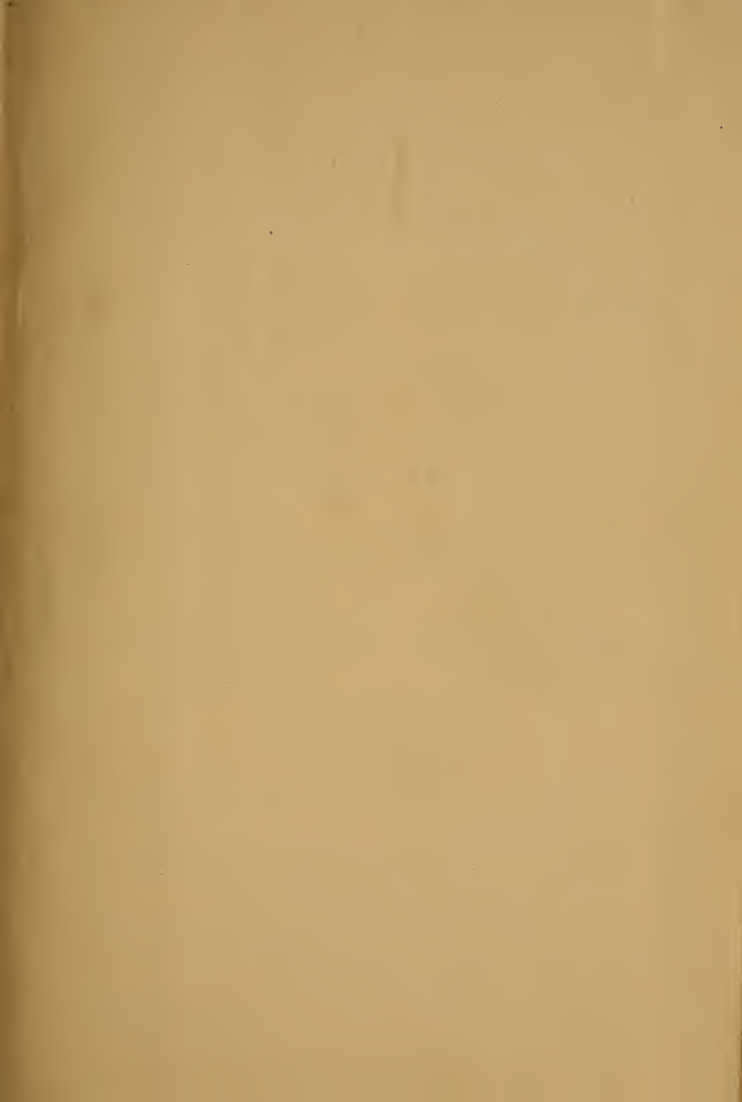




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The Art of Story-Writing

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EDITOR OF "THE WRITER'S MONTHLY"

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FORMERLY OF ROCKFORD COLLEGE, ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

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FOREWORD TO TEACHERS

The present volume is based on actual experience in teaching the art of story-writing to several thousand pupils, both in the classroom and by correspondence. The standards of the text and its methods of approach are doubtless modified by the editorial and the story-writing practice of the authors, but always the chief thing in their minds has been to guide the student in the most effective and direct way to actual fictional narration. For this reason, much insistence upon theory has been avoided—one of the author's works, "Writing the Short-Story," covers that ground quite fully. The practical method consists in four important steps:

1. The introduction of generally-approved examples of the various fictional forms gives both teacher and pupil a concrete basis for starting the study of each form, and furnishes a standard in the text for both criticism and wholesome imitation—though imitation must not be carried to the extreme.

2. The development of principles of structure is almost entirely inductive, and therefore appeals to the common-sense of the pupil instead of setting up a series of arbitrary rules.

3. The Questions and Exercises give opportunity for research, reading, and plenty of written and oral narration, besides being so framed as to stimulate original thought and invention. They are so framed that the pupil is led

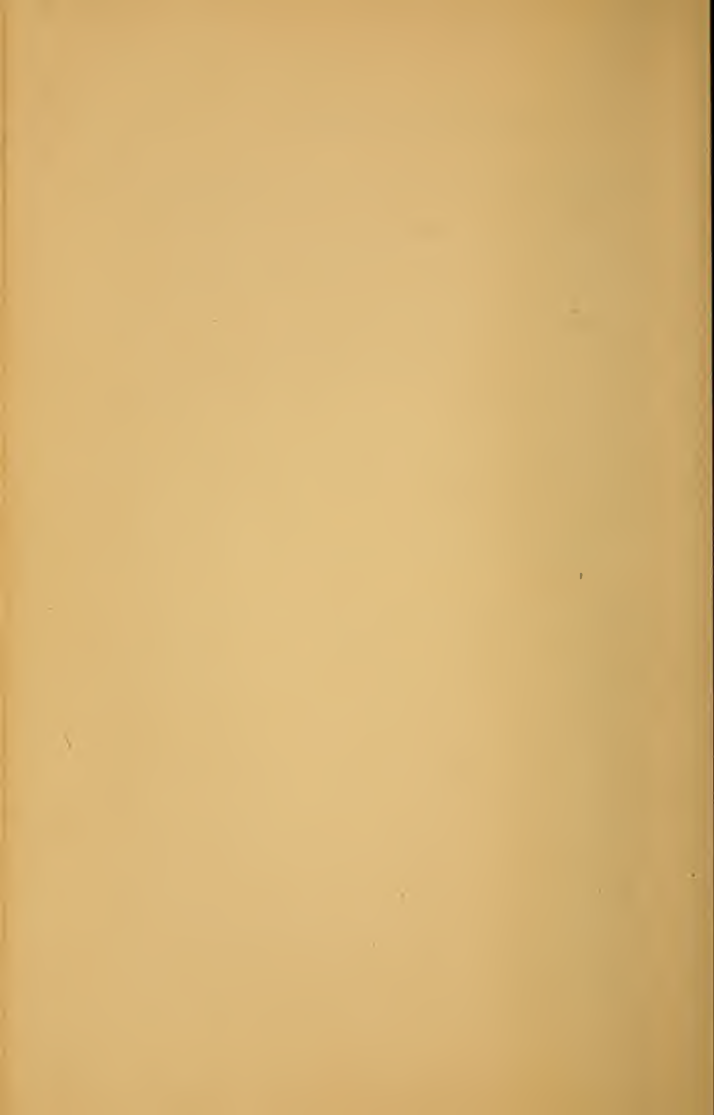
to depend upon himself and not upon the over-worked teacher.

4. The order of arrangement, from the simple anecdote, through the fable, the ancient parable, the modern parable, the early tale, the modern tale, the legend, the sketch, up to the short-story, is carefully calculated to lead the young writer by natural and easy steps up to the most sophisticated form of narration. This new approach is sound pedagogically and effective practically; besides, it enables the pupil to make real progress in narrating *complete* stories without spending much disheartening time at the start in studying and practising the *parts* of the more difficult short-story form—a method which has heretofore been the usual one in teaching the art of story-writing.

It is well for the teacher to impress upon the pupil that *invention* is the foundation of all narrative success, and that without some ability to see, develop, and originally devise interesting, fresh, and striking situations there is no hope of achieving distinction in the story-teller's art. At the same time, every pupil who is able to write English may with practice—preferably under guidance—learn to tell a simple story effectively. The story-telling impulse cannot be taught, for it is a gift; but the art of narration distinctly *is* a proper subject for instruction, and in many walks of life the ability to tell a story—even though it be not either an original or a notably good story—will prove to be a valuable attainment. No more fascinating and helpful method of teaching composition has yet been devised than by means of fictional narration.

It is hoped that teachers will place in the hands—or at least at the disposal—of pupils some of the collections of short-stories and other short fictive forms which are recommended in this volume. Good examples are provided herein, but the examination and analysis of other specimens will prove helpful and interesting.

J. BERG ESENWEIN,
MARY DAVOREN CHAMBERS.



CHAPTER I

THE STORY-TELLER'S ART

Nansen's stout-hearted comrades tell stories to one another while the Arctic ice drifts onward with the Fram; Stevenson is nicknamed the Tale-Teller by the brown-limbed Samoans; Chinese Gordon reads a story while waiting—hopelessly waiting—at Khartoum.—BLISS PERRY, *A Study of Prose Fiction*.

We find that the most refined and strongest thinkers—the theologian, the poet, and the metaphysician—have turned a kind eye upon fiction, which beguiled the leisure and refreshed the toil of Gray and Warburton, of Locke and Crabbe.

—R. A. WILLMOTT, *Pleasures of Literature*.

All the world loves a story. From the day when our baby speech first begs Mother to “tell us a story,” down to life's twilight when Grandfather's Chair becomes the story-teller's throne, the spinner of yarns is a welcome soul.

So it has been throughout the history of the race, for the dawn of story-telling must have been coeval with the daybreak of intelligence. Even before men began to write by scratching rude symbols and pictures on clay, carving them on wood and stone, or painting them on dried skins of animals, we may be sure that our savage ancestors loved to hear strange tales—of what marvelous sort we should find it difficult to fancy.

