, Arch had reached down and grabbed up the singletree that had been lying on the ground where Lonnie had dropped it.

Arch raised the singletree over his head and struck with all his might at Clem. Clem dodged, but Arch drew back again quickly and landed a blow on his arm just above the elbow before Clem could dodge it. Clem's arm dropped to his side, dangling lifelessly.

"You Goddamn yellow-blooded nigger!" Arch shouted. "Now's your time, you black bastard. I've been waiting for the chance to teach you your lesson. And this's going to be one you won't never forget."

Clem felt the ground with his feet until he had located the other singletree. He stooped down and got it. Raising it, he did not try to hit Arch, but held it in front of him so he could ward off Arch's blows at his head. He continued to stand his ground, not giving Arch an inch.

"Drop that singletree," Arch said.

"I won't stand here and let you beat me like that," Clem protested.

"By God, that's all I want to hear," Arch said, his mouth curling. "Nigger, your time has come, by God!"

He swung once more at Clem, but Clem turned and ran towards the barn. Arch went after him a few steps and stopped. He threw aside the singletree and turned and ran back to the house.

Lonnie went to the fence and tried to think what was best for him to do. He knew he could not take sides with a Negro, in the open, even if Clem had helped him, and especially after Clem had talked to Arch in the way he wished he could himself. He was a white man, and to save his life he could not stand to think of turning against Arch, no matter what happened.

Presently a light burst through one of the windows of the house, and he heard Arch shouting at his wife to take her up.

When he saw Arch's wife go to the telephone, Lonnie realized what was going to happen. She was calling up the neighbors and Arch's friends. They would not mind getting up in the night when they found out what was going to take place.

Out behind the barn he could hear Clem calling him. Leaving the yard, Lonnie felt his way out there in the dark.

"What's the trouble, Clem?" he said.

"I reckon my time has come," Clem said. "Arch Gunnard talks that way when he's good and mad. He talked just like he did that time he carried Jim Moffin off to the swamp—and Jim never came back."

“Arch wouldn’t do anything like that to you, Clem,” Lonnie said excitedly, but he knew better.

Clem said nothing.

“Maybe you’d better strike out for the swamps till he changes his mind and cools off some,” Lonnie said. “You might be right, Clem.”

Lonnie could feel Clem’s eyes burning into him.

“Wouldn’t be no sense in that, if you’d help me,” Clem said. “Wouldn’t you stand by me?”

Lonnie trembled as the meaning of Clem’s suggestion became clear to him. His back was to the side of the barn, and he leaned against it while sheets of black and white passed before his eyes.

“Wouldn’t you stand by me?” Clem asked again.

“I don’t know what Arch would say to that,” Lonnie told him haltingly.

Clem walked away several paces. He stood with his back to Lonnie while he looked across the field towards the quarter where his home was.

“I could go in that little patch of woods out there and stay still they get tired of looking for me,” Clem said, turning around to see Lonnie.

“You’d better go somewhere,” Lonnie said uneasily. “I know Arch Gunnard. He’s hard to handle when he makes up his mind to do something he wants to do. I couldn’t stop him an inch. Maybe you’d better get clear out of the country, Clem.”

“I couldn’t do that, and leave my family down there across the field,” Clem said.

“He’s going to get you if you don’t.”

“If you’d only sort of help me out a little, he wouldn’t. I would only have to go and hide out in that little patch of woods over there a while. Looks like you could do that for me, being as how I helped you find your pa when he was in the hog pen.”

Lonnie nodded, listening for sounds from the big house. He continued to nod at Clem while Clem was waiting to be assured.

“If you’re going to stand up for me,” Clem said, “I can just go over there in the woods and wait till they get it off their minds. You won’t be telling them where I’m at, and you could say I struck out for the swamp. They wouldn’t ever find me without bloodhounds.”

“That’s right,” Lonnie said, listening for sounds of Arch’s coming out of the house. He did not wish to be found back there behind the barn where Arch could accuse him of talking to Clem.

The moment Lonnie replied, Clem turned and ran off into the night. Lonnie went after him a few steps, as if he had suddenly changed his mind about helping him, but Clem was lost in the darkness by then.

Lonnie waited for a few minutes, listening to Clem crashing through the underbrush in the patch of woods a quarter of a mile away. When he could hear Clem no longer, he went around the barn to meet Arch.

Arch came out of the house carrying his doublebarreled shotgun and the lantern he had picked up in the house. His pockets were bulging with shells.

“Where is that damn nigger, Lonnie?” Arch asked him. “Where’d he go to?”

Lonnie opened his mouth, but no words came out.

“You know which way he went, don’t you?”

Lonnie again tried to say something, but there were no sounds. He jumped when he found himself nodding his head to Arch.

“Mr. Arch, I—”

“That’s all right, then,” Arch said. “That’s all I need to know now. Dudley Smith and Tom Hawkins and Frank and Dave Howard and the rest will be here in a minute, and you can stay right here so you can show us where he’s hiding out.”

Frantically Lonnie tried to say something. Then he reached for Arch’s sleeve to stop him, but Arch had gone.

Arch ran around the house to the front yard. Soon a car came racing down the road, its headlights lighting up the whole place, hog pen and all. Lonnie knew it was probably Dudley Smith, because his was the first house in that direction, only half a mile away. While he was turning into the driveway, several other automobiles came into sight, both up the road and down it.

Lonnie trembled. He was afraid Arch was going to tell him to point out where Clem had gone to hide. Then he knew Arch would tell him. He had promised Clem he would not do that. But try as he might, he could not make himself believe that Arch Gunnard would do anything more than whip Clem.

Clem had not done anything that called for lynching. He had not raped a white woman, he had not shot at a white man; he had only talked back to Arch, with his hat on. But Arch was mad enough to do anything; he was mad enough at Clem not to stop at anything short of lynching.

The whole crowd of men was swarming around him before he realized it. And there was Arch clutching his arm and shouting into his face.

“Mr. Arch, I . . .”

Lonnie recognized every man in the feeble dawn. They were excited, and they looked like men on the last lap of an all-night foxhunting party. Their shotguns and pistols were held at their waist, ready for the kill.

“What’s the matter with you, Lonnie?” Arch said, shouting into his ear. “Wake up and say where Clem Henry went to hide out. We’re ready to go get him.”

Lonnie remembered looking up and seeing Frank Howard dropping yellow twelve-gauge shells into the breech of his gun. Frank bent forward so he could hear Lonnie tell Arch where Clem was hiding.

“You aint going to kill Clem this time, are you, Mr. Arch?” Lonnie asked.

“Kill him?” Dudley Smith repeated. “What do you reckon I’ve been waiting all this time for if it wasn’t for a chance to get Clem. That nigger has had it coming to him ever since he came to this county. He’s a bad nigger, and it’s coming to him.”

“It wasn’t exactly Clem’s fault,” Lonnie said. “If Pa hadn’t come up here and fell in the hog pen, Clem wouldn’t have had a thing to do with it. He was helping me, that’s all.”

“Shut up, Lonnie,” somebody shouted at him. “You’re so excited you don’t know what you’re saying. You’re taking up for a nigger when you talk like that.”

People were crowding around him so tightly he felt as if he were being squeezed to death. He had to get some air, get his breath, get out of the crowd.

“That’s right,” Lonnie said.

He heard himself speak, but he did not know what he was saying.

“But Clem helped me find Pa when he got lost looking around for something to eat.”

“Shut up, Lonnie,” somebody said again. “You damn fool, shut up!”

Arch grabbed his shoulder and shook him until his teeth rattled. Then Lonnie realized what he had been saying.

“Now, look here, Lonnie,” Arch shouted. “You must be out of your head, because you know good and well you wouldn’t talk like a nigger-lover in your right mind.”

“That’s right,” Lonnie said, trembling all over. “I sure wouldn’t want to talk like that.”

He could still feel the grip on his shoulder where Arch’s strong fingers had hurt him.

“Did Clem go to the swamp, Lonnie?” Dudley Smith said. “Is that right, Lonnie?”

Lonnie tried to shake his head; he tried to nod his head. Then Arch’s fingers squeezed his thin neck. Lonnie looked at the men wild-eyed.

“Where’s Clem hiding, Lonnie?” Arch demanded, squeezing.

Lonnie went three or four steps towards the barn. When he stopped, the men behind him pushed forward again. He found himself being rushed behind the barn and beyond it.

“All right, Lonnie,” Arch said. “Now which way?”

Lonnie pointed towards the patch of woods where the creek was. The swamp was in the other direction.

“He said he was going to hide out in that little patch of woods along the creek over there, Mr. Arch,” Lonnie said. “I reckon he’s over there now.”

Lonnie felt himself being swept forward, and he stumbled over the rough ground trying to keep from being knocked down and trampled upon. Nobody was talking, and everyone seemed to be walking on tiptoes. The gray light of early dawn was increasing enough both to hide them and to show the way ahead.

Just before they reached the fringe of the woods, the men separated, and Lonnie found himself a part of the circle that was closing in on Clem.

Lonnie was alone, and there was nobody to stop him, but he was unable to move forward or backward. It began to be clear to him what he had done.

Clem was probably up a tree somewhere in the woods ahead, but by that time he had been surrounded on all sides. If he should attempt to break and run, he would be shot down like a rabbit.

Lonnie sat down on a log and tried to think what to do. The sun would be up in a few more minutes, and as soon as it came up, the men would close in on the creek and Clem. He would have no chance at all among all those shotguns and pistols.

Once or twice he saw the flare of a match through the underbrush where some of the men were lying in wait. A whiff of cigarette smoke struck his nostrils, and he found himself wondering if Clem could smell it wherever he was in the woods.

There was still no sound anywhere around him, and he knew that Arch Gunnard and the rest of the men were waiting for the sun, which would in a few minutes come up behind him in the east.

It was light enough by that time to see plainly the rough ground and the tangled underbrush and the curling bark on the pine trees.

The men had already begun to creep forward, guns raised as if stalking a deer. The woods were not large, and the circle of men would be able to cover it in a few minutes at the rate they were going forward. There was still a chance that Clem had slipped through the circle before dawn broke, but Lonnie felt that he was still there. He began to feel then that Clem was there because he himself had placed him there for the men to find more easily.

Lonnie found himself moving forward, drawn into the narrowing circle. Presently he could see the men all around him in dim outline. Their eyes were searching the heavy green pine tops as they went forward from tree to tree.

“Oh, Pa!” he said in a hoarse whisper. “Oh, Pa!”

He went forward a few steps, looking into the bushes and up into the tree tops. When he saw the other men again, he realized that it was not Mark Newsome being sought. He did not know what had made him forget like that.

The creeping forward began to work into the movement of Lonnie’s body. He found himself springing forward on his toes, and his body was leaning in that direction. It was like creeping up on a rabbit when you did not have a gun to hunt with.

He forgot again what he was doing there. The springing motion in his legs seemed to be growing stronger with each step. He bent forward so far he could almost touch the ground with his fingertips. He could not stop now. He was keeping up with the circle of men.

The fifteen men were drawing closer and closer together. The dawn had broken enough to show the time on the face of a watch. The sun was beginning to color the sky above.

Lonnie was far in advance of anyone else by then. He could not hold himself back. The strength in his legs was more than he could hold in check.

He had for so long been unable to buy shells for his gun that he had forgotten how much he liked to hunt.

The sound of the men’s steady creeping had become a rhythm in his ears.

“Here’s the bastard!” somebody shouted, and there was a concerted crashing through the dry underbrush. Lonnie dashed forward, reaching the tree almost as quickly as anyone else.

He could see everybody with guns raised, and far into the sky above the sharply outlined face of Clem Henry gleamed in the rising sun. His body was hugging the slender top of the pine.

Lonnie did not know who was the first to fire, but the rest of the men did not hesitate. There was a deafening roar as the shotguns and revolvers flared and smoked around the trunk of the tree.

He closed his eyes; he was afraid to look again at the face above. The firing continued without break. Clem hugged the tree with all his might, and then, with the far-away sound of splintering wood, the top of the tree and Clem came crashing through the lower limbs to the ground. The body, sprawling and torn, landed on the ground with a thud that stopped Lonnie's heart for a moment.

He turned, clutching for the support of a tree, as the firing began once more. The crumpled body was tossed time after time, like a sackful of kittens being killed with an automatic shotgun, as charges of lead were fired into it from all sides. A cloud of dust rose from the ground and drifted overhead with the choking odor of burned powder.

Lonnie did not remember how long the shooting lasted. He found himself running from tree to tree, clutching at the rough pine bark, stumbling wildly towards the cleared ground. The sky had turned from gray to red when he emerged in the open, and as he ran, falling over the hard clods in the plowed field, he tried to keep his eyes on the house ahead.

Once he fell and found it almost impossible to rise again to his feet. He struggled to his knees, facing the round red sun. The warmth gave him the strength to rise to his feet, and he muttered unintelligibly to himself. He tried to say things he had never thought to say before.

When he got home, Hattie was waiting for him in the yard. She had heard the shots in the woods, and she had seen him stumbling over the hard clods in the field, and she had seen him kneeling there looking straight into the face of the sun. Hattie was trembling as she ran to Lonnie to find out what the matter was.

Once in his own yard, Lonnie turned and looked for a second over his shoulder. He saw the men climbing over the fence at Arch Gunnard's. Arch's wife was standing on the back porch, and she was speaking to them.

"Where's your pa, Lonnie? " Hattie said. "And what in the world was all that shooting in the woods for?" Lonnie stumbled forward until he had reached the front porch. He fell upon the steps.

"Lonnie, Lonnie!" Hattie was saying. "Wake up and tell me what in the world is the matter. I've never seen the like of all that's going on."

"Nothing," Lonnie said. "Nothing."

"Well, if there's nothing the matter, can't you go up to the big house and ask for a little piece of streak-of-lean? We aint got a thing to cook for breakfast. Your pa's going to be hungrier than ever after being up walking around all night."

"What?" Lonnie said, his voice rising to a shout as he jumped to his feet.

"Why, I only said go up to the big house and get a little piece of streak-of-lean, Lonnie. That's all I said."

He grabbed his wife about the shoulders.

"Meat?" he yelled, shaking her roughly.

"Yes," she said, pulling away from him in surprise. "Couldn't you go ask Arch Gunnard for a little bit of streak-of-lean?"

Lonnie slumped down again on the steps, his hands falling between his outspread legs and his chin falling on his chest.

"No," he said almost inaudibly. "No. I aint hungry."