Conscious narration began when prehistoric man first saw the dramatic quality in some action of animal or fellow man and related it to his comrade, perhaps by a

gesture and an inarticulate cry, and ever since then story-telling has challenged the service of the most resourceful. The brightest minds have vied with each other in planning stories and relating them attractively, until now story-telling is an art of high order, with certain well-recognized standards of form, yet with all the room for differences in individual taste that is accorded to any other art. Today it is much more than a mere means of entertainment—it is woven into our entire life-fabric. The minister uses stories in the pulpit to illustrate his views of truth, the teacher illuminates his lessons by their aid, the advertiser employs them to explain the merit of his goods, the reporter casts the daily news in story form, and vast businesses are built up on the wide foundation of story printing and selling. So there are few, if any of us, who are not profoundly influenced for good or for evil by the myriad stories that fill the air and either beautify or mar the countless printed pages which confront us day by day. Whether as a means of pleasure or of curiosity, as a source of instruction or of livelihood, we shall find it worth while to look beneath the surface and learn more about an art which is at once so widespread and so potential.

I. What is a Story?

The derivation of the word "story" is closely related to that of the word "history," as may be seen by a comparison of both spellings. Naturally, therefore, one of the oldest meanings of "story" is an account of past events—a definition not far removed from that of "history."

In early times the professional bards and story-tellers were the only historians, passing from martial camp to palace, from public square to any gathering of people, and weaving the mythical or the genuine deeds of gods and heroes into "histories" for the entertainment of listeners.

Gradually, fact was separated from fiction, until now there is a great gulf fixed between history and fictive story. True, the gulf is not impassable, for while history now deals solely with fact, or what it believes to be fact, it often adopts the story form; and while most stories are fictitious, some are woven chiefly of history, and all stories are sure to contain fact in greater or lesser degree. The truth remains, however, that story and history are now distinct.

The term "story" includes a wide variety of narrative types, but broadly it may be defined as *the narration of a real or a fictitious action, dealing with thoughts, or motives, or feelings.*

This definition needs some discussion.

Since it concerns itself with action, a story is more than a mere word-picture. Only to tell what a thing looks like is description, not story-telling. For example, merely to describe an avalanche would not be to tell a story. But when Hawthorne, in "The Ambitious Guest," tells how an avalanche becomes the climax of a series of actions, he does tell a story, for he tells how something occurred which was more than a mere movement of inanimate nature. His story included an action which dealt "with thoughts or motives, or emotions"—actually, with all three.

It must be remembered that the action which is the

theme of a story need not be external or visible. Just as real and just as important actions take place in the inner life as occur in the outer; though generally inner life shows itself in outward action, and the best stories are those which show us something of how the inward man influences the outer.

As regards general form, a story may be told either in prose or in verse, orally or in writing. The first stories were all oral, for as we have said, man told tales long before he began to record his thoughts in writing. The verse-story was likewise an early type, and still exists, but for the purposes of this treatise it will be enough to confine ourselves almost exclusively to the nature and production of the written prose story.

2. Why We Study Form

In studying the anecdote, the fable, the parable, the sketch, the tale, and the modern short-story—the several shorter forms which the narrator's art adopts—we must remember one thing of importance: these forms are all *stories*, and therefore possess certain points in common. Indeed, we must not think that each particular type differs in many respects from other types. Quite to the contrary, the differences are only slight—so slight that the most expert among us may sometimes differ as to whether a story belongs entirely to one class or to the other.

This possible confusion, or difference in opinions, arises not so much from a lack of knowledge of what one form consists in, as from the fact that many stories possess the

characteristics of more than one type—they are half-breeds, and therefore not easy to place. To continue a comparison drawn from mankind, even some pure Caucasians are almond-eyed, others have the swarthy skin of the Indian, while yet other whites are quite negroid in feature. So, too, we shall find it to be in the narratives we examine. The chief thing to the story-teller has always been that his story should be worth telling—that is, that it should awaken the interest of the listener; a secondary thing has always been the form in which the story is told. So true is this that few of us today have ever cared to ask what kind of story it was that we told or heard, and even now such distinctions may not seem to us of great importance.

But as we try to produce a certain type of narration we shall find it easier to do so successfully when we have before us as clearly as possible the leading characteristics of that type and how it differs from another. The architect who knows no distinction between Gothic and Romanesque arches, or between the capitals of Ionic columns and those of the Corinthian type, might design a very useful building, but its architecture would surely turn out to be a medley. So if we wish not only to tell good stories but to tell them in an effective way, the first step will be to learn something of the forms in which they may well be narrated. After we have mastered a knowledge of the purer and simpler types we shall feel more at liberty to attempt the composite. Our knowledge of form is not to hamper us but to make us free to use all forms so far as our talents and our inclinations may permit.

SPECIAL READING LIST.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This work is complete in itself, but in the preparation of the following exercises, as well as those given in connection with the succeeding chapters, it would be well to refer to such volumes of the appended Reading List as may promise, either by the nature of their contents or by specific reference made by letter in the questions, to furnish the precise help needed. Other references for optional reading are freely made throughout the text and in abundant foot-notes. However, the following list, it is believed, will be found sufficient to supply all ordinary requirements.

Suggested Analytical Reading List

A. THE BOOK OF THE SHORT STORY, Alexander Jessup and Henry Seidel Canby. New York (1909): D. Appleton & Co., 507 pp.

A collection of eighteen short narratives representative of different periods in the development of the art of story-telling, beginning with a story from an Egyptian papyrus, and ending with one of Kipling's. There are full lists of tales and short-stories illustrative of each period, from 1400 B. C. to 1904; a list of the best stories by each writer whose work is represented; and a brief critique of the author's chief characteristics. A very full introduction (practically a reprint of Professor Canby's monograph on "The Short Story," in the *Yale Studies in English* series), is confessedly an attempt to trace the development of an impressionistic purpose in the short-story of recent times.

B. THE SHORT-STORY: SPECIMENS ILLUSTRATING ITS DEVELOPMENT, Brander Matthews. New York (1907): American Book Co. 399 pp.

A collection of twenty-three short narratives, showing the evolution of the short-story proper. Brief critical notes follow each story, a brief appreciation of each author is prefixed to his work, and the volume begins with an introduction which traces the development of this type of literature.

C. SPECIMENS OF THE SHORT STORY, George Henry Nettleton. New York (1901): Henry Holt & Co. VI + 229 pp.

A collection of eight stories selected to represent different phases of the narrative art, e.g., sketch, tale, allegory, detective story, etc. Each story is preceded by a short biography of the author, an estimate of his literary qualities, and a criticism of the example selected from his writings. Several pages of "Notes" explain points in the text.

D. STUDYING THE SHORT-STORY, J. Berg Esenwein. Springfield, Mass. (1912): The Home Correspondence School. XXXII + 438 pp.

Sixteen complete short-stories, arranged in eight typical classes, two stories illustrating each class. The first of each pair is analyzed, the second has wide margins left blank for analysis by the student. The general work of each author is criticised, suggestive questions follow each chapter, and explicit lists of representative stories of the different types illustrated, as well as reading references

on the work of each author, stimulate and facilitate further study.

E. SHORT-STORY MASTERPIECES, ten volumes, edited by J. Berg Esenwein. Springfield, Mass. (1912-1913): The Home Correspondence School.

A series of great short-stories translated into English, with introduction to each story by the editor, discussing the author and his short-story work, particularly his literary methods. Four volumes now issued, two French, two Russian, comprising twenty stories and twenty-two introductory essays; about 600 pages in the four volumes.

F. THE EVOLUTION OF LITERATURE, A. S. Mackenzie. New York (1911): Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. XVI + 440 pp.

A scholarly examination into the origin of both poetry and prose in the remotest times, with special reference to the beginnings of narration.

G. THE SHORT STORY IN ENGLISH, Henry Seidel Canby. New York (1909): Henry Holt & Co. XIII + 385 pp.

A complete historical and critical study of the development of the short-story in English—the only complete treatise of the kind.

H. A STUDY OF PROSE FICTION, Bliss Perry. Boston (1902): Houghton, Mifflin & Co. VIII + 408 pp.

A practical guide to the study of fiction, with authoritative discussions of its types, forms, and internal structure. Chapter XII (34 pp.) deals particularly with the short-story. The Appendix is especially valuable.

I. THE RHETORICAL PRINCIPLES OF NARRATION, Carroll Lewis Maxcy. Boston (1911): Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 279 pp.

An exposition of the principles of narrative art, adapted to the use of college classes in advanced composition.

J. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SHORT-STORY, Brander Matthews. New York (1901): Longmans, Green & Co. 83 pp.

A discussion of the essential differences between the short-story and the novel, arguing for unity of impression as the indispensable requisite in the short-story.

K. THE PLOT OF THE SHORT STORY, Henry Albert Phillips. New Edition. Springfield, Mass. (1920): The Home Correspondence School. XIV + 146 pp.

Seventeen short chapters, discussing and illustrating the nature, differentiation and practical building of short fictional plots.