EXERCISES

1. To understand the story properly, you have to look for some information on the post bellum institutions of sharecropping and Jim Crow. After you do that, take some notes on the way they are reflected in the story for class debate.
2. Mr. Gunnard, the planter, collected dog tails. Why did he do that? What des his hobby tell you about him?
3. Make an outline of the main events of the story. What moment was most stressing to you? Explain your reasons for the choice.
4. Describe the exchanges between Mr. Gunnard and Lonnie on the one hand and those of Mr. Gunnard and Clem Henry on the other.
5. Classify the main characters of the story according to their degree of personal independence.
6. In front of Mr. Gunnard, Lonnie simply could not talk. Why?
7. Contrast Clem's behavior with that of Lonnie. Give your opinion.
8. Look for one of the last scenes when Lonnie is on his knees in front of the rising sun, thus providing for the story's title. What is its metaphorical meaning?
9. What kind of slavery did Lonnie, a poor white, suffer? Do you know of a relation of subordination like that one in your family or in your surroundings? Write briefly about it.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHIES

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400)

English poet, born in London between 1340 and 1345; died there, 25 October, 1400. John Chaucer, a vintner and citizen of London, married Agnes, heiress of one Hamo de Copton, the city moneyer, and owned the house in Upper Thames Street, Dowgate Hill (a site covered now by the arrival platform of Cannon Street Station), where his son Geoffrey was born. That his birth was not in 1328, hitherto the accepted date, is fully proved (Furnivall in The Academy, 8 Dec., 1888, 12 Dec., 1887). John Chaucer was connected with the Court, and once saw Flanders in the royal train. Geoffrey was educated well, but whether he was entered at either university remains unknown. He figures by name from the year 1357, presumably in the capacity of a page, in the household books of the Lady Elizabeth de Burgh, wife of Prince Lionel, third son of King Edward III (Bond in Fornightly Review, VI, 28 Aug., 1873). The lad followed this prince to France, serving through the final and futile Edwardian invasion, which ended in the Peace of Bretigny (1360), and was taken prisoner at "Retters", identified by unwary biographers as Retiers near Rennes, but by Skeat as Rethel near Reims, a place mentioned by Froissart in his account of this very campaign. Thence Chaucer was ransomed by the king, who, when the Lady Elizabeth died, took over her page and later (1367) pensioned him for life. Chaucer was married before 1374; probably the Philippa Chaucer named in the queen's grant of 1366 was then Geoffrey Chaucer's wife (Lounsbury, Studies in Chaucer, I, 95-7). It seems clear that he could not have been happy in his marriage (Hales in Dict. Nat. Biog., X, 157). He had two sons and a daughter, if not other children. Gascoigne tells us that his contemporary, Thomas Chaucer was the poet's son. This statement, long discredited, is now fully endorsed by the best authorities (Hales in Athenaeum, 31 March, 1888; Skeat, ibid., 27 Jan.1900). Thomas Chaucer's mother was Philippa Roet, daughter of Sir Paon or Payne de Roet Guienne king at arms. Roet had another daughter, Catherine, widow of Sir Hugh Swynford, who was for Gaunt's mistress and eventually his third wife. Thus Chaucer became the brother-in-law of the great duke, who from 1368 onwards had been his most powerful patron. Thomas Chaucer (b. about 1367; d. 1434), later of Woodstock and Ewelme, became chief butler to four sovereign, as well as Speaker of the House of Commons (in 1414). His sister Elizabeth (b.1365) at sixteen entered Barking Abbey as a novice, John of Gaunt providing fifty pounds as her religious dowry. Lewis Chaucer, the "litel sonne Lowys", for whom the "Astrolale" was written, is supposed to have died in childhood. From about his twenty-sixth year Chaucer was frequently employed on important diplomatic missions; the year 1372-3 marks the turning point of his literary life, for then he was sent to Italy; circumstances make it extremely probable that either in Florence or at Padua he made Petrarch's acquaintance (Lounsbury, Studies, I, 67-68). The young King Richard II granted Chaucer a second life pension. It is startling to find him, in 1380, concerned in a

discreditable abduction (Athenaeum, 29 Nov., 1873; from the Close Roll of 3 of Richard II). He was made comptroller of the petty customs of the port of London and complains of the burden of official life in "The House of Fame" (lines 652-60); and it would appear from the prologue the "Legend of Good Women", and through the influence of the new queen, Anne of Bohemia, he was enabled by1385 to sucure a permanent deputy. At this time he gave up housekeeping in Aldgate, and settled in the country, presumably at Greenwich, where he had a garden and arbour. The intrigues of the partisans of the king's uncle, Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, involved Chaucer's fortunes in partial ruin. The grants made to Philippa, his wife ceased in 1387, so that we may suppose she was then dead; during the springs of 1388 Chaucer was obliged to sell two of his pensions; in 1390 he was twice in one day robbed of the king's money, but was excused from repaying it. Until King Richard recovered power Chaucer had lean years to undergo. For a while he was Clerk of the Works at Windsor, Westminster and the Tower, but proved thriftless and unsuccessful in business affairs, and gave little satisfaction. Unrivalled opportunities and the fostering care of successive sovereigns could not keep hirn frorn anxiety, if not penury, towards the end. It is noticeable that his latest and most troubled period produced the "Canterbury Tales". Within four days after his accession King Henry IV, the son of Chaucer's first benefactor, increased Chaucer's remaining income by forty marks per annum. The poet then leased a pleasant house in the monastery garden at Westminster, and there, hard by the Lady Chapel of the Abbey (now replaced by the loftier erection of Henry VII), he died. For a century and a half his only memorial in Westminster Abbey was a Latin epitaph written by Surigonius of Milan, engraved upon a leaden plate, and hung up, probably at Caxton's instigation, on a pillar near the grave. The present canopied grey marble altar-tomb, on the south side, was set up by Nicholas Brigham, in 1556, all trace of its votive portrait of the venerated master disappeared long ago. The "Canterbury Tales" were first printed by Caxton, from a faulty manuscript, in or about 1476-7; later by Pynson, and by Wynkyn de Worde. Other pieces were collected, and, between 1526-1602, often published with the "Tales". Many of these, attributed to Chaucer even by his earliest great modern editor, Tyrwhitt, are now known not to be his. (Skeat, "Chaucer's Minor Poems", Oxford, 1896; or, Idem "Chaucerian Pieces" in the "Complete Works", Oxford, 1897, suppl. vol.) Chaucer's genuine major poems are assigned to this chronological order: The "Romaunt of the Rose", that is, the first 1705 lines the remainder being rejected as not Chaucer's (see Chaucer Society Publications, 2nd Series, No 19, 1884), dates from about 1366, and "The A.B.C.", from the same period; the "Book of the Duchess" from 1369, the "Complaint of Pity" from 1372; "Anelida and False Arcite" from 1372-4; "Troilus and Cressid" from 1379-83, the "Parliament of Fowls" from 1382; the "House of Fame" from 1383-4; the "Legend of Good Women" from about 1385-6; and the "Canterbury Tales" as a whole, from 1386 onwards until after 1390. It is curious that the first draft of the lovely Tales by the Second Nun, the Man of Law, the Clerk, the Knight, and part of the Monk, should have been produced early; and that the Tales by the Miller, the Reeve, the Shipman, and the Merchant, as well as the Wife of Bath's Prologue, should have been produced after 1387. Chaucer's objectionable work is, therefore, not the work of his youth.

To the intense affection, frequently expressed, of Hoccleve, we owe the first and best of Chaucer's portraits, familiar through reproduction. It appears in the margin of "The Governail of Princes", or "De Regimine Principum" (Harl. MS. 4866, in British Museum). In it we see Chaucer, limned from memory, in his familiar hood and gown, rosary in hand, plump, full-eyed, fork-bearded. (For detailed accounts see Spielman, "The Portraits of Geoffrey Chaucer", London, l900, first issued in the "Chaucer Memorial Lectures", 111-41.) Like Dryden, he was silent, and had a "down look"; this physical characteristic was partly due to a most genuine modesty, partly to the habit of constant reading. Chaucer indeed read and annexed everything, and transmuted everything into that vocabulary of his, all plasticity and all power. He is a cosmopolite, chiefly influenced by Ovid, by his own contemporary Italy, a debtor, if ever man was, to the whole spirit of his age; he has its fire, its impudence, its broad licentiousness; he has rather more than his share of its true-hearted pathos, its exquisite freshness and brightness, its sense of eternity. The so-called "Counsel of Chaucer" sums up, at a holy and serene moment, his philosophic outlook. He had unequalled powers of observation, and gave a highly ironic but most humane report. He is an artist through and through, and that artist had been a soldier and a diplomat, hence his genius, even in its extremes of mirth has balance and health, remoteness and neutrality — it is never bitter, and never in the least "viewy". Matthew Arnold (Introduction to Ward's "English Poets" 1885, I, pp. xxxiv—v) accuses him of a lack of what Aristotle calls "high and excellent seriousness". But "high seriousness" is not quite the note of the fourteenth century. Chaucer's is the master-note (submerged all over Europe since the Reformation) of joy. This brings us to the question of his personal religion.

Foxe (Acts and Monuments of the Church, 1583, II, 839) started the absurd theory that Chaucer was a follower of Wyclif. The poet's own abstract habit; his association with the prince who (probably actuated by no very high motives) withdrew his favour from the contemporary reformer when solicitude for a purer practice ran into heresy and threatened revolt; his close friendship with Strode, a Dominican of Oxford and a strong anti-Lollard—these things tend of themselves to denote Chaucer's views in the matter. The opposite inference is "due to a misconception of his language, based on a misconception of his character" (Lounsbury Studies, II, 469). Like Wyclif, Chaucer loved the priestly ideal; and he draws it incomparably in his "Poor Parson of Town". Yet, as has been said, that very "Parson's Tale", in its extant form, goes far to prove that its author, even by sympathy, was no Wyclifite (A.W. Ward, "Chaucer", London, 1879, p. 134, in "English Men of Letters Series"). Passionless justice was the bed-rock of Chaucer's mind. He paints that parti-coloured Plantagenet world as it was, not interfering to make it better, nor to wish it better. Where the churchman type was gross, he represents it grossly. It is well, however, to recall that the famous episode of his "beating a Friar in Fleet street" is the invention of Speght, further embroidered by Chatterton; and that the prose tractate, "Jack Upland", full of invective against the religious orders, is proved not to be Chaucer's. His attitude towards women is just as two-sided. He shows in many a theme a reverence toward them which must have been fed by that "hy devocioun" to Our Lady which is beautifully apparent in his pages, and which Hoccleve mentions in recalling his memory; but dramatic exigencies, Boccaccio's example, presumable hard domestic experience, a laughingly merciless psychology,

and a paralyzing outspokenness, contrive too often, as readers regret, to fight it down. He has been held up as a rationalist, on the strength of a few passages, and against the enormous mass of testimony which he furnishes on the soundness of his Catholic ethos. Of that, after all, as of its absence, Catholics are the best judges. The "Nuns' Priest's Tale" (Skeat's ed., lines 4424-40) raises the question of predestination, only to drop it. The context shows that the poet thinks his sudden side-issue not trivial or tedious, but quite the contrary, he quits it only because he cannot "boult it to the bren", i.e., sift it down, analyze it satisfactorily. Again, the "Knight's Tale" (Skeat's ed., lines 2890—14) implies that the author has no mind to dogmatize upon the final destiny of poor Arcite, newly slain. Both these instances have been cited in the masterly chapter on "Chaucer as a Literary Artist" (Lounsbury, Studies, II, 512-15, 520), to prove, in the one ease, an easy dismissal of a mere scholastic dilemma; in the other, Chaucer's disbelief, or half-belief, in immortality. They prove, rather, a restraint in dogmatizing about the destiny of the individual, a restraint practiced by the church itself. "The Legend of Good Women" opens with some fifteen lines, the purport of which need never have been questioned. They mean nothing if they do not mean that knowledge by evidence is one thing, assurance by faith another thing; and that lack of sensible proof can never discredit revelation. A somewhat playful confession of belief has here been turned into a serious profession of agnosticism, through sheer lack of spiritual understanding. His "hostility to the Church", as Professor Lounsbury calls it, is certainly not borne out by Chaucer's going out of his way, as he does, to defend her from age-long calumnies; for instance, in the "Franklin's Tale", and in the section "De Ira" of the "Parson's Tale", he witnesses to her horror of superstitions and false sciences. Chaucer, in short, though none too supernatural a person, had a most orthodox grip on his catechism.

The "Preces", or prose "retracciouns", which are usually painted at either end of the "Canterbury Tales" date from the evening of Chaucer's life. To Tyrwhitt, Hales, Ward, and Lounsbury, who suspect undue priestly influence, the "Preces" are, in their own words, "morbid", "reaction and weakness", "a betrayal of his poetic genius", "unbearable to have to accept as genuine". In the course of them, Chaucer disclaims of his books "thilke that sounen in-to sinne" i.e., those which are consonant with, or sympathetic with sin. Skeat is the only editor who understands Chaucer in his contrition (Notes to the "Canterbury Tales", in the Oxford Press complete edition, 475). Gascoigne (Theological Dictionary, Pt. II, 377, the manuscript of which is in the library of Lincoln College, Oxford) unwittingly parodies the situation, and represents the old sinner "Chawserus" as dying while lamenting over pages, quae male scripsi de malo et turpissimo amore. To the secular point of view it has all seemed, and may well seem, mistaken and deplorable. But nothing is manlier, or more touching and endearing, than this humble self-subordination to conscience and the moral law. "Except ye become as little children" is the hardest saying ever given to the intellectual world. These are great geniuses, Geoffrey Chaucer not least among them, to whom it was not given in vain.

Taken from: The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III

Nihil Obstat, November 1, 1908. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor
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Sir Thomas Malory (1420-1471)

Sir Thomas Malory was the author of the most famous work of Arthurian literature, "Le Morte D'Arthur". This literary masterpiece was made all the more remarkable because it was written by a layman living in Medieval England. Clearly not a professional writer, Sir Thomas' composition grows in power throughout its length, while his style remains simple and informal, probably much like his own speech. He saw his romances as the chronicles of an historical Arthur perhaps with a moralistic slant. They certainly show off the religious and chivalric ideas of the age which Sir Thomas must surely have shared.

Little is known of the author of "Le Morte D'Arthur" and his specific identity has been much disputed. He was obviously an educated man who could read both English and French, the languages of his sources. His own writings reveal that he was a knight-prisoner around the year 1470 when he completed his literary tour de force. This points to him being the Sir Thomas Malory who was a probable Lancastrian conspirator in Cook's plot, excluded from the 1468 general pardon. Despite a notorious reputation for violent crime which conflicts considerably with the apparent chivalric values of the author of "Le Morte D'Arthur", this Sir Thomas was almost certainly also the one who lived at of Newbold Revel in Warwickshire.

Malory of Newbold Revel was born around 1420, the son of John Malory of that manor and his wife, Phillipa Chetwynd. He was probably already campaigning at the Siege of Calais in 1436, for he was a retainer of the Lord Lieutenant of France, Richard Beauchamp, the Earl of Warwick. After his master's death in 1439, Malory returned to England; but his time in France made him critical of the loss of English possessions there, and this is revealed in "Le Morte D'Arthur".

Sir Thomas inherited a considerable estate in Warwickshire upon his father's death in 1434, and he seems to have quickly become drawn into the turmoil of local politics. In 1445, he became MP for his county: a rather unstable area during this time because the usually powerful Earl of Warwick, was only in his mid-teens. It appears to have been political affairs in Warwickshire which led Sir Thomas into his numerous clashes with the law. From 1444 onwards, he was caught up in raids on the Peto lands and attacks on the Duke of Buckingham and Combe Abbey, as well as a number of thefts in the county of Essex. Keen to blacken his name, Sir Thomas' enemies branded him "a rapist, church-robber, extortioner and would-be murderer". Unlucky or incompetent, Sir Thomas was certainly in prison almost continuously throughout the 1450s, though he did escape several times. His political affiliations on a national level are difficult to gauge, but his pardon in October 1462, followed by military service in Northumbria the following month is paralleled by former Lancastrians buying back favour.

Later, he kept his head down, but may have become embroiled in Cook's Conspiracy of 1468, for which he was imprisoned. There, he turned to writing and earned eternal fame.
Sir Thomas died on 12th March 1471, probably in Newgate Prison (London). He was buried in the nearby Friary Church of St. Francis beneath a marble tomb inscribed: "Dominus Thomas Mallare Valens Miles Obitt 14 Mar 1470 De Parochia Monkenkyrby in Comitatu Warwici".

Taken from: http://www.earlybritishkingdoms.com/index.html

Joseph Addison (1672-1719)

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) was an English politician and writer. His name is usually remembered alongside that of his long-standing friend, Richard Steele, with whom he founded The Spectator magazine.
Addison was born in Milston, Wiltshire, his father being dean of the cathedral city of Lichfield. He was educated at Charterhouse, where he first met Steele, and at Queen's College, Oxford. He excelled in classics, and became a Fellow of Magdalen. In 1693, he addressed a poem to John Dryden, the former poet laureate, and his first major work, a book about the lives of English poets, was published in 1694, and his translation of Vergil's Georgics in the same year. In 1699, he began training for the diplomatic service, and travelled widely in Europe, all the time writing and studying politics. His poem, The Campaign, celebrating the Battle of Blenheim, won him preferment, and by 1705 he was an under-secretary of state in the government of Halifax. He became MP for Malmesbury in his home county of Wiltshire in 1708, and was shortly afterwards sent to Ireland, where he encountered Jonathan Swift and remained for a year. Subsequently, he helped found the Kitcat Club, and renewed his association with Steele. They founded The Spectator together in 1711, and began a successful second career as a dramatist. In 1716, he married the countess of Warwick, and his political career continued to flourish, as he served Secretary of State for the Southern Department from 1717 to 1718. However, his political newspaper, The Freeholder, was much criticised, and Alexander Pope was among those who made him an object of derision, christening him "Atticus". He eventually fell out with Steele over the Peerage Bill of 1719. In 1718, Addison was forced to resign as secretary of state because of his poor health, but remained an MP until his death, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Taken from: http://www.brainyencyclopedia.com/

Charles Lever (1806-1872)
Anglo-Irish Novelist, Physician, and Diplomat

Sadly, Anglo-Irish novelist Charles Lever is remembered today as the cause of Charles Dickens's prematurely publishing Great Expectations in All the Year Round because Lever's A Day's Ride was driving down sales of

Dickens's weekly journal and only a serial by Dickens himself could salvage the situation. In fact, as Buchanan-Brown notes,

Charles Lever was an exceedingly prolific writer who enjoyed a wide popularity in his own day, the pink covers opf the monthly parts of his novels rivaling the yellows of Thackeray and the greens of Dickens. He was an Irishman who wrote about his countrymen, and his readers thoroughly relished the wealth of incident with which his books were packed and the inexhaustible fund of stories with which they were filled. (p. 12)

The Irish-born Lever (1806-72) was raised in Dublin by English parents. After graduating from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1827, he went to Göttingen to study medicine; his popular novel,Charles O'Malley is based on his own college days in Ireland. Arthur O'Leary (1844) and Con Cregan (1849) reflect some of Lever's own adventures in the Canadian backwoods in 1829. Lever's first few novels appeared in installments in the Dublin University Magazine, for which he later served as editor (1842 to 1845), the journal's annual stipend being £1,250. Qualifying as a physician in 1831, and after working in various Irish county towns, Lever took up practice in the north of England seaside resort of Portstewart, where he displayed remarkable courage and skill in putting down a cholera epidemic in 1832. After five years of marriage, however, Lever needed a greater income than the little practice could provide, and so,m in 1837, he took up the post of physician to the British ambassador in Brussels. Before moving to Belgium, he had started his first novel, Harry Lorrequer, which like so many of the novels to follow was illustrated by the incomparable London artist Hablot Knight Brown, the "Phiz" of Dickens fame. Between 1839 and 1865, Browne etched almost 500 plates for fifteen Lever novels, as well as drawing numerous vignettes on wood-blocks, his work for Harry Lorrequer being among his best for Lever.

The difficulties of communicating at a distance are underlined by the fact that not even the diplomatic bag, which Lever as physician to the British Ambassador used to send copy of his publisher, was safe. In January/February 1839 the last instalment of Harry Lorrequer went astray, with the result, as Lever wrote to M'Glashan [his Dublin publisher] on 16 February, that 'The scenes for illustration are not so good, of course, in the concluding No.' (Buchanan-Brown 18)

Despite these early set-backs, by the early 1840s Lever had achieved great popularity in England because the early Victorian reading-public was eager to be entertained by his rollicking narratives. Notes S. P. Haddelsey, "he also enjoyed an abundance of laudatory critical notices which compared him favourably with his chief rival, Charles Dickens" ("The Lost Victorian," p. 1). Determining to abandon medicine for journalism, Lever returned to Dublin in 1843 as editor of The Dublin University Magazine, in which he published the first in the series Our Mess, Jack Hinton The Guardsman. In 1845, he went to Brussels, Bonn, and Karlsruhe, where he published The Knight of Gwynne (1847, but begun in 1845, before Lever resigned his editorship), and to the Tyrol, Como, and Florence in 1848; here he wrote the last of his rollicking, relatively unstructured novels, Roland Cashel (1850).

A prolific writer much influenced in his early years by Maria Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott, Lever produced thirty novels and five volumes of short stories and essays; he is best remembered for his farcical, lighthearted

picaresque novels of Irish military life, notably Harry Lorrequer (1839), Charles O'Malley (1841), Jack Hinton (1843), and Tom Burke (1844). These early novels also reveal the marked influence of sporting and military novelist William Hamilton Maxwell, a Peninsular Campaign and Waterloo veteran with whom Lever became friends while fighting a cholera outbreak in County Clare, Ireland. After 1845, as his popularity began to decline, his work became more serious in tone and more carefully constructed. The turning point may well have been William Carleton's vicious attack in The Nation (October 1843) on Lever's novels for fostering through caricature rather than realistic character study common English misconceptions about Irish "quaintness." In this new, more serious style (influenced by French novelist Honoré de Balzac) he wrote The Daltons (1852) and the Fortunes of Glencore (1857). Barrington (1862-63) he wrote at Spezia, where he had been British vice-consul since 1858. Subsequently he produced Luttrel of Arran (1865), three other novels, and some racy essays for Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine under the nom de plume "Cornelius O'Dowd." In 1867 he moved to Trieste to take up the the post of consul. Here, serving at his final diplomatic post, he died in 1872.

Resources

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Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

When one reads the nonfiction work of Robert Louis Stevenson along with the novels and short stories, a more complete portrait emerges of the author than that of the romantic vagabond one usually associates with his best-known fiction. The Stevenson of the nonfiction prose is a writer involved in the issues of his craft, his milieu, and his soul. Moreover, one can see the record of his maturation in critical essays, political tracts, biographies, and letters to family and friends. What Stevenson lacks, especially for the tastes of this age, is specificity and expertise: he has not the depth of such writers as John Ruskin, Walter Pater, or William Morris. But he was a shrewd observer of humankind, and his essays reveal his lively and perspicacious mind. Though he lacked originality, he created a rapport with the reader, who senses his enthusiastic embrace of life and art. If Stevenson at first wrote like one who only skimmed the surface of experience, by the end of his life he was passionately committed to his adopted land of Samoa, to his own history, and to the creation of his fiction.

Robert Louis Stevenson was born to Thomas and Margaret Isabella Balfour Stevenson in Edinburgh on 13 November 1850. From the beginning he was sickly. Through much of his childhood he was attended by his faithful nurse, Alison Cunningham, known as Cummy in the family circle. She told him morbid stories about the Covenanters (the Scots Presbyterian martyrs), read aloud to him Victorian penny-serial novels, Bible stories, and the Psalms, and drilled the catechism into him, all with his parents' approval. Thomas Stevenson was quite a storyteller himself, and his wife doted on their only child, sitting in admiration while her precocious son expounded on religious dogma. Stevenson inevitably reacted to the morbidity of his religious education and to the stiffness of his family's middle-class values, but that rebellion would come only after he entered Edinburgh University.

The juvenilia that survives from his childhood shows an observer who was already sensitive to religious issues and Scottish history. Not surprisingly, the boy who listened to Cummy's religious tales first tried his hand at retelling Bible stories: "A History of Moses" was followed by "The Book of Joseph." When Stevenson was sixteen his family published a pamphlet he had written entitled The Pentland Rising, a recounting of the murder of Nonconformist Scots Presbyterians who rebelled against their royalist persecutors.

In November 1867 Stevenson entered Edinburgh University, where he pursued his studies indifferently until 1872. Instead of concentrating on academic work, he busied himself in learning how to write, imitating the styles of William Hazlitt, Sir Thomas Browne, Daniel Defoe, Charles Lamp, and Michel de Montaigne. By the time he was twenty-one, he had contributed several papers to the short-lived Edinburgh University Magazine, the best of which was a fanciful bit of fluff entitled "The Philosophy of Umbrellas." Edinburgh University was a place for him to play the truant more than the student. His only consistent course of study seemed to have been of bohemia: Stevenson adopted a wide-brimmed hat, a cravat, and a boy's coat that earned him the nick-name of Velvet Jacket, while he indulged a taste for haunting the byways of Old Town and becoming acquainted with its denizens.

The most significant work from his student days was "On a New Form of Intermittent Light for Lighthouses," a scientific piece that explained the economical combination of revolving mirrors and oil-burning lamps. He read it

before the Royal Scottish Society of Arts on 27 March 1871 and received the society's Silver Medal. The paper, a result of his engineering studies, revealed his keen eye for technical detail. Only two weeks later, however, Stevenson took a long walk with his father and declined to follow the family profession of engineering; he meant to become a writer. Thomas Stevenson insisted that the young man study law, and his son stuck to the bargain long enough to receive, in 1875, a law degree he barely used.

It was not the first time that Stevenson disappointed his father. In January 1873 Thomas Stevenson discovered some papers that seemed to suggest that the young Stevenson was an atheist. Father and son had their worst falling out. In letters to his student chums, especially to Charles Baxter, Stevenson called himself a "damned curse" on his family. Though it is tempting to see his filial rebellion as a classic Victorian melodrama, father and son did reconcile. The episode is more important in having given the author one of the enduring themes of his fiction. It runs from "An Old Song," a short story published in an 1877 issue of the weekly London, to the masterly romance Weir of Hermiston (1896), left unfinished. It also threads through his nonfiction, in which it is tempered by a tone of reconciliation. For example, in "Crabbed Age and Youth," written in 1877, Stevenson seems to be looking for the common bond that father and son share.

In the decade after his university graduation, Stevenson steeped himself in life, finding an essential core of good humor in people and things. Something of the lightheartedness of this period survives in the humorous essays in Virginibus Puerisque and Other Papers (1881), published when the author was thirty-one years old. The essays in this collection had been originally published from 1876 to 1879 in the Cornhill, Macmillan's, and London magazines. The collection received little attention from the critics, but the brilliant whimsy and ironic tone in these pieces were well matched to their loose structures, modeled after Thomas Browne's and William Hazlitt's works, which Stevenson admired. He pretends to analyze marriage in "Virginibus Puerisque" and the relationship between old and young in "Crabbed Age and Youth"; he mounts a pseudophilosophical defense of sloth in "An Apology for Idlers" and humorously advocates the old method of illuminating cities in "A Plea for Gas Lamps." In "Child's Play," "El Dorado," and "Pan's Pipes," the author seems more entranced with the flight of his own rhetoric than he does with the topic at hand. There is a more serious side to the collection as well: in "Aes Triplex" and "Ordered South" Stevenson deals with his physical frailty and the trips away from Scotland's rugged winters he had taken for his health. As a boy, Stevenson had been to the Continent several times, and he grew up to love purposeless, rambling tours across Europe.

In An Inland Voyage (1878), written from a journal he had kept of a trip down the French river Oisé with his friend Walter Simpson, Stevenson glories in the slow pace of his vagabond life traveling through France. The young author expresses pleasure at having been suspected of being a Prussian spy by the French gendarmes and pride at having endured hunger, cold, and misery on a journey that, from Stevenson's account, sounds like one of the oddest and most aimless ever undertaken. The publication of An Inland Voyage was significant: it was his first full-length book and was reviewed kindly by the critics, though it did not enjoy as many printings as his next travelogue did.

Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes (1879) has something of the same sense of aimlessness and introspection as An Inland Voyage, but it lacks the other's high spirits. Its more somber, melancholy tone is due to the fact that Stevenson had fallen in love, and the relationship was a difficult one. On a trip to a French artists' colony in July 1876 with his cousin Bob, Stevenson had met Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, a married woman, an American, and ten years Stevenson's senior. She had been living in Paris and had come to the sleepy summer colony of Grez to recuperate after the death of her son. By the time she returned to America in 1878, Stevenson had fallen deeply in love with her; he undertook his walking tour through the mountains in France in part as a restorative to his emotional life.

In August 1879 Stevenson received a cable-gram from Fanny Osbourne, who by that time had rejoined her husband in California. Details are vague, but there seems to have been some last attempt by Osbourne to break with Stevenson; the contents of the cable were never revealed by either to family or friends. With the impetuosity of one of his own fictional characters, Stevenson set off from Greenock, Scotland, on 7 August 1879 for America. On 18 August Stevenson landed, sick, nearly penniless, in New York. From there he took an overland train journey in miserable conditions to California, where he nearly died. After meeting with Fanny Osbourne in Monterey, and no doubt depressed at the uncertainty of her divorce, he went camping in the Santa Lucia mountains, where he lay sick for two nights until two frontiersmen found him and nursed him back to health. Still unwell, Stevenson moved to Monterey in December 1879 and thence to San Francisco, where he fluctuated between life and death, continually fighting off illness.

Stevenson characteristically turned the ocean-crossing and transcontinental journey into grist for the literary mill. "The Story of a Lie" and "The Amateur Emigrant" were two products of Stevenson's trip. The former, a short story, was published in the New Quarterly Magazine in 1879. In the latter, a travelogue, Stevenson noted the harsher side of life, especially for the immigrant passenger aboard ship sailing for America. Its grim tone distressed his friends and family. Certain passages were considered too graphic by the publisher and by Stevenson's father: Thomas Stevenson bought all the copies of the already printed travelogue because he found it beneath his son's talent. Stevenson also produced a travelogue about the train journey, "Across the Plains," which was published as the title piece of his 1892 essay collection. The suppressed piece and "Across the Plains" were eventually published together in The Amateur Emigrant from the Clyde to Sandy Hook in 1895, the year after Stevenson's death.

When Stevenson left Scotland so abruptly he temporarily estranged his parents. They were also upset about his relationship with a married woman. However, hearing of their son's dire circumstances, they cabled him enough money to save him from poverty. Fanny Osbourne obtained her divorce from her husband, and she and Stevenson were married on 19 May 1880 in San Francisco. For their honeymoon they headed to Mount Saint Helena in Napa Valley, California—partly on the recommendation of friends concerned about Stevenson's frail health and partly because their meager finances afforded them no more than the rundown shack they were able to rent at Silverado, on the side of the mountain.