L. WRITING THE SHORT-STORY, J. Berg Esenwein. Springfield, Mass. (1909): The Home Correspondence School. XIV + 441 pp.

A hand-book designed for classes in short-story writing, or for individual study. The rise, structure, writing and sale of the modern short-story are discussed. Outline summaries as well as suggestive questions and exercises follow each chapter. Full appendices and bibliographies, together with an analytical device for the laboratory study of the short-story, complete the volume.

M. THE TECHNIQUE OF THE MYSTERY STORY,
Carolyn Wells.

N. CHILDREN'S STORIES AND HOW TO TELL THEM,
J. Berg Esenwein and Marietta Stockard.

O. THE PHOTOPLAY SYNOPSIS, A. Van Buren Powell.
This work on the photoplay contains extraordinarily helpful chapters on how to plot.

M, *N*, and *O*, published by The Home Correspondence School, Springfield, Mass.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES.

1. Write a paragraph or two on the earliest narrative forms (See *A*, *F* and *L*.)
2. Describe the scene, as though you yourself were a listener, made by a company gathered to hear (a) a savage chieftain telling of his exploits; or (b) a troubadour singing a tale of war; or (c) an oriental tale-teller addressing his audience; or (d) any other similar story-telling setting.
3. Cut from a newspaper a news item told as a true story.
4. Criticise the definition of a "story" given on p. 3.
5. Construct your own definition of a "story."
6. Is a study of story-forms likely to hinder or encourage a writer's originality? Give reasons.

NOTE 1. Question 6 might furnish a class debate.

NOTE 2. The Instructor may make assignments of reports to be made upon various chapters from the reading list covering the ground of early narration.

CHAPTER II

THE ANECDOTE

The champions of dry-as-dust literature have tried hard to discredit the use of the anecdote in literature.

—ALBERT SCHINZ, *The Dial*.

But the anecdote is really the relation of an actual experience of someone, either in the public eye or within the personal ken of the listener, which depends for its point upon the humor in the situation, or in the character, or in the manner of the narrator. It is plotless.—H. A. PHILLIPS, *The Plot of the Short-Story*.

An anecdote is the simplest form of *consciously devised* story, for we may assume that, though haphazard narration previously existed, a story centering about some person, and intentionally told as such, was the earliest type of connected narrative, almost as old as human speech.

Our grandparent—a-million-times-removed—who first returned to his cave or climbed into his tree-dwelling and enforced one of his primary ideas by telling his family about some wonder he had seen or some enemy he had overcome, was the first anecdotist, for we have said that in some such way the first story came to be told. Since then, down through the ages, every one of us as soon as he can prattle begins to contribute to the great sum of these short narratives of incidents and events—wonderful, mysterious, sorrowful, joyful, or humorous, but always worth relating—that we call anecdotes. Proof positive, this, that the instinct to narrate anecdotes is natural in

the human race, and may almost be classed with language, cooking, and the use of tools, as differentiating man from beast.

1. The Anecdote Defined

The word "anecdote" means, according to its Greek derivation, "not given out," that is, not published, and was thus applied by Procopius—a historian of the sixth century—to his "Unpublished Memoirs" (*Anecdota*) of happenings in the private life of the court of the Emperor Justinian. Anecdotes thus grew to signify a kind of tell-tale-tattle, and disparaging mention is made by various writers of "the anecdotal gossip of Suetonius,"¹ "the gossiping anecdote-mongers of later Greece,"² and of "the roguery and ignorance of those who pretend to write anecdotes, or secret histories."³

The word, however, is much too useful to be thus restricted, so we apply it now to *any short, pointed narrative of a detached incident, or of a single event, told as being in itself interesting or striking.*⁴

Mr. Howells says: "The anecdote is palpably simple and single. It offers an illustration of character, or records a moment of action."⁵

Now, as we understand the anecdote today it differs from the first crude recital of a prehistoric man in this: it

¹ Charles Merivale, *History of the Romans Under the Empire*, Vol. IV, Chap. 37.

² Frederick Denison Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, Chap. 6, Division 3, Section 2.

³ Dean Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Part III, Chap. 8.

⁴ Modified from Murray's *New English Dictionary*.

⁵ *North American Review*, September, 1901.

has a point, to the making of which everything else is subordinated, and the keener the point, and the more condensed the form, the better the anecdote. It would not be an anecdote merely to tell that a boy fell on a slippery pavement; but suppose that his fall leads to a crisis in his life or even occasions merely a witty retort, then we have the foundation for some sort of story.

There is an old anecdote of a lad who after he had fallen on the ice was asked by a kindly old gentleman, "Why, my boy, how did you happen to fall? Did you forget to wear overshoes?"

The little fellow grinned, and as he picked himself up, replied, "I have rubbers on, sir, but I fell notwithstanding."

The narration of this incident, with its palpable point, constitutes a real anecdote.

Alas, how many attempted anecdotes have no more point than the recital of the dullard who in attempting to repeat the foregoing gave the boy's reply in these words: "I have rubbers on, sir, but I fell nevertheless."

Of course it will not be supposed from this example that *all* good anecdotes should be witty—though they very well might be. In reality the point may be something quite serious, as illustrated in the example next cited.

2. Its Relation to Truth

An attempt has been made to confine the word "anecdote" to an incident which is supposed to be true, in contradistinction to the word "story," which may apply to either true or fictitious narrative.¹ But even this effort

¹ *The Century Dictionary.*

to narrow its meaning has proved ineffective, and one of our standard magazines¹ sponsors a witty defence of anecdotes which are highly embellished, unauthenticated, and generally lacking foundation in fact. Thus we are begged not to investigate the origin of the immortal cherry-tree story of the Father of our Country. "What matters such a non-essential as historical accuracy so long as it gives to the boys and girls of this country an ideal view of a truly great and good man?"²

Anecdotes often express the spirit of the times. They spring up around great movements and great men. We have anecdotes of the Fall of the Roman Empire, of the French Revolution, of the Civil War, of Napoleon, of Saint Francis of Assisi, of Abraham Lincoln.

Like the subjoined, they must, if unprovable historically, be at least true in the spirit, as are the sacred legends so often found in the religious writings of other days—for a legend is often an anecdote, and often a tale, as we shall shortly see. In the following legend we have the real anecdotal form.

EXAMPLE

*THE VISIT OF KING LOUIS TO BROTHER GILES OF THE FRIARS MINOR*³

Saint Louis, King of France, set out one time on a pilgrimage to visit the sanctuaries of the world, and learning of the great holiness of Brother Giles, one of the first companions of Saint

¹ *The Outlook*, Vol. 90, pp. 247-8.

² *Ibid.*

³ Adapted from the *Fioretti di San Francisco*.

Francis, and that he was truly a man of God, the king determined to visit him. So he put off his royal state, and in the guise of a poor pilgrim he came to the door of the House of the Brothers which is in Perugia, and without telling his name he asked the porter with great earnestness for Brother Giles. Now God had revealed to Brother Giles who it was that asked for him, so he left his cell and quickly ran to the door. And though the friar and the king had never seen one another before, yet the moment they met they kneeled down with great devotion and embraced and kissed one another with the tender love of close, familiar friends. But all the while no word was spoken by either the one or the other, only they remained together in silence, and with such signs of love and understanding as if they enjoyed sweet companionship with one another.

And when they had continued for a long time together in the manner set forth above, but with no word spoken by either one, King Louis went his way on his journey, and Brother Giles returned to his cell.

But so close had their souls been knit together that speech would have only interrupted their perfect communion. They parted from one another with marvellous content and consolation, full of joy, but without words, and they never met again.

Mr. Ruskin, who quotes the incident in full, says that although the story may not be believed by everybody, "the spirit which created the story is an entirely indisputable fact in the history of Italy and of mankind. Whether Saint Louis and Brother Giles ever knelt together in the street of Perugia matters not a whit. That a king and a poor monk could be conceived to have thoughts of each other which no words could speak; and that indeed the king's tenderness and humility made such a tale credible to the people,—this is what you have to meditate on here."¹

¹ John Ruskin, *Mornings in Florence*.

3. Scope of the Anecdote

The anecdote is one of the useful bits of literary and social small-change. According to our several callings and avocations we use, exchange, and pass on, the "good story." It is told at the fireside, at the sick-bed, at the social dinner. It is used by the toast-master, by the orator, by the evangelist. It is dressed-up and transformed by all sorts and conditions of writing people. Anecdotes enliven the work of the historian; the biographer could not portray a great life without them; the poet touches them with his wand and transforms them into gems, or chaplets of beads,¹ or sets them here and there in a great epic. The "story" of the newspaper reporter is often an anecdote, and frequently it becomes the nucleus of a short-story, while many so-called short-stories are nothing more nor less than expanded anecdotes—though not a whit less interesting on that account.

To the biographer, in particular, the anecdote is indispensable. Rather than at the great cross-roads of destiny, it is in the little crises of life—which often come with a transforming force of their own—that the natural bent of character is revealed; it is in the unpremeditated response, in the every-day chit-chat not meant for the reporter's ear, that a man most faithfully discloses himself. A study of any of the great biographies, like Boswell's "Life of Johnson," will show that the anecdotes, more than anything else, give vitality to the portrayal. Plutarch tells us that "the most glorious exploits do not always furnish

¹ Like Sir Edwin Arnold's *Pearls of the Faith, or Islam's Rosary*.

us with the clearest discoveries of vice and virtue in men; sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever.”¹ Plutarch himself is confessedly an anecdotist, for the reason, as he tells us, that his “design is not to write histories, but lives.”²

The following anecdote, from a modern biography, well illustrates the suggestiveness of this form of narration.