Stevenson also turned this experience into literature: he wrote The Silverado Squatters in 1880 from a journal he kept during the approximately two months they spent at the abandoned mine site. It is a pleasant description of their adventures and their domestic life and includes portraits of the people living around Saint Helena and Calistoga in the Napa Valley. The work was first serialized in the Century Magazine in 1883 and later that year was published as a book.

When both husband and wife were well enough for extended travel, they returned across the continent and set sail from New York, landing in Britain on 17 August 1880. Fanny Stevenson was soon accepted at the Stevenson family home on 17 Heriot Row. She became a favorite of Stevenson's father and a staunch ally of his mother, with whom she shared the duty of attending to Stevenson's health.

In the next seven years, 1880 to 1887, Stevenson did not flourish as far as his health was concerned, but his literary output was prodigious. Writing was one of the few activities he could do when he was confined to bed because of hemorrhaging lungs—"Bluidy Jack" he nicknamed the recurrent bleeding. But, despite illness, he wrote some of his most enduring fiction, notably Treasure Island (1883), Kidnapped (1886), Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), and The Black Arrow (1888). He was also busy writing essays and collaborating on plays with W. E. Henley, the poet, essayist, and editor who championed Stevenson in London literary circles and who became the model for Long John Silver in Treasure Island. Although he settled well into domestic life with Fanny, Stevenson's letters revealed that he rejoiced in returning to his friends—to fellow artists such as Edmund Gosse and Henley, to Sidney Colvin, his longtime literary adviser, and to Charles Baxter, the confidant from his university days who remained his closest friend as well as financial adviser.

It was also a period of much traveling. His and Fanny's various temporary residences in England, Switzerland, and southern France had more to do with his probable tuberculosis (it was never diagnosed as such during his lifetime) than with his love for travel. It was at Braemar in Scotland that Treasure Island was begun, sparked by a map that Stevenson had drawn for the entertainment of his twelve-year-old stepson Lloyd Osbourne. Stevenson had quickly imagined a pirate adventure story to accompany the drawing, and a friend arranged for it to be serialized in the boys' magazine Young Folks, where it appeared from October 1881 to January 1882. By the end of the 1880s, it had become one of the most popular and widely read books of the period. William Ewart Gladstone was supposed to have stayed awake all night to read it, and Stevenson, no supporter of Gladstone, snapped upon learning the news that the man would have done better "to attend to the imperial affairs of England." In the seven-year period from 1880 to 1887 Stevenson's output also included essays on the craft of fiction. In these, in which the reader might expect Stevenson to exhibit a more objective attitude than he had in the travelogues, the author's cultivated discursiveness and rambling rhetoric are not always successful.

Stevenson had a very uncomplicated view of art; he would have rewritten Horace to assert that it was better to entertain than to instruct. Consequently his critical essays on literature contain few sustained analyses of style or content. They are more entertaining to read for the narrator's tone than they are instructive about the fine points of writing. In "'A Penny Plain and Two-pence Coloured'" (1884), Stevenson recounts how the seeds of his craft

were sown in childhood when he purchased Skelt's Juvenile Drama—a toy set of uncolored or crudely colored cardboard characters (hence the title of Stevenson's essay) who were the principal actors in a usually melodramatic adventure. Stevenson maintained that his art, his life, and his mode of creation were all in some part derivative of the highly exaggerated and romantic world that he had inherited from Skelt's toy.

The same love for the exaggerated world of romance and adventure informs the essays "A Gossip on Romance" (1882) and "A Gossip on a Novel of Dumas's" (1887). Again Stevenson maintains that the better end of reading and writing is entertainment, a claim that led some critics to accuse him of escapism. French realists, such as Émile Zola, had begun to explore the harsher sides of reality in their fiction. To some extent English realists, George Gissing, for example, and Americans, including William Dean Howells and Henry James, agreed in practice with the tenets of realism. But the bulk of Stevenson's literary criticism is explicitly in favor of the romance. He saw himself as the literary descendant of Sir Walter Scott. The best storytelling, he felt, had the ability to whisk readers away from themselves and their circumstances.

It was particularly the tendency in French realism to dwell on sordidness and ugliness that Stevenson rejected. In an 1877 essay, "François Villon: Student, Poet, and Housebreaker," he castigates the French medieval poet François Villon for lying about the poor: Villon had made them out to be as greedy, covetous, and deceitful as he, but he had not the courage to depict their nobility. Stevenson reiterated this theme, but with an eye on the nineteenth-century French realist Zola, in his essay "The Lantern-Bearers" (1888). In this piece he describes a childhood game wherein vacationing schoolboys belted tin bull's-eye lanterns to their waists, buttoned their top-coats over the lanterns, and met in some remote cove to reveal, at a password, the lit lanterns beneath their coats. Stevenson likens the average person to the boy who joyfully walks in the dark knowing he has a lantern "within" him. All people are noble, although Zola (and realists like him) would dismiss them as dreary lumps of humanity, seeing only the topcoats of mundane dullness, completely missing the nobility that it is the artist's job to uncover.

Stevenson attempted to justify his attack upon realism on technical grounds. In both "A Note on Realism" (1883) and "A Humble Remonstrance" (1884), Stevenson analyzes different types of fiction. The 1883 essay maintains that realism differs from romance only according to the writer's choice of style. In "A Humble Remonstrance," Stevenson answers Henry James's claim in "The Art of Fiction" (1884) that the novel competes with life. Stevenson protests that no novel can ever hope to match life's complexity; it merely abstracts from life to produce a harmonious pattern of its own. Henry James essentially agreed: he had made the point earlier that reality was too immense to capture in art. At Bournemouth, where the Stevensons lived from 1884 to 1887, James came calling in the spring of 1885 and was mistaken for a tradesman. Gradually, however, the two men became close friends. James, in fact, was one of the few of her husband's associates whom Fanny Stevenson trusted. Watchful of her husband's health, she resented the friends who kept Stevenson up into the night.

Fanny Stevenson had never been content to remain on the outside of her husband's craft; she coupled her nursing with editorial duties and alienated some of her husband's friends in the process. Doubtless she had kept

him alive from Silverado to Bournemouth, but barring some of his lively friends from seeing Stevenson caused some resentment. W. E. Henley had the worst falling out with Fanny Stevenson, partly because of his drinking and partly because he exhausted Stevenson by keeping him at work collaborating on plays that had little promise. The major crisis occurred after the Stevensons had settled at Saranac Lake, New York (the move was supposed to have been only a temporary leave-taking of Scotland), on 3 October 1887. Henley accused Fanny, in a letter marked confidential, of having stolen a story from Stevenson's cousin, ignoring or forgetting that Fanny had permission to rework the story.

Stevenson was crushed, although he eventually forgave Henley, who never admitted he had done anything wrong. What made the accusation harder to bear was that it came on the heels of Thomas Stevenson's death. The elder Stevenson had died after a long illness in May 1887, plunging his son into a deep depression. In the spring of that year Stevenson contemplated arranging his martyrdom in Ireland, intending to die at the hands of night riders, in the theory that his death—he was by now the well-known author of the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—would draw attention to the injustices suffered there. Partly out of that bizarre wish came Confessions of a Unionist (1921), an explanation to Americans why Ireland should continue to be ruled by England. Written in January 1888, it was rejected by Stevenson's American publisher and never published during his lifetime.

In 1888 the main threads of Stevenson's art and life seemed to snap; he wrote the last of his literary essays for Scribner's magazine by May, and his serious quarrel with Henley had opened his eyes to betrayal. In a letter he wrote to Baxter in May 1888, he sounded as though he was gambling for new stakes. He informed his friend that he would take a South Seas cruise, one that he expected to heal him emotionally as well as physically: "I have found a yacht, and we are going the full pitch for seven months. If I cannot get my health back ... 'tis madness; but of course, there is the hope, and I will play big."

The Stevenson party—including Stevenson, his wife, his stepson, and his mother—chartered the yacht Casco and sailed southwest from San Francisco to the Marquesas Islands, the Paumotus, and the Society Islands, and thence northward from Tahiti to the Hawaiian Islands by December of 1888. They camped awhile in Honolulu, giving Stevenson time to visit Molokai's leper settlement and to finish his novel The Master of Ballantrae (1889). In June 1889 they set out southwest from Honolulu for the Gilbert Islands aboard the schooner Equator. From there in December 1889 the Stevensons traveled to the island of Upolu in Samoa. By that time Stevenson realized that his health could never stand a return to Scotland, despite his friends' urgings and his own homesickness. Gosse and Colvin, in particular, urged him to return. Only James and Baxter seemed to react sympathetically to Stevenson's predicament: each time that he ventured far from the equator he fell sick. In October 1890 the Stevenson party returned to Samoa to settle, after a third cruise that took them to Australia, the Gilberts, the Marshalls, and some of the remoter islands in the South Seas.

Stevenson detailed his three cruises and adventures in the letters he wrote to his friends, exulting in his newfound health, relating incidents of life on the open sea, and capturing the flavor of life lived away from

Western civilization. From 1889 to 1894 his attitude toward the islanders in his letters gradually changed from paternalism to sympathy for their troubles with Western imperialism. He studied South Seas politics to espouse plans that he believed would ensure harmony between the whites and the indigenous races of the South Pacific. The naiveté of his early letters is absent from his remarkable book of essays on the various island groups and their peoples—In the South Seas . Written from material he had collected on the three cruises, the book reveals a much shrewder observer of human nature and politics than the man who had written Confessions of a Unionist. He viewed the islanders as humans who were not without a valid culture of their own. They were not all cannibals, nor were they all noble savages. As for politics, he advocated self-rule for the islands, a view that did not always make him popular with contemporary travelers and settlers in the Pacific. But he was never predictable. While he was in Hawaii, for example, Stevenson felt himself drawn to the royalists—those who wanted the United States out of Hawaii. But he resisted becoming involved in their intrigues because he did not fully trust the royalists themselves.

In the South Seas had a checkered publishing history, not so much because of the radical nature of its political views, but because it was not so colorful as his former travelogues. Twenty-two copies for copyright purposes were printed in 1890 by the London firm Cassell; an enlarged text, bearing the Scribners imprint, was published in New York in 1896, and the first British edition, from Chatto and Windus, appeared in 1900. Although Stevenson was happy with his work, his friends back home thought he was wasting his talent on politics when he should have been writing fiction. The complicated publishing history of In the South Seas suggests that it may have been too serious for those who wanted Stevenson to remain the introspective traveler he had been when he was younger. The work, however, did find an admirer in Joseph Conrad, who highly approved of its form and its portrayal of life on the edge of civilization.

While Stevenson was in Hawaii, in June 1889 he visited the government's leper colony on Molokai. According to Fanny Stevenson, her husband had first gone to the island on a fact-finding mission, expecting to uncover the "truth" about Father Damien De Veuster, the missionary to the lepers who had died only a month earlier. His admiration was awakened by firsthand reports of the man's courage and resourcefulness which contradicted then-current rumors that the priest had contracted leprosy through intimacies with female patients. In Sydney, Australia, eight months later Stevenson read an attack in the religious press upon Damien by a Dr. Charles M. Hyde, a former missionary to Molokai, who maintained that these rumors were true. The letter by Hyde was circulated throughout the South Seas and the world. Stevenson was so provoked that he wrote his famous Father Damien: An Open Letter to the Reverend Dr. Hyde of Honolulu (1890) in a hotel lobby, in uncharacteristic haste.

His defense of Father Damien was curious. It did not deny Hyde's charges so much as it suggested that their publication was an indication of the meanness, cowardice, and jealousy of Hyde. Though defending Damien DeVeuster's character was a way for Stevenson to identify with the good work of the missionary priest, the defense involved some risk. Stevenson fully expected to be sued and financially ruined by Hyde—by a libel suit

he knew, as a lawyer, he had little chance of winning. Luckily for the Stevensons, Hyde contented himself with dismissing the author as a crank. The episode had a profound effect on Stevenson and his work on the South Seas. He continued to champion the oppressed even when it seemed to threaten his safety and security.

While he lived in the Pacific, Stevenson kept up his usual impressive literary output. From 1888 to 1894 the author finished The Wrecker (1892), a collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne; Island Nights' Entertainments (1893), containing "The Beach of Falesá," "The Bottle Imp," and "The Isle of Voices"; and The Ebb-Tide (1894), again a collaboration with his stepson. He also completed the sequel to Kidnapped, Catriona, published in 1893. At his death in December 1894 two novels lay unfinished—St. Ives (1897), a pot-boiler about a French prisoner who escapes from a Scottish jail to England, and Weir of Hermiston (1896), generally acknowledged to be a master-piece although it is a fragment. In his last years he also worked industriously at his nonfiction. With In the South Seas finished, he completed A Footnote to History, published in 1892. At his death Records of a Family of Engineers (1916) lay unfinished.

Stevenson had gathered material on Samoa for In the South Seas but later realized that he had enough for more than one book. The Samoan political situation in the late 1880s and early 1890s was complex. Historically the Samoans had chosen a king from among several tribal high chiefs. Because of friction over trade in the islands, Germany, England, and the United States had attempted but aborted a plan to divide the islands into protectorates. In 1888 the Germans banished Laupepa, one of three tribal chiefs in contention for kingship, the other two being Tamasese and Mataafa. After a short war between the other two chiefs (in which some Germans died) the three Western nations formed a tripartite consulate and established Laupepa as king of Samoa and Mataafa as vice-king. Arguing that Mataafa had, by rights and power, more claim to kingship than his rival, Stevenson advocated Mataafa's cause in A Footnote to History and continued writing letters to several British newspapers well into 1894, stirring up a hornet's nest of controversy for himself in Samoa. His book earned him the resentment of the Germans and threats of deportation from harassed British officials. When the Germans banished Mataafa to the Marshall Islands in 1893, Stevenson's agitation could do no more than secure the release of some of Mataafa's supporters who were jailed in Apia.

In A Footnote to History Stevenson advocated justice and compromise among the Samoan factions. He wanted to bring the affair before the public, to acquaint Westerners with the effects of imperialistic policies they tacitly supported. Though he apologized for the tempest-in-a-teapot nature of the rebellion, he believed A Footnote to History performed a service for the beleaguered country.

In the last two years of his life Stevenson's letters to his friends in Great Britain increasingly revealed his longing for Scotland and the frustration he felt at the thought of never seeing his homeland again. To S. R. Crockett he wrote, "I shall never see Auld Reekie. I shall never set my foot again upon the heather. Here I am until I die, and here will I be buried. The word is out and the doom written." It may have been this preoccupation with Scotland and its history that made Weir of Hermiston so powerful a tale. With its theme of filial rebellion, its evocation of Scotland's topography, language, and legends, it is a masterly fragment and the most Scottish of all his works.