EXAMPLE ³

During Sir Walter Scott's visit to Rome, in 1832, one Don Luigi Santa Croce, a great admirer of his works, spoke to him of the plots of some of the novels, and earnestly remonstrated against the fate of Clara Mowbray, in “St. Ronan's Well.” “I am much obliged to the gentleman for the interest he takes in her,” said Sir Walter, “but I could not save her, poor thing — it is against the rules — she had the bee in her bonnet.” Don Luigi still insisted. Sir Walter replied — “No; but of all the murders I have committed in that way, and few men have been guilty of more, there is none that went to my heart so much as the poor bride of Lammermoor; but it could not be helped — it is all true.”

Here is a characteristic picture of the author dominated by his subject, and regarding himself as merely the vehicle through which the story must be told. His heroines are real to him,—he may deplore, but he cannot change their fate.

The humorous anecdote, to which in particular the term

¹ Plutarch's *Lives*, the introductory words to the *Life of Alexander*.

² *Ibid.*

³ Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*.

“good story” is oftenest applied, is its own excuse for being. Like the first class of anecdotes discussed in this chapter, it need not aspire to literal truthfulness, nor always even to probability. Sometimes it is found to be consistent with the spirit of the times, or with the characters involved, sometimes it is a burlesque, sometimes it is deliberately ironical. Its one essential is that it shall leave us at its close with a decided sensation of amusement—that it shall always score a point.

EXAMPLE ¹

Judge Ray, the temperance lecturer, in one of his speeches made the following statement:

“No person can use whiskey for years with moderation. If there is a person in the audience before me whose experience disputes this, let him make it known. I will account for it, or acknowledge that I am mistaken.”

A tall, large man arose, and folding his arms across his breast, said:

“I offer myself as one whose own experience contradicts your statements.”

“Are you a moderate drinker?” asked the judge.

“I am.”

“How long have you been drinking in moderation?”

“Forty years.”

“And were you never intoxicated?”

“Never.”

“Well,” remarked the judge, scanning his subject from head to foot, “yours is a singular case; yet I think it is easily accounted for. I am reminded by it of a little story: A colored man, with a loaf of bread and a bottle of whiskey, sat down to dine on the bank of a clear stream. In breaking the bread he dropped some of the crumbs into the water. These were eagerly seized and

¹ George Bungay, *Temperance Anecdotes*.

eaten by the fish. That circumstance suggested to the darkey the idea of dipping the bread into the whiskey and feeding it to them. He tried it. It worked well. Some of the fish ate of it, became drunk, and floated helpless on the surface. In this way he easily caught a large number.

"But there was in the stream a big fish unlike the rest, for it partook freely of the bread and whiskey with no perceptible effect. The darkey resolved to take this fish and discover what was the matter. So he procured a net, caught the fish, and telling the case to a colored neighbor, asked his opinion.

"The other surveyed the wonder a moment, and then said, 'Sambo, I understands dis case. Dis fish is a mullet-head; it ain't got any brains, an' de whiskey affects only de brains.'"

The foregoing differs from the simple anecdote in two respects. First, it is what might be called an involved anecdote, that is, an anecdote with an introduction, telling how someone else came to tell an anecdote. Second, it carries with it a lesson, or moral, and this brings it close to the fable, which will form the subject of the next chapter.

4. Writing the Anecdote

We have had a two-fold purpose in thus examining the anecdote—that we might understand its origin, its purpose, and its forms; and that we might learn to use it effectively, whether orally or in writing.

With the latter object in view, observe four points:

(a) *The theme* must be simple, suited to the class of persons who are to hear it, and not so remote in interest that long and involved explanations are needed to establish a setting, or to make the point clear. A long story makes a poor anecdote. So does an obscure one.

(b) *The manner of telling* is quite as important as the

matter to be told. A good story badly told will prove less effective than an ordinary incident related with skill. Do not model your anecdotes upon the formal and labored style of past decades. A breezy, crisp, and informal manner is best. Tell the story as nearly as possible as it would be told by a bright speaker whose chief desire is to present the point of the anecdote as well as possible. Even a serious subject may be treated with a brisk and charming manner, therefore instill life into your narrative. If you must be dry-as-dust, write obituaries, not anecdotes.

(c) *The opening* is a crucial matter. Be careful to select a good place to begin—and that does not necessarily mean at the beginning of the incident as it occurred. Study the anecdotes which have most impressed you—for tastes differ—and note the variety of ways in which the narrators open their recitals. Beware of lengthy introductions, lest the point be not effective enough to warrant the time you have consumed. Take, for example the foregoing story of the boy who fell on the ice, and practise by introducing it in a dozen different ways, thus:

Governor Stone, of Illiana, tells the story of a lad, etc.

There are two ways of telling a story, as I learned recently by hearing Governor Stone, of Illiana, tell of a little chap, etc.

My friend of the opposition has missed the point entirely. He is like the serious-minded man who recently heard the following story, etc., etc. He knew by the laughter that it must be a good yarn so he decided to repeat it on the first occasion, and this he did, but when he came to repeat the witty answer of the boy, the nearest approach he could make to it was, etc.

That a world of meaning may lie in a single word, was well illustrated lately when Governor Stone of Illiana, told the story, etc., etc. About a week later a ponderous lawyer attempted to spin the same yarn, etc.

These variations could be carried on indefinitely to good advantage—at least they lead away from the tiresome “And that reminds me.”

(d) *The ending* is also of major importance. Many a good story is spoiled by “giving away” the ending too soon. The climax should be carefully reserved for the close. If you *must* give explanations, never add them after you have reached the climax of your story. In such a case you not only commit the literary folly of anti-climax but actually call in question the clearness of the point you have tried to make by your anecdote. When you are through, stop. If you cannot be brief, be quiet.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Cut out three newspaper items which furnish good material for anecdotes. Briefly work over each one, bringing out its strong points, and otherwise altering it so as to throw it into anecdote form.

2. Why is an anecdote called a “consciously devised” story?

3. Write an original anecdote dealing with some personal experience, altering the facts as you may wish.

4. Write a fictitious anecdote relating to some topic or person of public interest at the present time.

5. Write three original fictitious anecdotes in keeping with the character of some well-known historical personage. Let one of the three be cast in the “involved” form of the foregoing temperance anecdote from George Bungay. State in each case what trait or traits you wish to illustrate.

6. Cut out three or four brief anecdotes from any newspaper or magazine, illustrating national peculiarities, such as those of the Irish, the Scotch, the Germans, etc., and criticise them as to aptness, probability, offensiveness, point, anti-climax, clearness, etc.

7. Rewrite one of them so as to avoid the weaknesses you criticise.

8. Select and copy from the magazines at least six different forms of beginning an anecdote.

9. Name some poems which are anecdotes in verse.

10. Which of the great epics are rich in anecdote?

11. Do you know of any short-story which could be "boiled down" into an anecdote?

NOTE: These exercises may be varied so as to include oral work, especially the oral telling of anecdotes, both prepared and impromptu.

12. Recast the following in two entirely different styles:

WHITE MAN *vs.* INDIAN¹

An officer of the Indian Office at Washington tells of the patronizing airs frequently assumed by visitors to the government schools for the redskins.

On one occasion a pompous little man was being shown through one institution when he came upon an Indian lad of seventeen years. The worker was engaged in a bit of carpentry, which the visitor observed in silence for some minutes. Then, with the utmost gravity, he asked the boy:

¹ Taylor Edwards, in *Lippincott's Magazine*. Used by permission.

"Are you civilized?"

The youthful redskin lifted his eyes from his work, calmly surveyed his questioner, and then replied:

"No, are you?"

13. Recast the following, changing both the introduction and the entire style of narration:

ADVANCE NEWS¹

Thomas Jefferson, the actor, tells the following story about his father, the late Joseph Jefferson, so well-beloved by all theatre-goers.

For a long time before his death, Mr. Jefferson was very sensitive upon the subject of his retirement from the stage. When he was playing in one of the Southern cities a paper came out with the news that he had decided to leave the footlights at the expiration of his engagement in that city.

Mr. Jefferson resented the printing of such a story, and the reporter who had brought it in was called upon to tell how he got it.

"Why," he explained, "the city editor told me to see Joseph Jefferson and ask him if it were true that he was soon to retire."

"Well," he was asked, "did you see him?"

"No," he replied; "I went to his hotel and sent my card up to his room, and it was sent back with this written on it:

"Mr. Jefferson has retired."

"So, you see, I had good authority for the story."

¹ A. S. Hitchcock, in *Lippincott's Magazine*. Used by permission.

14. As the title is an important matter in a printed anecdote, furnish original titles for all the anecdotes printed in this chapter.

15. Give reasons why you prefer either the old title or the new, in each instance.

CHAPTER III

THE FABLE

Strange stories were told of animals who talked and who had many of the characteristics of mankind; and by word of mouth these marvelous tales were passed down from generation to generation, growing in detail and gaining in precision, until there came to be an immense mass of beast-fable, surviving in oral tradition chiefly, but getting itself lifted up into literature now and again. It was from this fund of accumulated and transmitted lore of legend that Bidpay and Æsop made their selections, to be followed, after many a century, by that more accomplished artist in narrative, La Fontaine, the great master of the fable, which instructs and yet satirizes our common humanity.

Every fable has its moral, even though this is not always tagged to the tail of it; and the ethical intent of the story-teller who sets down what the animals say to one another is as obvious in the record of the doings of Reynard the Fox as it is in the sayings of B'rer Rabbit preserved for us by Uncle Remus. A moral there is also—and the sturdiest and wisest of morals—in the “Jungle Book” of Mr. Kipling, wherein we learn how Mowgli grew to manhood among the wild creatures of the field and of the forest.—BRANDER MATTHEWS, *The Short-story*.

In earlier days, when precise definitions were not held to be so necessary, any fictitious narrative was called a fable. Even yet, myths and legends are sometimes loosely called fables—so are mild and guileless fibs. But the more restricted meaning of the word is the one we shall accept—that is, a very short narrative plainly designed to convey some useful lesson. Thus a fable is a kind of sugar-coated fictional pill, or it might be defined as a fictitious anecdote with a moral purpose.

Most of us are in agreement with the old Greek dramatist who said, "I hate all teaching that is thrust upon me."¹ But the fable is skilfully designed so that almost unconsciously we teach ourselves. We are lured by the exchange of table courtesies between a fox and a stork, or we read with a smile the adventures of a greedy dog with a piece of meat in his mouth. Suddenly the "moral" flashes on us, and we greet it with all the joy of the discoverer. Perhaps this is why animals and inanimate objects are so frequently the speakers and actors in the fable. "The man is hidden in the animal,"² so the fun of discovery is greater.

Another reason for the use of animals in this kind of story is that the fox naturally stands for cunning, and the wolf for cruelty, and the hare for swiftness, and the tortoise for sloth, so that the lesson is easier to learn. It is also a less personal, a more polite form, of conveying a rebuke or of giving advice, to wrap it up in a story about a Hare and a Tortoise, or about the Frogs that wanted a King. Thus we find that the Orientals, lovers of politeness and lovers of metaphor, constantly make use of picturesque allegory in intercourse with one another. For instance, "Children should not see a pattern on the loom till the pattern is made plain,"³ is both a prettier and a more effective way of refusing an explanation than to say, with unpolished directness, "I won't tell you, you are too young to understand." And "Thou wouldst have drunk water twice, perhaps thrice, afterwards. I do not think

¹ Euripides.

² Taine, *La Fontaine et ses Fables*, Partie II, Chap. 2.

³ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, Chap. VI.

more than thrice,"¹ is surely a gentle and pleasing way of telling a boy that he would have been murdered if he had betrayed his trust. So, naturally, the Orientals are the great fable-tellers of the nations, for their love of symbolical themes and of figurative language finds outlet in this form of narrative. Many of the fables attributed to Æsop were first told in Hindustan—the panther, the ape, and the peacock, pointing to Indian origin.²

But fables have appeared in the literatures of all races and nations. Their appeal is universal, for they teach lessons we all have to learn—not high spiritual truths, perhaps, but every-day serviceable morality, profitable for the life that now is.

1. The Ancient Fable

Someone says the fable is composed of two parts, the soul and the body; the story-part of the fable is the body, and the moral is the soul.³

The aim of the ancient fable was to "point the moral," rather than to "adorn the tale," hence its language is very clear, simple, and direct—like that of a story told by a child, in short sentences, without deliberate literary craftsmanship and with little adornment.

As the anecdote was the first oral attempt at storytelling, and therefore a work of unconscious art, the fable is supposedly the beginning of conscious, though childlike, narrative effort in the race. Primitive peoples, like children,

¹ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, Chap. VIII.

² Harry Thurston Peck, in Warner's *Library of the World's Best Literature*, Vol. 1, Article on Æsop.

³ La Fontaine.

display in this, as in all their arts, a native preference for a rude symbolism, a sort of literary suggestion, which "in some way or other serves to call up the object or the thought without really representing it."¹

Jotham's story of "The Trees Choosing a King"² is said to be the oldest fable in the world. According to the chronology of King James's version of the Bible, it is at least 3,000 years old, and probably it is much older. Compared with Jotham, Æsop is a modern writer. But many of the fables of Æsop, himself a somewhat mythical personage, can be traced back to India or Egypt, so that our own nursery tales of "The Wolf and the Lamb," and "The Lion and the Mouse," are older than history, and have been told and loved by men, women, and children, and played with by poets, from the days of the childhood of the human race until now.

EXAMPLE

*THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE*³

A hare and a tortoise were once quarreling with one another as to their rate of speed. Accordingly they fixed a time and a place for a contest, and started together to race. Now the hare, on account of his natural quickness, was confident of winning, so feeling a little tired he lay down by the roadside and fell asleep. The tortoise, however, because he was aware of his slow gait, never once stopped, but kept up his best speed. Thus he hurried past the sleeping hare, and came to the goal of victory.

¹ Frederick Starr, *First Steps in Human Progress*, Chap. 21.

² The Bible, Judges IX: 7-15. A kind of parable-fable. See next chapter.

³ Translated from the Greek collection of C. Halm, Leipsic, 1852.

ANALYSIS

“Shortness, sense, and salt,” were said by an English writer¹ two or three centuries ago to be the essentials of a good proverb. They are likewise the characteristics of the ancient fable. No time is wasted in description, or in giving the setting, or in embroidery of the simple facts. The style is clear and direct, but lacking in the graces that charm, and its naive and somewhat bald simplicity is far from the “noble simplicity” which Professor Barrett Wendell² tells us characterizes a great work. The story is told in as few words as possible, and for its attractiveness it depends upon the message it carries. This message, or teaching, is self-evident—it is impossible to miss it—and the sole aim of the story is to enforce this teaching and to make it so plain that he who runs may read.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Name some well-known Beast-Stories which are not fables.³

2. (a) What is the difference between fable, myth, legend, and allegory?⁴ (b) Illustrate by naming one example under each head, if possible, briefly relating the story.

3. (a) State briefly and clearly the moral of the fable

¹ James Howell, *Lexicon Tetraglotton*.

² English Composition, Chap. VI.

³ See the animal stories of Ernest Thompson-Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known*, William Long's *School of the Woods*, and others.

⁴ See *Biblical World*, Vol. 33, pp. 305-312, also the first chapter of Dr. Trench's book on *The Parables of Our Lord*, for aid in these definitions.

of "The Hare and the Tortoise." (b) Show, by means of three human examples, how its lesson could be applied. (c) What lessons, besides that given in (a), could be drawn from this fable?

4. (a) Make a list of from eight to ten proverbs suitable for the foundation of fables. (b) Which of these proverbs would be best suited to the Beast-Fable? (c) Which to development by means of inanimate objects as actors in the story? Give reasons for your answers.

5. (a) Write a paragraph or two discussing the points to be observed in writing a fable. (b) Make a list of things to be avoided in the method of narration.

6. Write two fables modelled on the type of the antique fable.

7. Write one fable on any of the themes in Exercise 4 (a).

2. The Modern Fable

The ancient fable, in its simplest form, seems to have been a kind of common property, and any writer who pleased was at liberty to re-edit it, as it were, or to re-write it in verse, or otherwise to embellish its form. This liberty was freely used by the ancients themselves, the verse-fables of Phædrus and others being merely re-casts of the earlier Æsopian tales; even Socrates occupied himself in prison by turning some of Æsop's fables into verse.¹

Similarly, the modern fable often adopts the same theme or even the same story as the ancient fable, but

¹ Max Müller, *On the Migration of Fables*, in *Chips from a German Workshop*.

tells it with more literary skill and charm, with a deeper insight into human character and motives—that is to say, with a better knowledge of psychology—and, in the master-fabulists, with more or less power to touch the emotions.

A typical modern fabulist of this class is La Fontaine, who has been called the Æsop of France. In his youth La Fontaine was an eager reader and student of the ancient classical writers. So we are not surprised to find that his fables are all twice-told tales, but in his hands the crude simplicity of the ancient fable is transformed by a touch of poetry into a thing of sparkle and charm. Thus the fable of "The Reeds and the Oak," attributed to Æsop, is in the original a moral-carrier and nothing more, while La Fontaine's "The Oak and the Reed" is said to be not only the finest he ever wrote but the finest in any language.

Some of Hans Andersen's stories are fables, as are also a few of Lord Lytton's "Fables in Song"—though these are more complex, in both form and scheme. "The Ship that Found Herself," by Rudyard Kipling,¹ is a delightful fable. So are many of his "Jungle Stories." Of these Dr. Harry Thurston Peck writes that they have "creative imagination, psychological insight, brilliantly picturesque description, and the touch of one who is a daring master of vivid language."²

EXAMPLE

The difference between the ancient and the modern fable will best be seen by a comparison of the ancient form

¹ McClure's Magazine, Vol. VI, p. 328.