Records of a Family of Engineers, a biographical work that recounts his grandfather's engineering feats, reveals that Stevenson was trying to find a bridge back to his own family and finally coming to terms with his earlier rejection of the engineering profession. In Records of a Family of Engineers he depicts his grandfather as a scientist-artist, linking his own growing objectivity in his style of writing to the technical yet imaginative work of his forebears. Increasingly Stevenson's art embraced more of the everyday world and drew on his experiences in the South Seas for its strength. His South Seas work, both nonfiction and fiction, gradually grew more powerful than the earlier works for which he is, ironically, more famous. When he died of a stroke on 3 December 1894 in his house at Vailima, Samoa, he was at the height of his creative powers.

The Samoan faction that he had helped to free from jail assembled at his house to cut a path to the top of Mt. Vaea, where he was buried. He had been rich, famous, an adventurer, and a legend in his homeland; the report of his death created a small shock wave throughout the literary world. Almost immediately the Stevenson family began attempts to glorify the memory of Stevenson, and this action was to work against the writer's literary reputation. They dickered over who would best edit Stevenson's letters. Baxter and James steered clear of the unenviable task, which fell to Sidney Colvin. There also appeared memoirs by Stevenson's friends who did him the disservice of writing hagiography instead of biography. The inevitable reaction of the succeeding literary generation to this presentation of Stevenson as a demisaint was severe. The worst of it amounted to speculation about Edinburgh prostitutes whom the youthful Stevenson might have known and the exact amount of impropriety in Stevenson's relationship with Fanny before their marriage. From personal attacks on Stevenson, critics turned to style: he was accused of blind imitation, having nothing to say and saying it oddly, and of promoting a spineless escapism.

What Stevenson was left with was a literary reputation based solely on his romances—a reputation that solidly ignored his South Seas fiction, his essays, his travelogues about America and the Pacific, and the letters that revealed his enthusiasm for his craft and for the islanders of the South Pacific. Because of this failure to acknowledge his breadth as a writer, he is often remembered primarily as an author for children; his reputation as the author of Treasure Island has prevented many adults from reading any of his other works. But he may yet survive the injustice. G. K. Chesterton's 1927 book Robert Louis Stevenson restored a sense of balance to the examination of the author's life and letters. Recent studies have turned more attention to Stevenson's less-well-known works, attempting to integrate the various strata of his literary output. Consequently, Stevenson has risen in stature since the early 1900s. The centennial of his death may bring a scholarly reappraisal of Stevenson that will move him from the second rank of Victorian authors to the first.

Taken from: http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/index.html

Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970)

Edward Morgan Forster was born the first day of 1879 in London. His father, an architect from a strict evangelical family, died of consumption soon after Forster was born, thus Forster was raised by his mother and paternal great-aunt. Since his mother was from a more liberal and somewhat irresponsible background, Forster was raised in a household that exposed him to great domestic tension. Forster was raised at Rooksnest, the house that inspired Howards End. Forster was educated as a dayboy at the Tonbridge School, Kent, an experience responsible for a good deal of his later criticism of the English public school system. Forster attended college at King's College, Cambridge, which greatly broaded his intellectual interests and gave him his first exposure to Mediterranean culture, which counterbalanced the more rigid English culture in which he was raised.

Forster became a writer shortly after graduating from King's College. His first novels were products of that particular time, stories about the changing social conditions at the decline of Victorianism. However, where these earlier works differed from Forster's contemporaries is their more colloquial style. These novels established an early conviction of Forster that men and women should keep in contact with the land to cultivate their imaginations. He developed this theme in his first novels, Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905) and The Longest Journey (1907). Forster followed these with A Room With a View (1908), a comic novel concerning the experience of a young British woman, Lucy Honeychurch, in Italy.

Forster's first major success, however, was Howards End (1910), a novel dealing with the alliance between the liberal Schlegel sisters and Ruth Wilcox, the proprietor of the titular house, against her husband, Henry Wilcox, an enterprising businessman. The ends with the marriage of Henry Wilcox to Margaret Schlegel, who brings him back to Howards End, reestablishing this link to the Wilcox land. During this time, Forster was part of the Bloomsbury Group, a set of unconventional bohemian thinkers in England that included Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, Dora Carrington and Lytton Strachey.

Forster spent three wartime years in Alexandria doing civilian work and visited India twice. After he returned to England, he wrote A Passage to India (1924), inspired by his experience in India. The novel concerns the colonial occupation of India by the British, but cedes its position as a political tract to explore the friendship between an Indian doctor and British schoolmaster during the former's trial on a false charge. This novel was the last that Forster published during his lifetime, but two other works remain. Forster did not complete another novel, Arctic Summer, while a second novel written around 1914, Maurice, was published in 1971 only after Forster's death. Forster only allowed it to be published after his death because of its overt homosexual theme.

Although Forster published no novels after A Passage to India, he continued to write short stories and essays until his death in 1970. He published several anthologies, including The Celestial Omnibus (1914) and The Eternal Moment (1928), two collections of short stories, Abinger Harvest (1936), a collection of poetry, essays and fiction, and several non-fiction works. Forster also wrote the libretto to the Benjamin Britten opera "Billy Budd." The essays by Forster as well as his frequent lecture son political topics established his reputation as a liberal thinker and strong advocate of democracy. Forster was awarded membership in the Order of

Companions of Honor in 1953 and received the Order of Merit from Queen Elizabeth in 1969. He died in June of 1970 after a series of strokes

Taken from: http://www.classicnote.com/

Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923)
Pseudonym of Kathleen Murry, original name Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp

New Zealand's most famous writer, who was closely associated with D.H. Lawrence and something of a rival of Virginia Woolf. Mansfield's creative years were burdened with loneliness, illness, jealousy, alienation - all this reflected in her work with the bitter depiction of marital and family relationships of her middle-class characters. Her short stories are also notable for their use of stream of consciousness. Like the Russian writer Anton Chekhov, Mansfield depicted trivial events and subtle changes in human behavior.
"Henry was a great fellow for books. He did not read many nor did he possess above half a dozen. He looked at all in the Charing Cross Road during lunch-time and at any odd time in London; the quantity with which he was on nodding terms was amazing. By his clean neat handling of them and by his nice choice of phrase when discussing them with one or another bookseller you would have thought that he had taken his pap with a tome propped before his nurse's bosom. But you would have been wrong." (from 'Something Childish But Very Natural')
Katherine Mansfield was born in Wellington, New Zealand, into a middle-class colonial family. Her father, Harold Beauchamp, was a banker and her mother, Annie Burnell Dyer, was of genteel origins. She lived for six years in the rural village of Karori. Later on Mansfield said "I imagine I was always writing. Twaddle it was, too. But better far write twaddle or anything, anything, than nothing at all." At the age of nine she had her first text published. As a first step to her rebellion against her background, she withdrew to London in 1903 and studied at Queen's College, where she joined the staff of the College Magazine. Back in New Zealand in 1906, she then took up music, and had affairs with both men and women. Her father denied her the opportunity to become a professional cello player - she was an accomplished violoncellist. In 1908 she studied typing and bookkeeping at Wellington Technical College. Her lifelong friend Ida Baker (L.M., Leslie Moore in her diary and correspondence) persuaded Mansfield's father to allow Katherine to move back to England, with an allowance of £100 a year. There she devoted herself to writing. Mansfield never visited New Zealand again.
After an unhappy marriage in 1909 to George Brown, whom she left a few days after the wedding, Mansfield toured for a while as an extra in opera. Before the marriage she had an affair with Garnett Trowell, a musician, and became pregnant. In Bavaria, where Mansfield spent some time, she suffered a miscarriage. During her stay in Germany she wrote satirical sketches of German characters, which were published in 1911 under the title In a German Pension. Earlier her stories had appeared in The New Age. On her return to London in 1910,

Mansfield became ill with an untreated sexually transmitted disease, a condition which contributed to her weak health for the rest of her life. She attended literary parties without much enthusiasm: "Pretty rooms and pretty people, pretty coffee, and cigarettes out of a silver tankard... I was wretched."

In 1911 Mansfield met John Middleton Murray, a Socialist and former literary critic, who was first a tenant in her flat, then her lover. Mansfield co-edited and contributed to a series of journals. Until 1914 she published stories in Rhythm and The Blue Review. During the war she travelled restlessly between England and France. In 1915 she met her brother "Chummie". When he died in World War I, Mansfield focused her writing on New Zealand and her family. 'Prelude' (1916), one of her most famous stories, was written during this period. In 1918 Mansfield divorced her first husband and married John Murray. In the same year she was found to have tuberculosis.

Mansfied and Murray became closely associated with D.H. Lawrence and his wife Frieda. When Murray had an affair with the Princess Bibesco (née Asquith), Mansfield objected not to the affair but to her letters to Murray: "I am afraid you must stop writing these love letters to my husband while he and I live together. It is one of the things which is not done in our world." (from a letter to Princess Bibesco, 1921)

In her last years Mansfield lived much of her time in southern France and in Switzerland, seeking relief from tuberculosis. As a part of her treatment in 1922 at an institute, Mansfield had to spend a few hours every day on a platform suspended over a cow manger. She breathed odors emanating from below but the treatment did no good. Without the company of her literary friends, family, or her husband, she wrote much about her own roots and her childhood. Mansfield died of a pulmonary hemorrhage on January 9, 1923, in Gurdjieff Institute, near Fontainebleau, France. Her last words were: "I love the rain. I want the feeling of it on my face."

Mansfield's family memoirs were collected in Bliss (1920), which secured her reputation as a writer. In the next two years she did her best work, the peak of her achievement being the Garden Party (1922), which she wrote during the final stages of her illness. Only three volumes of Mansfield's stories were published during her lifetime. 'Miss Brill' was about a woman who enjoys the beginning of the Season. She goes to her "special" seat with her fur. She had taken it out of its box in the afternoon, shaken off the moth-powder, and given it a brush. She feels that she has a part in the play in the park, and somebody will notice if she isn't there. A couple sits near her. The girl laughs at her fur and the man says: "Why does she come here at all - who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?" Miss Brill hurries back home, unclasps the neckpiece quickly, and puts it in the box. "But when she put the lid on she thought she heard something crying." In 'The Garden Party' (1921) an extravagant garden-party is arranged on a beautiful day. Laura, the daughter of the party's hostess, hears of the accidental death of a young local working-class man, Mr. Scott. The man lived in the neighborhood. Laura wants to cancel the party, but her mother refuses to understand. She fills a basket with sandwiches, cakes, pastries and other food, goes to the widow's house, and sees the dead man in the bedroom where he is lying. "He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane." Crying she tells her brother who is looking for her: "'It was simply marvellous. But, Laurie - '

She stopped, she looked at her brother. 'Isn't life,' she stammered, 'isn't life - ' But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood."

Mansfield was greatly influenced by Anton Chekhov, sharing his warm humanity and attention to small details of human behavior. Her influence on the development of the short story as a form of literature was also notable. Among her literary friends were Aldous Huxley, Virginia Woolf, who considered her overpraised, and D.H. Lawrence, who later turned against Murray and her. Mansfield's journal, letters, and scrapbook were edited by her husband.

Taken from: http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/calendar.htm

Washington Irving (1783-1859)

A merchant's son, born and raised in New York City, Washington Irving was writing satirical pieces for a local newspaper before he was twenty. It was not until he was thirty-seven, however, that he established himself as a professional author. The cheap importation and reproduction of English books made literature a precarious occupation in the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Moreover American commercial society tended to equate art with idleness. For years Irving halfheartedly pursued a career in law and business, while stealing as much time from work as possible for his writing. Only in 1818, with the bankruptcy of his brothers' importing firm, on which he depended financially, did he risk authorship for a living. Two years later, however, the remarkable popularity of The Sketch Book made him a marketable commodity in both England and America, and his future as the nation's first successful professional writer was guaranteed.

In his youth, while essentially an amateur in literature, he wrote an abundance of broad, often irreverent burlesque humor, parody, and satire primarily to amuse a local New York audience. The comic periodical Salmagundi, on which he collaborated with his brother William and James Kirke Paulding, and the facetious History of New York, ostensibly written by the eccentric and highly unreliable antiquarian, Diedrich Knickerbocker, mocked literary conventions and simultaneously made fun of bourgeois manners, provincial high culture, American chauvinism, and republican politics—particularly Jefferson's.

From 1815 to 1832 Irving lived and traveled widely in England and on the European continent. Now much of his work shaped itself as a consciously American response to Old World culture. Seeking a large international audience, he became primarily a writer of short fiction and personalized sketches and essays. Burlesque satire gave way to a gentler, more subtle humor, and he developed the more ingratiating prose style for which he became famous. His persona Geoffrey Crayon, a shy, ironic, at times melancholy American bachelor writer traveling in Europe—a fictionalized version of Irving himself—gave a degree of thematic and tonal unity to his miscellanies, The Sketch Book, Bracebridge Hall, Tales of a Traveller, and The Alhambra. In addition Crayon helped dramatize the author's ambivalent feelings toward both European aristocracy and American democracy.

Irving had grown up in a transitional America, a nation culturally unsure of itself and deeply divided as to how democratic it should become. He is often dismissed as a political reactionary, a would-be aristocrat in a democratic society. Such a view, however, overlooks complexities, if not contradictions, in his work. For him issues were seldom clear-cut, and he was prone to exploit his uncertainties. A mild (if not rampant) self-mockery is inherent in much of his satire and fiction.

By 1820 he had become a partial convert to romanticism, catering to the vogue for tearful sentimentality (though he made fun of it too) and exhibiting romantic interests in landscape, folklore, and the past. Subsequently as a historian and biographer, he was to focus on colorful drama, costumes, and pageantry. But though by temperament a dreamer, he lacked the high romantic's faith in imagination. The undermining of common sense by illusion and the shattering of visions against an unyielding reality are persistent themes in his work, as in "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." With these nar-ratives (both from The Sketch Book) Irving is usually seen as having created the short story as a new genre, distinct from the moral or sentimental tale and tales of headlong action and gothic mystery. Ironically both stories, with their evocative American settings, were partly inspired by German folk motifs and composed in England.

His going to Spain in 1826 and being given access to a mass of largely unused materials relating to Christopher Columbus led to his biography of the explorer. The book was well received, and thereafter Irving wrote more history and biography than fiction. A national celebrity upon his return to America in 1832, he traveled west, gathering material for "A Tour on the Prairies" (in The Crayon Miscellany), which he followed shortly with Astoria and Bonneville, histories of far-western fur-trading and exploring ventures. From 1842 to 1846 he served as American minister to Spain. In his final years he continued to produce books and revised and published his complete works. He finished the five-volume Life of Washington shortly before his death.

William Hedges
Goucher College

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Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

Since the publication of The Scarlet Letter in 1850, Nathaniel Hawthorne has been recognized as one of America's most important writers, both a "romancer" who probed inner mysteries and a "realist" who assessed the American character and experience.

Born in Massachusetts on the Fourth of July, 1804, he was the descendant of Puritan worthies and the son of a ship's captain who died at sea in 1808. His mother then brought her son and two daughters to live with her own

family, the Mannings. Books freed Hawthorne's imagination, but the Eden of his youth was the lakeside wilderness of Raymond, Maine, where from 1816 to 1819 he lived with his mother and sisters, "free as a bird." Summoned back to Salem to prepare for college, and working part-time in the Mannings stagecoach office, he complained, "No Man can be a Poet & a Book-Keeper at the same time." The problem would recur.