² *Library of the World's Best Literature*, Vol. I, Æsop.

of "The Reeds and the Oak" with a translation of La Fontaine's version, previously mentioned.

THE REEDS AND THE OAK¹

The wind, after uprooting an oak tree, hurled it into the river. Then, as it was being carried along down the stream, the oak asked the reeds: "How is it that you, who are so weak and fragile, are not torn up by the violent winds?"

Their answer was: "You resisted the winds and struggled against them, and for this reason you have been uprooted. We, however, bending before every breeze, remain unharmed."

THE OAK AND THE REED²

The Oak one day said to the Reed:—

"You have good cause to rail at partial fate.

You groan beneath a hedge-wren's trifling weight;

A puff of air, a breath indeed,

Which softly wrinkles the water's face,

Makes you sink down in piteous case;

Whereas my brow, like Alp or Apennine,

Reflects the sun's radiance divine,

And braves the tempest's hate.

What I call zephyrs seem north winds to you.

Moreover, in my shelter if you grew,

Under the leaves I generously scatter,

My patronage you would not rue,

When storms do blow and winds do batter.

But you spring up on the frontier

Bordering the showery kingdoms of the wind.

Against you unjust Nature sure has sinned."

"Your pity," quoth the bulrush in reply,

Comes from a noble heart. But have no fear;

¹ Translated from the Greek collection of C. Halm, Leipsic, 1852.

² Translated by George McLean Harper. *Library of the World's Best Literature*, Vol. I, *Æsop*.

To dread the winds you have more cause than I,
Who bend, but break not. Many a year and age
 To their terrific rage
 You've turned a stalwart back;
But not yet is the end." Scarce had he spoke
 When from the north with flying rack,
Hurried the wildest storm that ever broke
 From winter's icy fields.
 The tree stands firm, the bulrush yields.
The wind with fury takes fresh head
 And casts the monarch roots on high,
 Whose lofty brow was neighbor to the sky
And whose feet touched the empire of the dead.

ANALYSIS

Though it is no easy task to preserve in translation the spirit of the original, and though many of the subtleties and felicities of expression are lost, it is yet not difficult to discover the fundamental difference between the ancient and the modern fable in the foregoing examples. The sole aim of the ancient fable was to teach; the chief aim of the modern is to charm, and to this the lesson itself, though present, is incidental or tributary.

This charm is brought about by the conscious exercise of the story-teller's art. Note the artless beginning of the ancient fable: "The wind, after uprooting an oak tree, hurled it into the river." This incident, in the later version, is made to furnish a strong and effective climax—the artless form begins where the artistic form ends. The contrast between the reed and the oak, an essential of the story, is heightened by the use of but a single reed, rather than an indefinite number of reeds, as in the ancient form.

This contrast is further enhanced by skilful and picturesque suggestion. We can see the slender stalk bending under the weight of a wren, we can feel the strength and force of the mountainous summit of the oak, as it "braves the tempest's hate." Imagination pictures the wind gathering its forces, the fury of the battle, the final overthrow of the giant, brave, generous, and boastful. The last two lines are touching, and almost grand. So *literary form* constitutes one great point of difference between the new fable and the old.

3. Fables in Slang

Some of the cleverly written modern fables¹ are worded in slang, which, since it is itself a form of metaphor, seems peculiarly fitting language for the fable. Slang has been called "the foe and the friend of English speech, the foe, because of its frequent inelegancies, the friend, because it is constantly enriching our vocabulary by the addition of fresh, vigorous, words and phrases." The words "rogue," "bully," and "prig," were once slang. So, more recently, was the word "blizzard," and now we find the slang abbreviations, "gym," "exam," and "photo," demanding recognition, as did the contractions, "lunch," "cab," and the like, a generation ago. Thus fables in slang, aside from their moral, have a distinct literary value and interest. Perhaps it is needless to say, however, that slang should never be confused with good English—its value is distinctly limited, and young people need not be urged to adopt it.

¹ George Ade, *Fables in Slang; Forty Modern Fables; More Fables*.

When used consciously and with intelligent purpose, it may be put to excellent use; when used habitually it degrades our English speech.

George T. Lanigan (1845-1886), a journalist and author, considerably antedated Mr. Ade's "Fables in Slang," though his work was neither so prolific nor so finished as that of the later fabulist. The form, as will be apparent, is in imitation of the classical, though a satire on the ancient attempt to teach a lesson.

THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE ANT

A frivolous Grasshopper, having spent the summer in Mirth and Revelry, went on the Approach of the Inclement Winter to the Ant, and implored it of its charity to stake him. "You had better go to your Uncle," replied the prudent Ant; "had you imitated my forethought and deposited your funds in a Savings Bank, you would not now be compelled to regard your Duster in the light of an Ulster." Thus saying, the virtuous Ant retired, and read in the Papers next morning that the Savings Bank where he had deposited his funds had suspended.

Moral—*Dum vivimus, vivamus.*

4. The Modern Society Fable¹

This is another form of recent vogue which deserves notice. It uses no slang, nor does it adhere to the classical model except in form, but it presents, often with some wholesome satire, many of the more or less harmless follies of our day and generation.

Besides those authors mentioned in the footnote, Count

¹ Josephine Dodge Daskam, *Fables for the Fair*; Guy Wetmore Carryl, *Fables for the Frivolous* (verse); Elizabeth M. Gilmer (Dorothy Dix), *Fables of the Elite*.

Tolstoi was one of the brightest modern fable-writers. His fables are in part paraphrases from the Indian, and in part imitations. The first one, given below, has a direct bearing on the author's views of modern social conditions; the second is a simple satire.

*THE WOLF AND THE FOX*¹

A Wolf was running from the dogs, and wanted to hide in a cleft. But a Fox who was lying in the cleft showed her teeth to the Wolf and said, "You cannot come in here, this is my place."

The Wolf did not stop to argue the matter, but merely said:

"Were the dogs not so near I would teach you whose place it is; but now the right is on your side."

THE BOOK

Two men together found a book in the street and began to dispute as to its ownership.

A third who happened along, asked:

"Which of you can read?"

"Neither."

"Then why do you want the book? Your dispute reminds me of two bald men who fought for possession of a comb, when neither had any hair on his head."

The next example is more in the flippant vein of the up-to-date social satire, and is quite representative of the type under examination.

*THE WOMAN WHO TALKED WELL*²

There was once a woman who had Remarkable Conversational Powers. Her Friends admired her Very Much. Once they Planned a Dinner Party in her Honor. To this Party they

¹ *Fables.*

² Copyright, 1901, by Charles Scribner's Sons, and used by permission, from *Fables for the Fair*, by Josephine Dodge Daskam.

Invited a Man who was what is known as The Life of the Occasion. He was one of Those People who Set the Table in a Roar. The Hostess had Planned for him to Take Out the Woman of the Conversational Powers. To her Surprise, he Refused, Politely but Forcibly, to do this.

"Why, I Thought you would Enjoy each other So Much!" said the Hostess. "She is such a Fascinating Talker—so Brilliant! You, of All People, would Appreciate Her."

"On the Contrary," said the Man who could Set the Table in a Roar. "Far From It. That Woman Irritates me Beyond Endurance. Every Time I Open my Mouth, she knows What I am going to Say beforehand, and More than That, she Talks All the Time herself. I am Sorry to Disoblige you, but you must give me Somebody Else."

"Here's a list of the Ladies," said the Hostess. "Take your Choice."

"I will take This One," said he, "for she Stutters."

This teaches us that Birds of a Feather occasionally Prefer to Flock Apart.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. (a) Who was called the Æsop of England? (b) Who the Æsop of Germany? (c) Name some fables by each.

2. (a) Which of Hans Andersen's tales may properly be called fables? (b) Which of Kipling's "Jungle Stories?" (c) Why?

3. Find a parallel in ancient fable to Kipling's "The Ship that Found Herself."

4. Rewrite the fable of "The Hare and the Tortoise," giving it as much literary grace as you can.

5. Write a fable embodying any one of the following proverbs:

He that will not when he may, when he wills it shall have nay.

Whatever we look for we find.

Willows are weak, but they bind other wood.

6. Write a fable in slang in ridicule of some common fad or hobby.

7. Write a fable embodying any of the proverbs of (a) Poor Richard; (b) found in the Book of Proverbs, in the Bible.

8. Write a social satire on any one of the following themes: (a) The Man Who Tried to Save; (b) The Woman Who was Afraid of Microbes; (c) The Boy Who Imagined he was a Man; (d) any theme you may invent.

9. Make lists (a) of points of merit, and (b) points to avoid, in writing the modern fable.

10. Criticise, either favorably or unfavorably, any modern fable you can find.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANCIENT PARABLE

The most perfect specimens of this form of composition, and those by which the comparative value of all others in the like kind is to be measured, must be sought in that Book which is the most perfect of all books; yet they do not belong exclusively to it.—R. C. TRENCH, *The Parables of Our Lord*.

The fable and the parable are closely related in that both are illustrative stories designed to carry a message; but while the message of the fable is self-evident, that of the parable is purposely so obscured as to be revealed only to the seeing eye. Its lesson needs study, and often even interpretation. It is mysterious and hidden, rather than popular and simple:

“Thou shalt never get such a secret from me but by a parable,” says Launce.¹

“The parables are fair and good,
But then—they must be understood.”

writes a German poet.² And the word is often used in the Old Testament to signify things hidden and concealed:

“I will open my mouth in a parable
I will utter dark sayings of old.”³

In the charm of this semi-obscurity there is implied a delicate and subtle compliment. In conveying a truth

¹ *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act II, Scene V.

² Matthias Claudius.

³ Psalms, LXXVIII, 2.

by means of a parable one says to his hearer with a suggestiveness much more potent than words: "*You* are favored by being thus spoken to, for you have the perception that is needed to recognize the inner meaning of this story. You and I can possess its treasure, while these others" (here the rest of the world is dismissed into outer darkness), "doubtless worthy people, but not gifted with *our* sensitive insight—these others may grope and guess, but they will never know. *You* and *I* are the secret-sharers." Or if the parable is so dark and obscure as to need explanation, if it is a kind of spiritual cypher-code, hiding its lesson even from the elect, then the one who is singled out as worthy to learn to translate it must feel that he is still more signally preferred.

With all reverence, it may be remarked that this high form of compliment was often paid by Jesus to his disciples, and must have served to strengthen their loyalty to their Master, as well as to stimulate their desire to penetrate to the heart of his teachings. "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables."¹

Thus the parable is intellectually and spiritually aristocratic, while the fable is democratic. And this distinction points out the relative popularity of the two forms, at least with modern readers and writers.

"The parable," as is said by the publishers of Dr. Trench's book, "whilst it is amongst the earliest modes of conveying truth to the mind, is at the same time the most effective. Never losing its vigor by age or repetition, it

¹ Luke, VIII, 10.

convinces sooner than a logical argument, and strikes the imagination more readily than a living example."¹

Even the lash of a rebuke, while not less painful, may be made more acceptable when conveyed by a parable, for so the offender is elevated to the dignity of being made to some extent his own judge. Thus in one of the finest of the Old Testament parables was the sinner made at once the criminal, the judge, and the counsel for the prosecution, when Nathan told his story and then enforced the application by saying to David, "Thou art the man."²

1. Four Essentials of the Parable

(a) *The parable must be metaphorical in character.* This is plainly indicated by its derivation from a Greek word signifying *to compare*, or *to throw beside*. It must then embody, to quote an English writer, "agreements or correspondences between things material and things spiritual."³

(b) *The parable must tell a story*—it must be more than a mere comparison, more even than a spiritual metaphor. In insisting on this characteristic Dr. Barton quotes, by way of warning rather than example, the following so-called Buddhist parable:

As a man who has trusted his child to a protecting nurse is without uneasiness, and says, "A protecting nurse watches my child," so have I set royal officers for the welfare and protection of the land.

¹ Richard Chenevix Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, first American Edition, from the "Advertisement of the Publishers."

² II Samuel, XII, 7.

³ J. Clowes, *The Parables of Jesus Christ Explained*.

This, says Barton, is an extended simile.¹ He further excludes Isaiah, XXVIII, 24-28, elsewhere designated as a parable,² from this class of narrative, since "it contains a comparison between the natural and spiritual worlds, but no story."³

(c) *The truth that the parable conveys must be spiritual in its nature*, rather than the commercial morality, so to speak, of the fable. It must be remarked, however, that it will not do to limit the word "spiritual" to things "heavenly." A broader modern knowledge of the dignity of man has taught us that all these truths are spiritual which have to do with man's higher nature, and with the lofty affairs of life which we embrace under the word "duty."

(d) *The story of the parable must be probable*, that is, something which might naturally happen. In this especially it differs from the fable or apologue, which, as we have seen, often invests animals, trees, rocks, and the like, with the qualities of human beings. The reason for this insistence on what is natural and probable is that the purpose of the parable removes it from the sportive and jesting anecdote and the worldly-wise fable by a considerable distance.

2. The Parable Defined

To recapitulate, the four characteristics of the parable are: (1) It must be metaphorical. (2) Its significance

¹ George A. Barton, *Parables Outside the Gospel*. *Biblical World*, Vol. 33, pp. 305-12.

² *The New International Encyclopedia*.

³ George A. Barton, *Parables Outside the Gospel*.

must be of a high or spiritual nature. (3) It must contain a short story. (4) The story must be probable. From these points we may construct a definition: *A parable is a short, probable, metaphorical story illustrating a lofty or spiritual truth.*

In passing, let us note the similarity of the allegory—*The Pilgrim's Progress* of Bunyan, for example—to the form we are now studying. The parable is really a short allegory, without the greater latitude of theme and treatment naturally accorded the longer literary form. Like the parable, the allegory treats one subject under the guise of another and better known form.

3. Ancient Parable Forms

The parables of Buddhism are among the earliest of which we have record, but the Old Testament, the Talmud, the Koran, and the Wisdom literature of the Greeks, are all rich in parables. As might be judged from that love of metaphor displayed by the Orientals, the parable is found to be "among the favorite vehicles for conveying moral truth throughout the East."¹

Since the parables of Jesus excel all others in vigor, spiritual depth, human interest, and literary charm, we can hardly err in choosing several as

EXAMPLES

*THE LOST SHEEP*²

And he spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth

¹ St. Jerome.

² Luke, XV, 3-7.

not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that even so there shall be joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance.

This illustrative story is an example of what may be called (a) *the simple parable*. It scarcely needs explanation, except perhaps as a reinforcement of its lesson. Its story element, though slight, is sufficient to redeem it from being merely a metaphor with a similitude at the close.

In construction as a piece of story-telling, notice its remarkable compression, the personal way in which the hearer is at once made an interested party, the comparative values of ninety-nine sheep and one, and the tremendously emphasized value set upon the one, because it was lost. Notice, too, the effective simplicity of statement: could the multiplication of words convey the purpose and earnestness of the shepherd half so well as those simple Saxon words, "go after that which is lost, until he find it?" Finally, notice how big a scene Jesus paints, with not a single false stroke from start to climax—a big scene as a human picture, and a bigger scene as the application of the story suddenly sweeps us up to a vision of great rejoicings in another world. Even if one were to reject the spiritual teaching, how could he fail to marvel at "The Lost Sheep" as a literary masterpiece!

An example of (b) *the complex parable* follows:

*THE SOWER*¹

And he taught them many things in parables, and said unto them in his teaching, Hearken: Behold, the sower went forth to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds come and devoured it. And other fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth; and straightway it sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was risen it was scorched; and because it had no root it withered away. And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And others fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing; and brought forth, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. And he said, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables.

And he saith unto them, . . . The sower soweth the word, and these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; and when they have heard, straightway cometh Satan, and taketh away the word which hath been sown in them. And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places, who, when they have heard the word, straightway receive it with joy; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for awhile; then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble. And others are they that are sown among the thorns; these are they that have heard the word, and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they that were sown upon the good ground; such as hear the word, and accept it, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

In this parable we see almost the same literary values as in "The Lost Sheep," with an advance in the use of materials—the keen, accurate observation of nature—and a farther advance in mysticism, for the interpretation is

¹ Mark, IV, 3-20.

added to show the exact contact of the parable *at all its points* with the complete spiritual situation it illustrates. In "The Lost Sheep" the whole situation is included in a simple comparison; in "The Sower" the teaching is complex and progresses to a climax of its own.

Yet another class we may call (c) *the compound parable*. In this a double narrative is told, each a parable in itself, yet mutually related. Such is the story in which figures "that immortal Prodigal who walks from the page of the Evangelist into the hearts of every successive generation."¹

THE PRODIGAL SON²

A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have been filled with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants,

¹ Joseph Farrell, *Lectures by a Certain Professor*.

² Luke, XV, 11-32.

Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing. And he called to him one of the servants, and inquired what these things might be. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. But he was angry, and would not go in, and his father came out, and intreated him. But he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but when this thy son came, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine. But it was meet to make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

In this charming story—for however divine its teaching it is precisely that—we find the high tide of parabolic narration. Considered merely as a story, its theme is admirably chosen, for that weariness of an uneventful and serene life, that disgust with the commonplace, and that impelling lure of the *Wanderlust*, so skilfully suggested in the case of the younger brother, are phases of human experience always old and always new, and universal in their appeal to our sympathies.

With yet rarer skill there is woven in with the story of the self-willed and impulsive youth who wins our hearts from the start, a second parable—that of the elder brother. Here is introduced, with the touch of fine art which distinguishes the master-narrator, that strong element of

contrast which enhances the effect. As in the case of the younger brother, very little is really said regarding the temperament and disposition of the elder, but with subtle and convincing art we are made aware that he was a man of irreproachable character and blameless conduct—one who never sinned and never repented, who always had a good opinion of himself, and who probably was not pleasant to live with. Note here how the righteousness of one brother, set side by side with the transgressions of the other—and these not a whit minimized or condoned—yet serves merely as a foil to enhance the “values” of the younger, to enlist our sympathies for him. This in itself is a miracle of story-telling!