From 1821 to 1825, Hawthorne was a student at Bowdoin College, graduating in the middle of his class of thirty-eight. From the Scottish philosophers, he absorbed the concepts of faculty psychology which would recur in his fiction: belief in a unitary mind with separate but interacting powers (including perception, reason, memory, association of ideas, and imagination) regulated by the will during waking hours but not in dreams; and a conviction that fulfillment requires living throughout the entire range of our faculties and sensibilities. Three classmates would become lifelong friends—Bridge (who helped arrange publication of his first book), Longfellow (who reviewed it), and Pierce (who became President of the United States and appointed Hawthorne Consul to Liverpool).

Even before college, Hawthorne had rejected the major careers open to graduates—the ministry, medicine, and law. He mistrusted institutionalized authority, including organized religion, though he would always provisionally believe in a beneficent deity. "What do you think of my becoming an Author, and relying for support upon my pen," he had asked his mother, musing how proud she would be "to see my works praised." Although that ambition was unrealistic in mercantile America—since most books were imported from England or pirated, and most magazine fiction was low-paid and published anonymously—the new graduate was determined to pursue it. In the tales he produced in the Mannings's "chamber under the eaves," he exaggerated his plight as a lonely writer-dreamer, though his problems were real enough. In 1828, at his own expense, he published a slender novel drawn from his college experience entitled Fanshawe, but it is characteristic of his lifelong diffidence that he soon repudiated it and tried to destroy all copies. He linked some of his tales into collections, but for lack of a publisher, he burned some and submitted others to periodicals and gift-books. Editors were eager for his stories and one offered hackwork: in 1836, with the assistance of his sister Elizabeth, Hawthorne edited The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge and wrote a best-selling children's text, Peter Parley's Universal History.

In 1837, Hawthorne's "twelve lonely years" as "the obscurest man of letters in America" came to an end when Twice-told Tales was published with his name on the cover. Longfellow, already well established as a man of letters, enthusiastically praised the author's poetic imagination, his style, and his use of New England materials, and other critics followed suit, though neither this collection nor the expanded 1842 version attracted a large audience. The volume included "The Minister's Black Veil," a historically grounded parable about the guilt we hide from one another and about the dangers of self-absorption (which anticipates The Scarlet Letter). But Hawthorne had not chosen to include two even more complex early stories, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" or "Young Goodman Brown": both probe the individual's complex inner life and interrelationships with society, warning against simplistic moral judgments and challenging pious assumptions about Puritanism and

revolutionary America. Both present eruptions of what had been suppressed; and the narrator, who asks if the guilt-obsessed Brown had “only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting” and answers “Be it so if you will,” requires the reader to participate in moral judgment. For the castles of Gothic romance, Hawthorne substituted the American wilderness and the wilderness of the mind. As in a dream, his fiction pushes beyond surface reality, conveying knowledge that resists complete understanding.

Eighteen hundred thirty-seven brought another milestone: Hawthorne met Sophia Peabody, a frail amateur artist to whom he became secretly engaged the following year. He was still writing stories for the magazines; but in January, 1839, to supplement his income, Hawthorne sought political appointment, and became Measurer in the Boston Custom House. Predictably complaining that his imagination was dulled by routine, he produced only a few tales and two collections of children’s stories (Grandfather’s Chair and Famous Old People), as well as entries in the notebooks he used as literary storehouses and long letters telling Sophia (his “Dove” and his “Wife”) how love had wakened him to life.

He left the Custom House in November, 1840. The following April, he began what he would call “the most romantic episode of his own life—essentially a daydream and yet a fact”: he joined the Utopian commune of Brook Farm. Although skeptical about the community’s socialist ideals, he hoped their way of life would enable him to combine authorship and marriage. But the drudgery of farm work made writing impossible, and he left after half a year. His third novel, The Blithedale Romance, would dramatize that venture.

Next came an idyll that would last over three years: in July, 1842, Hawthorne married Sophia and moved into the Old Manse in Concord. He contentedly gardened, ice-skated with Emerson, and rowed with Thoreau. He also wrote prolifically, producing twenty published works, among them two of his most challenging stories—“The Birth-mark” and “Rappaccini’s Daughter.” Both explore the dark side of nineteenth-century scientific and technological change by means of experiments that go awry, and both portray men’s anxieties about women’s sexuality. Perhaps working out his own apprehensions as a new groom, Hawthorne presented obsessed and cold-hearted men who destroy the innocent women who love and trust them. He had no trouble selling what he wrote; but his pen did not provide enough support, especially after the birth of his daughter Una in 1844. Political appointment was again the recourse.

In April, 1846, Hawthorne became Surveyor of the Salem Custom House and returned to his birthplace. That June, Mosses from an Old Manse was published and his son Julian was born; but predictably, Hawthorne’s imagination was inhibited by routine duty. Nonetheless, he was earning a comfortable living; and when the victorious Whigs dismissed him in 1849, Hawthorne struggled for reinstatement on the grounds that as a Surveyor and a man of letters, he was apolitical. Then, anguished by his mother’s death and frustrated by his dismissal, he wrote The Scarlet Letter.

His first novel, his masterpiece, is an indictment of Puritan America, but also of his own society. Its introductory essay, “The Custom-House,” purportedly a straightforward account of his experience as Surveyor, attacks officials who connived in his dismissal while vindicating himself as an artist. Like his heroine Hester, Hawthorne

emerges from confrontation with a self-righteous society as an individual of integrity, passion, and moral superiority. The introduction also defines his requisites for writing romance: “a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other”; enlivened by the heart, fiction could then “flow out on the brightening page.” The romance itself also expresses Hawthorne’s “romantic” belief in subjective perception, showing how imagination participates in creating the world we inhabit. Thus in the central scaffold scene, Dimmesdale perceives a meteor as an immense scarlet letter which signifies his guilt.

Leaving Salem forever, Hawthorne moved his family to a small house in the Berkshires in the spring of 1850, and soon produced his second novel, The House of the Seven Gables, centering on a Salem family burdened by ancestral guilt. He also wrote most of his third novel, The Blithedale Romance, drawing on his Brook Farm experience; his third major collection of short fiction, The Snow-Image; and a collection of Greek myths retold for children entitled A Wonder-Book. This was also the period of his friendship with Herman Melville—an ideal reader, whose review of Mosses from an Old Manse praised Hawthorne’s “power of blackness,” and who would dedicate Moby-Dick to him with “admiration for his genius.”

Hawthorne’s third child, Rose, was born in Lenox in 1851, and a year later, he bought a house in Concord, the only one he ever owned. The following year, however, the family would sail for England: as a reward for writing Pierce’s campaign biography, Hawthorne was appointed Consul to Liverpool, serving from 1853 to 1857. As in his other political positions, Hawthorne worked conscientiously, but his imagination became stultified; except for his notebooks, he wrote almost nothing. Then from 1857 to 1859, he lived in Rome and Florence, where his immersion in art and acquaintance with artists generated the last romance he would complete—The Marble Faun.

Returning to Concord in 1860, Hawthorne struggled to complete three other romances; but his health was broken and he was distraught by the prospect and then the actuality of civil war. Though he believed slavery was evil and hoped for Union victory, he remained skeptical about what abolitionists (or any other reformers) could accomplish. Except for the eyewitness report “Chiefly About War Matters,” he published only a series of sketches drawn from his English notebooks (collected as Our Old Home). He died on May 19, 1864. Soon afterward, Sophia augmented her slim income by editing his American notebooks for publication; and memoirs by Julian and Rose Hawthorne expanded the biographical record.

For more than a century, despite changes in perspective and methodology, the verdict on Hawthorne’s stature has remained virtually constant. The critical consensus continues to be that Hawthorne was a shrewd and large-minded writer who read widely and pondered deeply about the human condition and American identity from Puritan times to his own. Though afflicted by self-doubt and constrained by a materialistic society that did not adequately reward serious artists, he created texts whose power, profundity, and artistry command our attention. He wrote about his own society and its antecedents, but it turns out that he also wrote about ours.

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Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

Edgar Allan Poe is one of the best-known American authors, but his literary legacy is complex and confusing. Poe pioneered many of the most enduring forms of American popular culture, including the detective story, science fiction, and the gothic or sensational tale; yet he also exerted a profound influence on Modernism through the enthusiasm of Charles Baudelaire and the French Symbolist poets. Poe's fiction celebrates both the hyper-rationality of his detective double, C. Auguste Dupin, and the inability of philosophy to account for the perverse. Poe maintained that authors should begin by considering their writing's effect on the reader; yet he was highly critical of sentimentality and didacticism, insisting that beauty, understood as the elevation of the soul, was the essence of true poetry.

Poe's life was as contradictory as his literary legacy. He suffered the early death of his parents, disinheritance by his foster father, poverty, anonymity, and a series of professional failures, but he also enjoyed some notable successes: a reputation as a discerning, if severe, literary critic; sudden celebrity after the publication of "The Raven"; notoriety for his involvement in a number of literary scandals; and the beginnings of a European reputation as a misunderstood American genius. Many myths about Poe's life have taken powerful hold on the popular imagination, partly due to Poe's exaggeration and distortion of his own life story, to his creation of memorable pathological narrators, which readers have confused with Poe himself, and to society's difficulty in coming to grips with the contradiction between Poe's aesthetic of writerly mastery and his apparent lack of control over his finances, his drinking, and his career. One of the first American writers to attempt to support himself by writing for a popular audience, Poe remains a cultural icon for the risks and rewards of aesthetic engagement.

Born in Boston on July 19, 1809, Edgar Poe was the second child of Elizabeth and David Poe, itinerant actors who performed in theaters in eastern seaboard cities from Massachusetts to South Carolina. David Poe abandoned the family while Poe was still an infant. When his mother died in December 1811 while appearing at the Richmond Theater, Poe was taken in by a prosperous Virginia merchant and his wife, John and Frances Allan.

An exporter of tobacco and importer of a variety of merchandise, John Allan moved his family to England in 1815 to set up a branch of his firm in London. There, Poe attended boarding school until he was eleven, when Allan moved the family back to Richmond on account of business failures. Poe completed school in Richmond,

entering the newly opened University of Virginia in 1826. He excelled at ancient and modern languages, but incurred large gambling debts that Allan refused to pay. Quarreling with his foster father over his irresponsibility and extravagance, Poe fled to Boston, arranged for the publication of his first volume of poetry—Tamerlane and Other Poems (1827)—and enlisted in the United States Army under the name Edgar A. Perry. Poe left the army and reconciled with Allan when his foster mother died in 1829, obtaining a nomination to West Point in part through Allan's influence. While waiting to take up his appointment, Poe published his second book, Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems (1829).

Poe resumed his studies at West Point but continued to quarrel with Allan, who refused to support him financially and whose remarriage in the fall of 1830 dashed Poe's hopes that he eventually would become Allan's heir. Poe got himself dismissed from West Point by deliberately disobeying orders; then he set out for New York City, where he published Poems (1831) on the strength of a subscription list generated by his fellow cadets. Poe struggled in the following years to support himself by his writing, moving to Baltimore to live with his grandmother, his aunt, and his young cousin Virginia Clemm, and submitting stories for newspaper prize competitions. Early in 1835, he began to publish tales and book reviews in a newly established Richmond magazine, the Southern Literary Messenger. By the end of the year Poe had been hired as a regular contributor and as editor of the journal's reviews, and he had reconstituted a family in Richmond consisting of his aunt Mrs. Clemm and thirteen-year-old Virginia, whom he married in the spring of 1836.

While at the Messenger, Poe developed a national reputation as a "tomahawk" critic, one who mercilessly subjected authors to unrelenting criticism in the manner of the British quarterly reviews. However, the magazine's financial troubles and Poe's disagreements with its owner over editorial and personal matters, including Poe's drinking, forced his resignation from the Messenger in 1837. Not for the last time, Poe turned to literary hack work to support himself. In 1838, the Harper Brothers, an increasingly prominent New York publishing firm, brought out his partially serialized adventure novel The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, but it sold poorly in the United States despite being enthusiastically reviewed and pirated in England. In 1839, Poe finally obtained steady work in Philadelphia as editor of Burton's Gentleman's Magazine, where he published "The Fall of the House of Usher" and a number of other tales and reviews. His first collection of fiction, Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, was published in Philadelphia later that year, but reviewers found the tales extravagant and mystical and the book sold poorly. Fired from Burton's in 1840, Poe attempted to garner capital and subscribers for a literary magazine of his own; but when this project proved unfeasible, he accepted a job as literary editor and reviewer for Graham's Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine, a monthly journal that published literature and criticism alongside sentimental illustrations and the latest fashions.

Poe published "The Man of the Crowd" and the first of his detective stories in Graham's along with numerous other tales, poems, and reviews. In January 1842, Virginia Poe burst a blood vessel while singing, almost died, and never fully recovered her health. Poe's own ill health prompted his replacement at Graham's, and he spent the next two years publishing wherever he could, unsuccessfully angling for a government appointment, and

gaining a measure of celebrity by winning a Philadelphia newspaper contest with the cryptographic tale “The Gold Bug” in 1843. After experimenting with the lecture circuit, Poe moved his family to New York in 1844. There, failing to find better work, he wrote anonymous articles as a “mechanical paragraphist” for the New York Mirror.

Poe burst onto the New York literary scene rather suddenly in January 1845 when James Russell Lowell’s favorable sketch of Poe’s life and works was followed by the publication of “The Raven,” a poem that was immediately copied, parodied, and anthologized. As the “Author of ‘The Raven, ” Poe was introduced into fashionable New York literary society, attending the salon of Ann Lynch, carrying on a literary flirtation with the poet Frances Sargent Osgood, and sharpening his critical credentials by accusing Henry Wadsworth Longfellow of plagiarism in an extended series of articles in the Broadway Journal. Poe’s sudden celebrity and his reputation for critical independence endeared him to a group of literary nationalists who sponsored the publication of his Tales and The Raven and Other Poems in July and November 1845. Poe gradually assumed editorship and part ownership of the Broadway Journal, using it as a vehicle for printing revised versions of tales that had been scattered among a variety of newspapers and magazines. Just as Poe seemed to be gaining a measure of control over his career and his literary corpus, however, his personal and professional life began to unravel. Out of perversity, anxiety, strategy, or some combination of the three, Poe gave a disastrous reading at the Boston Lyceum, presenting his early poem “Al Aaraaf” as if it were a new production and, when the substitution was discovered, claiming to have been drunk at the time and to have hoaxed the Bostonians by getting them to applaud an inferior poem. Poe’s war of words with the Bostonians increased his notoriety and his reputation for unreliability; meanwhile, the Broadway Journal, of which Poe had acquired complete control, collapsed under the weight of considerable debt. Poe continued to publish tales and criticism and to get embroiled in literary scandals, finally fleeing the city in the spring of 1846 for a cottage in Fordham, New York, hoping the change of pace would relieve him from pressure and improve Virginia’s health. Destitute and ill, Poe and his wife appeared in the papers as charity cases, much to Poe’s chagrin. Virginia’s health declined, and she died early in 1847.

In the last years of his life, Poe wrote poems, tales, and criticism and lectured on poetry and poetic theory, devoting considerable energy to Eureka (1848), a book-length prose poem detailing his theory of the universe. Reviving his plan to found an elite literary magazine, Poe traveled to Richmond to seek southern support in the summer of 1849. There he took the temperance pledge and became engaged to his boyhood sweetheart before returning north on literary business. Stopping in Baltimore, he apparently broke his pledge, became drunk and disoriented, and was found unconscious outside a polling station on Election Day. Taken to a hospital, Poe died days later of “congestion of the brain.” Shortly after the funeral, his character was maligned in a pseudonymous obituary by Rufus Wilmot Griswold, the man Poe had named as his literary executor. Griswold’s posthumous edition of Poe’s Works (1850) sealed Poe’s literary fame, but the volumes were prefaced by laudatory sketches

by Lowell and N. P. Willis, as well as by Griswold's melodramatic and damning "Memoir of the Author," giving lasting form to the split subject of Poe biography.

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William Dean Howells (1837-1920)

The most influential American novelist, editor, and critic of his generation, W. D. Howells was at the center of American literary culture for over fifty years. Born and raised in frontier Ohio, Howells was also one of the first important western writers to emigrate to the publishing centers of the East. Largely self-educated, he visited New England in July 1860 and met Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and other luminaries. As he later reminisced, Hawthorne gave him a note to pass to Emerson: "I find this young man worthy." And while hosting Howells at dinner at the Parker House, James T. Fields said to James Russell Lowell, "this is something like the apostolic succession; this is the laying on of hands." Later in same year, Howells published a campaign biography of Abraham Lincoln, and after Lincoln's election he was rewarded with an appointment as U.S. consul in Venice. There he wrote the essays collected in his first major book, Venetian Life (1866). Settling in Boston the same year, he became the assistant editor of the redoubtable Atlantic Monthly, the most important magazine in America, and upon the retirement of Fields in 1871 Howells became its editor, a position he held for the next ten years. In this office he became a dominant critical voice, an arbiter of taste and fashion, and a champion of literary realism or "the truthful treatment of material."

For Howells, realism was a democratic movement in the arts, a focus on the normal and commonplace, distinct from romanticism or "romanticistic" fiction with its emphasis on the more ideal, bizarre, sentimental, or aristocratic. In a word, he promoted such writers as Henry James and Mark Twain and criticized others such as Sir Walter Scott and William Makepeace Thackeray. He urged readers to apply this singular test to any work of the imagination: "Is it true?—true to the motives, the impulses, the principles that shape the life of actual men and women?" He was profoundly moved in the late 1880s by Leo Tolstoy's ideas about nonviolence and economic equality. The Russian realist "has not influenced me in aesthetics only, but in ethics, too," he explained, "so that I can never again see life in the way I saw it before I knew him." Howells summarized his notion of moral complicity in his novel The Minister's Charge (1886). No one "sinned or suffered to himself alone," a character remarks. "If a community was corrupt, if an age was immoral, it was not because of the vicious, but the virtuous who fancied themselves indifferent spectators." Faithful to such principles in his life as

well as in his art, Howells flirted with socialism and inveighed against imperialism, as in his story "Editha" (1905), a satire of a young woman who challenges her weak-willed lover to win glorious honors in battle.

Nowhere were Howells's democratic ethics more apparent than in his courageous but ill-fated defense of the Haymarket anarchists. On May 4, 1886, after a wave of labor strikes in Chicago in favor of an eight-hour workday, a policeman was killed, and seven others were mortally wounded by a bomb of unknown origin thrown during a rally in Haymarket Square organized by anarchists to protest police brutality. Eight anarchists were arrested, though none was identified as the bomb-thrower, and tried for murder. All were found guilty on August 20 and seven of them sentenced to hang. Howells fairly believed they had been railroaded. After the Supreme Court of Illinois denied their appeal on November 2, he resolved to take a stand on their behalf. On November 4 he sent a letter to the editor of the New York Tribune in which he urged readers to petition the governor of Illinois to commute the anarchists' sentences. The letter appeared in the newspaper on November 6 under the banner "Clemency for the Anarchists/A Letter from W. D. Howells." Howells stood virtually alone on behalf of the doomed men and became the target of public scorn. Even his friends refused to help. As Lowell wrote him, "I thought those Chicago ruffians well hanged," though he "honored your [Howells's] courage in saying what you did about them." After one of the men committed suicide and the sentences of two others were commuted to life in prison, the other four anarchists were executed on August 11. The next day Howells wrote a second letter to the Tribune entitled "A Word for the Dead," though it was not published in the paper and probably never sent. However, Howells expressed similar views in his portrayal of the German socialist Lindau in A Hazard of New Fortunes (1890), the novel many critics consider his best. In 1893, the new governor of Illinois pardoned the three surviving anarchists, vindicating Howells's position.

Theodore Dreiser once compared Howells to a sentry "on the watch tower, straining for a first glimpse of approaching genius." As an editor of the Atlantic for fifteen years and later as the contributor of the "Editor's Study" and "Editor's Easy Chair" series to Harper's, Howells befriended and promoted the careers of such writers as James, Twain, Bret Harte, Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins (later Freeman), Frank Norris, Charles W. Chesnutt, John W. De Forest, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Hamlin Garland, Edith Wharton, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Abraham Cahan, and Stephen Crane. Such selections from Howells's late critical writing as his reviews of Wilkins's stories in 1891 and Chesnutt's stories in 1900 and his introduction to Dunbar's Lyrics of Lowly Life (1896) illustrate his sponsorship of women writers and writers of color. (Howells also endorsed women's suffrage and was one of the founding members of the NAACP in 1909.)

Known late in life as "the Dean of American letters," Howells was the first president of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and served in that office for thirteen years before his death. Though he became a favorite target of such iconoclasts as H. L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis for whom he seemed to epitomize Victorian gentility, he deserves better from his critics. Frank Norris dismissed realism as "the drama of a broken teacup," but as practiced by Howells it both affirmed and subtly questioned bourgeois values. While he once asserted that the "smiling aspects of life" are the "more truly American," Howells was neither snob nor prig but an influential

literary theorist, a prolific author, and a courageous spokesman for unpopular, progressive, and occasionally radical causes.

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Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914?)

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Ambrose Bierce's life is the mystery of his death. In 1913, when he was over seventy years of age, Bierce decided to tour Mexico in order to meet the revolutionary Pancho Villa, and understand firsthand the civil war in progress there. He realized he would probably never return from that war-torn country. His last letter was dated December 26, 1913. After that, his whereabouts are simply unknown, although the contemporary Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes insists that one still hears stories about "an old gringo" wandering the Mexican countryside. In spirit, Bierce certainly haunts the South American literary landscape: major writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, and Fuentes have all been influenced and intrigued by his work and his life.

Bierce was tenth of the thirteen children of Laura Sherwood and Marcus Aurelius Bierce, poor farmers in southeastern Ohio who believed in the western dream of expansion. The family moved in 1846 to a farm outside of Warsaw, Indiana, but did not achieve prosperity there either. Bierce early evinced a keen literary imagination and a nonconformist temperament. While still in school, he worked on The Northern Indianan, an anti-slavery newspaper.

In 1861, at the age of eighteen, he enlisted in the Ninth Indiana Infantry. Bierce performed a number of notable acts of bravery during his war years, including carrying a wounded comrade off a battlefield. The soldier died, and Bierce had his first taste of ambivalent heroism. Similarly, occupying the staff position of topographical engineer, Bierce surveyed some of the most famous—and bloodiest—battles of the Civil War, including those at Shiloh, Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain, and Missionary Ridge.

After the war, Bierce traveled for nearly seven years, trying his hand at different careers, and only in 1871 did he publish his first short story, "The Haunted Valley." On Christmas Day of the same year, he married Mollie Day. The couple lived first in San Rafael, California, and then, the following year, moved to London where Bierce wrote satirical pieces for Fun and Figaro.

Bierce returned to America in 1875. He settled in San Francisco with his wife and their three children and forged a career as a short story writer and one of the best-known journalists of his age. Unwilling to compromise his

principles or tone down his scathing criticisms of those he thought to be unscrupulous or merely pompous, he was known as "bitter Bierce" and "the wickedest man in San Francisco" and seemed to enjoy both titles.
Although his personal life was not happy—he separated from his wife and experienced the tragic deaths of both of his sons—Bierce enjoyed the respect of a number of his contemporaries. He pioneered a number of important literary techniques, including a fluid, sometimes surrealistic prose style, the use of stream of consciousness, and the exploration of the subjectivity of time. In his stories he is particularly preoccupied with the human capacity for self-deception. Whether writing ghost stories or war tales, he often portrays characters who destroy themselves by their unwillingness to examine their own assumptions. "Chickamauga," in particular, is one of the most graphic anti-war stories in American literature. A fictional experimentalist, Ambrose Bierce nonetheless remained a moral writer who believed that the reader might learn from the lessons that his characters typically learn too late.

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Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945)

Theodore Dreiser was the son of a German Catholic immigrant father and a German-Moravian Mennonite mother. He spent his childhood in the Midwest, his parents moving frequently from one town to another as they searched for steady employment and tried to establish a stable home life for their large family. Paul, the eldest of the ten Dreiser children, changed his name to the less Germanic “Dresser” and went on stage where he became famous as a vaudeville performer and songwriter. The other Dreiser children, with the exception of Theodore, were less successful: all of them rebelled against their father’s dogmatic Catholicism, and some of them drifted into petty crime or, in the case of several of the girls, into liaisons with married men. Theodore’s education was desultory, but through the generosity of one of his elementary school teachers he did manage a year at Indiana University in 1889–90. Not long after, he made a start in journalism and wrote for newspapers in Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh. During this period he first encountered the fiction of Balzac and the philosophical writings of Huxley, Tyndall, and Spencer. These authors had a strong impact on him and profoundly influenced his subsequent thinking.
By 1899 Dreiser had become a successful free-lance writer in New York City and had married. At the urging of his friend Arthur Henry, he undertook a novel and based it on the experiences of one of his sisters. That novel became Sister Carrie (1900), a landmark in American naturalistic fiction. Difficulties with his publisher over the novel, together with marital problems and other tensions, caused Dreiser to suffer a nervous breakdown in 1902.

With the aid of his brother Paul he recovered and re-entered the world of journalism early in 1904 but attempted no significant new writing for almost seven years—though he did have Sister Carrie successfully reissued in 1907. After he lost a lucrative position with the Butterick Publishing Company in 1910, Dreiser completed and published Jennie Gerhardt (1911). That book, with Sister Carrie, finally established him as a visible, pioneering novelist.

The next fourteen years were productive but difficult for Dreiser. Such novels as The Financier, The Titan, and The "Genius" were frank in their treatment of sex and severe in their criticism of American society; as a result, they were frequently attacked and sometimes banned. Dreiser joined with H. L. Mencken, his champion among critics, and with Horace Liveright, his publisher, to battle the forces of puritanism and repression in the courts and the literary marketplace. These conflicts left Dreiser exhausted and wary of further disputes with censors. After The "Genius" in 1915, he published no new novel for ten years, though he worked on several in manuscript. His career as a writer of fiction culminated in 1925 with publication of the magnificent two-volume novel An American Tragedy, based on an actual murder case in upstate New York. After the Tragedy, Dreiser completed no other novel until almost the end of his life, but he remained active over the next two decades, issuing poetry, short fiction, travel books, philosophical writings, journalism, drama, and a remarkable autobiographical volume entitled Dawn (1931). During the thirties and forties he involved himself in proletarian causes and, shortly before his death, applied for membership in the Communist Party.

"Typhoon" was written by Dreiser not long after he published An American Tragedy. Like that novel it is based on an actual murder case—the shooting of Edward Lister by Ethel Schultz in Philadelphia on October 27, 1925. "Typhoon" is typically Dreiserian: the story includes elements strongly reminiscent of Sister Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt, and the Tragedy, and it touches on many other major themes found in Dreiser's writings. Its message, strongly pessimistic, is tempered by Dreiser's sympathy for his characters, especially Ida, who is trapped biologically and is driven by desires and motives which she does not understand.

Dreiser wrote "Typhoon" early in 1926 for the mass-circulation magazine Hearst's International-Cosmopolitan. The story appeared there in October 1926 under the title "The Wages of Sin" and was republished the following spring, under Dreiser's preferred title, in his collection Chains: Lesser Novels and Stories. Both the magazine text and the collected text were cut and censored before publication. The magazine version was especially heavily edited; the cuts altered characterization and motivation, removed many references to sex, and softened the harsh determinism of the theme. Dreiser restored some of the excised material to the collected version, but he was still not able to publish "Typhoon" as he had originally written it. The text presented here has been reconstructed by James M. Hutchisson from manuscripts and typescripts which survive among Dreiser's literary papers at the University of Pennsylvania. "Typhoon" appears in the book as Dreiser originally wished to publish it.

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Jack London (1876-1916)

Jack London was born in San Francisco to Flora Wellman, a young unmarried woman who had run away from her Ohio family. His father was probably William Chaney, an itinerant astrologer, who left London's mother when he learned of her pregnancy. London was adopted and raised in Oakland and its environs by the man his mother soon after married, John London. The Londons were never able to establish themselves securely; alternating hard work with spiritualism and get-rich-quick-schemes, they struggled to maintain a precarious lower-middle-class respectability. During his adolescence, London held a variety of manual jobs, dropped out of high school, shipped out on a sealing vessel, apprenticed himself as an electrician, and became a tramp. While he was on the road, he was imprisoned in the Erie County Penitentiary for vagrancy. The "unspeakable" brutalities he witnessed in his thirty days in prison awakened him to the reality of his downward class mobility. He saw a vision of the "Social Pit," and of himself slipping further and further into it. The contradictions of his life and writings are suggested in his responses: in rapid succession he returned to high school, fled to the Alaskan Gold Rush, embraced socialism, and determined to become a writer.

Longing for stability and roots, he seized upon writing as a ticket to a secure middle-class identity. At a time when novelists like Henry James were becoming self-conscious about their profession and articulating a privileged culture around their activity, London approached writing as a working-class trade; he apprenticed himself to the popular magazines and learned their formulas. In 1899 he broke into print in the Overland Monthly with his Alaskan stories. They brought him immediate success and are among the finest he ever wrote. London's first novel, A Daughter of the Snows (1902), was a commercial and critical failure, but The Call of the Wild (1903) brought him national fame at the age of twenty-six. As myth, adventure story, and lyrical transformation of his working-class experiences, it remains his most fully realized work. Success was accompanied by sharp disillusionment, reflected in the pessimism and contradictions of The Sea-Wolf (1904) and the dissolution of his short-lived marriage to Bessie Maddern. By the willpower that marked his attempt to pull himself out of the Social Pit, London pulled himself out of his depression, married Charmian Kittredge, and wrote a total of fifty-one volumes before he died at the age of forty. In addition to many novels and volumes of short stories, including tales of the South Seas, he wrote political essays and a journalistic exposé of the East

End of London (The People of the Abyss, 1903), covered the Russo-Japanese War, and published several autobiographical volumes (The Road, 1907, and John Barleycorn, 1913). Both participant in and observer of the American dream, London in his most powerful work articulated the longings and contradictions at its heart. These are movingly depicted in his autobiographical novel, Martin Eden (1909), which chronicles in vivid detail his own struggle to become a writer and his disillusionment with success. At the time of his death he was in poor health, his body marked by the strenuous life he had sometimes glorified in his fiction. He died of a self-administered overdose of morphine, which he was taking to counter the pain of nephritis, a side effect of his alcoholism.

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file:///C:/english/lauter/heath/4e/students/index.html

John Dos Passos (1896-1970)

Son of a famous Wall Street lawyer, John Dos Passos attended Choate, toured Europe, and went on to Harvard to become first an aesthete and then, gradually, something of a political rebel. In 1917, like many young men of his background, he went to France as a volunteer ambulance driver. Horrified by the war's brutality, by the official lies, by the meaninglessness of the suffering he witnessed, he grew increasingly radical and further alienated from the world his father represented. In Three Soldiers, an attack on the army, he sought, through formal means, to break out of the narrow perspective of his own social class: this early novel is narrated in turn from the points of view of three different soldiers, one an artist and Harvard man, but the other two very much "average" soldiers.

Dos Passos's desire to broaden further the social perspective in his writing, along with his intense interest in postwar developments in the arts, led to the experimental novel Manhattan Transfer, published in 1925. Here the point of view shifts rapidly, providing over a hundred fragments of the lives of dozens of characters, so that no one individual, but rather Manhattan itself—dazzling, but lonely and alienating—emerges as the novel's protagonist.

Over the next ten years, Dos Passos became involved with a variety of left-wing causes, among them the New Masses, a political journal; the radical New Playwrights Theatre; the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti, two Italian American anarchists hastily accused of murder and finally executed in 1927; and the 1931 miners' strike in Harlan County, Kentucky. The fiction he wrote during this period, the trilogy U.S.A., reflects Dos Passos's deepening radicalism as well as his increasing ambition as a writer, for the subject of U.S.A. is the history of American life in the first three decades of last century. His best work, the trilogy represents a culmination of Dos Passos's experimentation with literary form. In U.S.A., Dos Passos found the technical means to delineate the

connections between the kinds of alienation he dramatized in Manhattan Transfer and the social structures that produced it.

Most of this lengthy trilogy consists of twelve interwoven fictional narratives, each told from the point of view of its central character. These twelve narratives are interrupted not only by each other but by three kinds of formal devices: (1) sixty-eight "Newsreel" sections, carefully constructed collages of actual newspaper headlines, news story fragments, and snatches of song lyrics, political speeches, and advertisements that together trace mass culture and popular consciousness over the years; (2) twenty-seven biographies (like the two included in the book) of key public figures, people who shaped or represented or resisted the major social forces of the era; and (3) fifty-one "Camera Eye" sections, stream-of-consciousness fragments that depict the developing awareness of a sensitive and artistic individual (not unlike Dos Passos). These four components—narratives, Newsreels, biographies, and Camera Eye sections—work together to dramatize the impact of public events on private lives, to illustrate the very social nature of individual experience, and to indict capitalist America.

Dos Passos's writing after U.S.A. never approached the power of the trilogy. His experimenting had been very much tied up with his radical ideas, and he began rejecting those ideas in the late 1930s (becoming, in later life, extremely conservative). He returned to more traditional forms in a second trilogy, District of Columbia (1952), and in later novels; he began writing history, including a biography of Thomas Jefferson; and he continued the political journalism and travel writing he had been producing all his life. In 1961 he published Midcentury, which copies the form of his first trilogy but has none of its power; Midcentury's attack on unions, psychoanalysis, teenagers, and other targets seems narrow and petulant next to the passionate critique of an entire social system that is Dos Passos's greatest achievement, U.S.A.

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William Faulkner (1897-1962)

The great-grandson and namesake of Colonel William C. Falkner, a Civil War hero who was also a popular writer, William Cuthbert Faulkner aspired to greatness, even as a small child, when he listened mesmerized to tales and legends from his distinguished family's past, a history that had paled by the time it reached his rather ordinary and sometimes hostile father, Murray Faulkner. William was born in New Albany, Mississippi, but the family soon moved to nearby Oxford, where Faulkner would spend most of his life.

In June 1918, Faulkner joined the Royal Air Force of Canada; he trained as a cadet pilot in Toronto until November, when the Armistice sent him homeward again. Back in Oxford, after swaggering around the square in his uniform, telling spurious tales about his combat in France, he renewed his attempts to become both an artist and a poet. He had learned to draw from his artistically inclined grandmother and mother; enrolling as a special student at the University of Mississippi, he illustrated several campus publications, as well as some poetry sequences he wrote for various girlfriends. After dropping out of the university in 1921, Faulkner took a brief job in a New York bookstore; there he met the future wife of Sherwood Anderson, Elizabeth Prall. Returning to Oxford in December, he accepted a position as postmaster at the university, a job he held, despite a lackadaisical attitude, until late 1924. His first book of poetry, The Marble Faun (1924), continued his work in the decadent/neo-romantic vein.

Faulkner moved to New Orleans in 1925, where his friendship with Elizabeth Prall led to an apprenticeship with Sherwood Anderson, whom she had married. In Anderson's literary circle Faulkner became acquainted with Freud's theories of sexuality, the mythic world of anthropologist Sir James Frazer's Golden Bough, and the sweeping implications of the literary innovations of T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. He also absorbed the ennui and despair of the post-war generation, and melded all these influences, first in a series of literary sketches published by the New Orleans Times Picayune and The Double Dealer (a literary magazine) and then in a first novel, Soldier's Pay. Faulkner meanwhile left for Europe, spending time in Italy and England but reacting most strongly to France, beginning a lifelong love affair with that country. Returning to Mississippi, Faulkner took a series of jobs while working on his second novel, Mosquitoes (1927).

For Faulkner, 1929 marked the beginning of what critics have come to call "the great years" (extending to 1942), when he wrote the seven novels (in a total of twenty) that have been judged masterworks. The impetus for this extraordinary outburst came in Sartoris (1929), when Faulkner, on the advice of Anderson, decided to concentrate on what he came to call his "little postage-stamp of soil," Yoknapatawpha County; all the great novels are set there, in or around Jefferson, the county seat. The town and county obviously depict Oxford and its surrounding Lafayette County. As a result of this focus, Faulkner was able to create a mythic "cosmos" of his own, with interconnected mythic structures and characters, populating his world with all the various folk he had encountered in life; he made a determined effort to render the experience of women, blacks, and American Indians as well, and showed nostalgia for lost traditions and the vanishing wilderness while simultaneously decrying rampant materialist culture and racial injustice.

Faulkner's first masterwork, The Sound and the Fury, was published in 1929. Faulkner wrote this book thinking of a little girl with muddy drawers climbing a pear tree to look in on her grandmother's body lying in state in the parlor, thereby finding a metaphor for the narrative of the fall of a proud southern family. The story, told in three successive first person narrations by three brothers and finally through the consciousness of their black nurse/housekeeper, keeps circling back to the same issues in different voices, adding new levels of understanding. Documenting, in a radical new prose style, both the loss of familial love and honor and the

decline of a great culture, the book caused a sensation among critics but sold poorly, as did its successor, As I Lay Dying (1930), which detailed the efforts of a poor-white family to bury their unembalmed mother.

Faulkner, desperate for money, embarked on the first of several unhappy stints in Hollywood as a scriptwriter (1932–1936; 1942–1945; parts of 1951 and 1954). He found intermittent happiness during his Hollywood years. He wrote much of his next novel, Light in August (1932), during a trip to New York. One of his two or three greatest works, it details the deceptively simple frame story of Lena Grove, a country woman wandering the South searching for the father of her unborn child. This narrative interconnects on many levels with the one it encloses, the much longer and tragic tale of Joe Christmas, an orphan like Lena, who may or may not have black blood. The novel probes deeply into race, religion, and sexuality, and the role of memory and the past in the human consciousness.

Absalom, Absalom! (1936) is generally considered Faulkner's most monumental achievement. Four narrators, including Quentin Compson of The Sound and the Fury and his Harvard roommate, Shreve McCannon, attempt to decipher the mysteries surrounding the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen, a self-made planter and God-like creator of Supten's Hundreds, a huge plantation. The novel plunges into the darker recesses of personal histories, exploring incest, inter-racial love, psychic perversion, and materialist obsession, while simultaneously rendering the sufferings of blacks and whites during the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the South's attempts to come to terms with its tragic history.

Faulkner experimented with counterpoint in The Wild Palms (1939), alternating chapters of two discrete narratives, one concerning a convict's efforts to bring a woman and her baby safely out of a Mississippi flood, the other focusing on a tragic and adulterous love affair. He returned to form in his last two masterworks, The Hamlet (1940) and Go Down Moses (1942). The former, Faulkner's finest comedy, begins a trilogy of novels about the rise of the Snopes family which continues in The Town (1957) and The Mansion (1959). Go Down Moses, generated by Faulkner's revision and union of existing stories, concerns the efforts of Ike McCaslin to repudiate the tragic racial history of his family, which includes his grandfather's siring of a child on his mulatto daughter. The narrative builds to a climax in what is perhaps Faulkner's most powerful and sustained piece of writing, "The Bear," which uses a hunt to explore the meaning of history, manhood, and responsibility to nature.

The course of his career was always uncertain, and all of his books except Sanctuary were out of print before Malcolm Cowley's publication of The Portable Faulkner in 1946, which began a reassessment of Faulkner's career. Faulkner's Collected Stories appeared in 1950, setting the stage for his acceptance of the Nobel Prize for literature in Stockholm, where his short but powerful acceptance speech caused a sensation; he predicted that man would not only endure; he would prevail.

Faulkner's last decade combined increasing bouts with illness, accident, and alcoholism, with public appearances and pronouncements. He traveled widely for the State Department (most memorably to Japan in 1955) and eventually accepted a position at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

His dogged, often heroic commitment to a dissection of racism indicates an agreement with W.E.B. Du Bois's assertion that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." Faulkner's profound sense of history and tradition was in no way a curb on his appetite for modernist solutions—both stylistic and philosophical—to literary, social, and spiritual problems. He stated, a few years before his death, that "the writer's first job..." is "always to search the soul...To search his own soul, and to give a proper, moving picture of man in the human dilemma." At its best, Faulkner's complex work courageously meets this standard.

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Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Though he has a reputation for writing best about men in a man's world of war or wilderness, Hemingway lived very much in a world of women. Born in the affluent Chicago suburb of Oak Park, he was surrounded by women as the second child and first son in a family of four sisters. He was sixteen before his only brother, Leicester, was born. Like his alter ego Nick Adams, who appears in over twenty stories, Hemingway went hunting and fishing with his physician father in upper Michigan. A story such as "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" in In Our Time suggests the alignment Hemingway saw between the suburban world of his strong-willed mother, Grace, and the escape from its complexities provided by the Michigan woods that his father loved. An eye injury kept him out of the army in 1917 when he tried to enlist after high school graduation. Instead he began his writing apprenticeship as a reporter for the Kansas City Star.

Less than a year later, he succeeded in entering the Great War as a driver in the Red Cross Ambulance Corps. Hemingway uses his own war experiences in both the Nick Adams stories and A Farewell to Arms of 1929 and yet ties them to images of war in the work of contemporaries such as T.S. Eliot and nineteenth-century writers Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane. Crane's protagonist in The Red Badge of Courage was named Henry Fleming; Hemingway's narrator Frederic Henry becomes a direct descendant since he is usually referred to by his last name alone. Both characters are experiencing war for the first time, and both become disillusioned by the experience.

Like his narrator Frederic Henry, Hemingway was wounded in the leg soon after arriving in Italy to serve in the ambulance corps. He too fell in love with a British nurse and later found himself caught up in the Italian army's

retreat from Caporetto as the Austrian and German forces advanced. Henry's real enemies are boredom, hunger, thirst, and random violence, all of which are exacerbated by class conflicts between enlisted men and officers and inept leadership. In the section excerpted in the book, Henry translates his conversations with Italian soldiers into English and allows himself the luxury of remembering nurse Catherine Barkley, who is pregnant with his child, only in a dazed moment of escape from the humdrum preparations for retreat.

Hemingway returned from World War I to an American Midwest constrained by Prohibition and the numbing strictures of family and smalltown life. Journalism and travel proved his escape. In 1921 he married Hadley Richardson, the first of his four wives, and returned to Europe as foreign correspondent for the Toronto Star.

Armed with a letter of introduction from Sherwood Anderson, Hemingway joined the coterie of American expatriates forming around Gertrude Stein in Paris. Later he would attribute much of the repetition in her work to her aversion to revising and deleting, steps in the writing process that he saw as vital. Yet as the neophyte writer, Hemingway's competitive instincts were set aside while he profited from the lessons of more established writers such as Stein, Ezra Pound, and eventually F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Success and recognition complicated Hemingway's life, as did the birth of his son John in 1923. Impending fatherhood and the responsibilities it entailed had a gloomy effect on Hemingway, much as it does for the American in "Hills Like White Elephants." Most immediately, Hadley's pregnancy meant a return to Canada for several months and a threatened end to the youthful freedom they had enjoyed in Paris. Their last European fling that July was the first of his three visits to Spain for the running of the bulls in Pamplona. This experience is embedded in his most highly acclaimed novel, The Sun Also Rises, which presents the rootless society of the "lost generation" on a secular pilgrimage that covers terrain similar to that of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land.

Each of Hemingway's four marriages marks a stage in his career that suggests an alignment of his personal and professional life. Marriage to Pauline Pfeiffer in 1927 signaled a turn toward domestic concerns. Key West, Florida, became his home base, though he traveled widely in America, Europe, and Africa, occasionally accompanied by Pauline and their two sons, Patrick and Gregory, as well as his older son John. He wrote personal essays against the background of bullfighting in Death in the Afternoon and big game hunting in Green Hills of Africa and a novel dealing with his Loyalist sympathies in the Spanish Civil War, For Whom the Bell Tolls.

Divorce and remarriage to foreign correspondent Martha Gellhorn in 1940 marked another stage in Hemingway's life and work. For the first and only time, he chose a competitor as a wife, and by his standards this was the least successful of his marriages. He wrote little fiction in these years, and despite the homes he established with Martha Gellhorn in Cuba and Ketchum, Idaho, he led a nomadic life, sporadically covering the European theater of World War II. By the time Martha Gellhorn scooped him by being with the first wave of American troops to hit the beaches in the Normandy invasion, Hemingway had chosen a less aggressive journalist, Mary Welsh, to be his fourth wife. It was with Mary that Hemingway celebrated the liberation of Paris in August 1944.

Highlights of Hemingway's career in the years of his marriage to Mary Welsh were the negative response to his highly autobiographical novel Across the River and Into the Trees, in contrast to the popular and critical success of his novella The Old Man and the Sea. This work, for which he received the Pulitzer Prize in 1952, was the impetus for his receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. Like Stephen Crane of an earlier generation, Hemingway put modern man in an open boat for a life-or-death struggle on the sea. Though his "old man" Santiago conquers the great fish, he loses all but the memory of his success.

Falling into depression exacerbated by bouts of hard drinking and writer's block, Hemingway committed suicide at his ranch in Ketchum in 1961. His posthumously published works greatly increase the biographical dimensions of the man to be discerned from works published in his lifetime, but his reputation as a stylist and writer of fiction still rests squarely on those works he himself saw through many stages of revision to publication.

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