The plot of this story as a whole is slight; it is simply and succinctly told; the setting is merely suggested. Plot, setting, and narration are adroitly subordinated to the incomparable character-portrayal which has just been referred to. Not only the two youths, but the link between the two—that fine father, loving, tolerant, ripe in wisdom—lives and moves before us, and each reveals himself so that we see into his very heart. And all this is done without direct description of the men, or any apparently conscious revelation of temperament or bent. What wonderful art in the Narrator! *How did he do it?*

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Make a list of themes suitable for treatment in ancient parable form.
2. What elements both of parable and fable do you find in Jotham's story of the “Trees Choosing a King?”

3. Write a short parable, dealing with tendencies of the present day, and parallel in form to the simple New Testament parable. (See page 44.)
4. Do another in the complex form.
5. Do a third in the compound form.
6. Write two short parables, having for their themes the lessons taught in any two of the parables of Jesus, but written from the standpoint of today, and dealing with circumstances and persons of the present time.

CHAPTER V

THE MODERN PARABLE

Poetry has always been apt in blending the noble and lofty in moral sentiment with the element of beauty.

—SHERWIN CODY, *The World's Greatest Short Stories*.

To one who sternly demands the fulfilment of every jot and tittle of the "Four Essentials of the Parable" (page 41), the quest for the modern parable is likely to prove discouraging and unfruitful — it will not do, in literature, to insist too strongly on definitions. Besides, if the tide of parabolic narration rose to its full in the stories told by Jesus, it is only to be expected that His pure and simple style should not be attained by narrators of today. Hence, though the parable — the fictitious narrative designed to carry a spiritual truth by suggestion instead of by direct statement — is well represented in present-day fiction, it will usually be found to diverge widely from the strictest ancient type. It will either be lacking in probability, being confessedly mystical, allegorical, and dealing with the marvellous; or it will be excessively long; or yet again the story-element will be lacking. But if we remember that unalterable laws went out of fashion with the passing of the Medes and Persians, and if further we adopt something of the excellent philosophy of the fox who did not want the grapes that he could not get, and if still further we demand only the spiritual lesson, letting go of all that is subordinate, then we shall find whole gold-mines of modern parable in the most modest "five-foot shelf."

EXAMPLE

*OUT OF THE AGONY*¹

By Hamilton Wright Mabie

It was midday, and the sun beat on the course with merciless intensity; a cloud of dust hung over the track and enfolded the runners so that they saw neither the sky nor the crowd that waited and watched, excited, eager, ready to break into thunders of applause. They saw one another only indistinctly — vague figures moving in a suffocating fog. The agony of the contest had entered their souls; their faces were strained, sweat poured from them; they ran with a silent, steady persistence that was full of pain and yet indifferent to it. The few who still ran had ceased to count suffering; that was part of the price of the reward, and they paid it without questioning. It was, after all, only a kind of acute fatigue, and the brave spirit makes sport of fatigue.

The weak, the irresolute, the fickle-minded, had long since fallen out of the race. They had started with assurance on their faces; for the course lay so clearly before them that it seemed but a little way to the goals shining in the fresh morning air. There was an eager throng cheering the runners as they sped away from the starting-post, and friendly faces and shouts lined the path or followed them long. It was pure pleasure to run in the bracing air, with flying competitors, with goals to guide the feet, and vociferous praise following like a noisy wave. But the distance lengthened, the morning passed, the heat grew bitter, the dust of racing feet rose in a suffocating cloud, sweat ran from every pore; the struggle became agonizing. Those who were untrained, who had borne no yoke of discipline, who needed the stimulus of applause or of visible rewards, grew faint and weary and ceased to run. In the cloud of dust which moved along the course there was left only the little group of those whose sinews were steel, whose wills were iron, who cared neither for applause nor for rewards if only the race might be well run. They had ceased to hear the cheers so long that they had forgotten that there were any spectators; they were so intent upon putting forth

¹ Copyright, 1902, The Outlook Company; Copyright, 1904, The Macmillan Company, and used by permission.

their full strength that they had ceased to think of the goals. They ran as if running were life and nothing else were worth while. They had given themselves to the race, they were paying the price; that was the whole of their simple, heroic story.

And while they ran, long forgetful of all save the speed of the moment, the dust began to settle, the sky began to clear, the heat began to pass, faces began to appear on either side, and sounds broke the silence. And, lo, when they had ceased to care for reward in the strain and stress of the trial, suddenly the goals shone clear and close at hand in the soft afternoon air, and long cheers thundered about them, and flowers rained from friendly hands, and crowns of wild olive were outstretched.

ANALYSIS

In this beautiful parable of present-day life, there is only the merest suggestion of a story. It is, however, both natural and probable. Moreover, we readily see that it is an extended metaphor, and its significance is of a high or spiritual nature. Hence all the strictest requirements of the parable are fulfilled. The lesson conveyed is clear and simple, needing no explanation, but it is reinforced by the beauty and convincing truth-seeming of the narration. We feel the stress of the contest, the long test of endurance, the self-forgetfulness in effort, the rich reward when all thought of recompense had been lost in consecration. The lesson is one of those old ones that is always new, and can be applied in every life that is worth living.

Other Modern Parables

“The Pilgrim’s Progress,” the allegory by John Bunyan already alluded to, is, barring its length, pure parable. It is, to be sure, too long to be related in the course of ordinary conversation, but aside from this, the other con-

ditions of the parable are fulfilled, for it tells a story, it conveys a spiritual truth, and if Bunyan knew of the "probability" requirement — which is unlikely — he piously "hedged" by making the statement that his story was "delivered under the similitude of a dream."

"The Passing of the Third Floor Back" by Jerome K. Jerome, that beautiful narrative which has also been put into play form, is nearly perfect as a parable, and who, save those hopelessly addicted to the commonplace, would cavil at the improbability of its "quick results?" We *feel* that it represents great forces of character, and the people of the story interest us more by what their experiences teach us about ourselves than by what they are as mere fictional personages.

"Where Love Is There God Is Also," one of the most exquisite of Tolstoi's short-stories, is a gem amongst modern parables, even though at times it comes very close to direct teaching. That it deals with the marvellous hardly debars its happenings from "such as might naturally occur." The coming of the Presence to the poor Russian Cobbler who all day sought to see the Christ and found Him at length only in the persons of those to whom he had been doing deeds of kindness throughout his day of searching, 'is real to us, as it was to the Cobbler, in an inward and spiritual sense.

Many of Dr. Henry Van Dyke's short-stories, notably "The Blue Flower," "The Other Wise Man," and several of his "Half-Told Tales," in the volume entitled "The Unknown Quantity," are fine and beautiful parables in spirit, for while there is always a certain amount of

direct teaching, the underlying truth is the ever great thing.

"Parables of Life" by Hamilton Wright Mabie, from which was chosen our example of the modern parable, "Out of the Agony," are rich in spiritual meaning. Though not all of them tell a story, and though the mystical element predominates, their convincing lessons are set forth with a skill and charm which make the impression permanent, and render them true contributions to the literature of the parable.

"Dreams" by Olive Schreiner, a collection of short allegories, may also be ranked as parables, though a touch of the gruesome detracts from their charm, and anointed eyes are needed to find the optimistic in their teaching.

"Story-Tell Lib" by Annie Trumbull Slosson, a collection of tender, charming, allegory-parables, may be read with delight by all who are young in heart at any age from nine to ninety.

Other fictitious narratives bearing the parable stamp are some of Alice Brown's imaginative tales, touched with mysticism, such as "The Man Who Wanted to be Safe,"¹ "Golden Baby,"² and others.

"The Reason Why"³ by Edward Lefevre, is a story containing parables within a parable, and dealing with present-day problems.

It will be seen from the examples cited that the essential of the modern parable is that it shall be designed to convey

¹ *Harper's Magazine*, June, 1907.

² *Ibid.*, March, 1910.

³ *Everybody's Magazine*, Volume 26.

a lofty or spiritual truth. That the events related shall bear the stamp of probability — even of possibility — is not insisted upon.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. (a) Which of the modern parables mentioned in this chapter have you read? (b) Read as many of them as you can. (c) Write out a short opinion of such as you have read.

2. (a) Cite at least three other short narratives by contemporary writers which may be classed as parables. (b) State in each case what you consider the chief divergencies from the strict parable form.

3. Write a parable conveying the truth: Where love is, there self-denial is also. Adhere strictly to the four rules for the parable given on page 42.

4. (a) Outline the story of any modern parable you have read which you liked particularly. (b) Analyze it. (c) State clearly the parts that pleased you.

5. Write a modern parable of not more than five hundred words, on any of the adages of "Poor Richard," giving free play to your fancy.

6. Analyze the parabolic teachings of any one of the parables referred to on pages 53 and 54.

7. Taking the following story-plan from Hawthorne's "The Great Stone Face," turn it into a parable (a) of the brief, ancient sort; (b) of the longer, modern type — say, of about seven or eight hundred words for the latter form. The original contains over eight thousand words.

The Great Stone Face "was a work of Nature in her

mood of majestic playfulness, formed on the perpendicular side of a mountain by some immense rocks." "Its features were noble, and the expression was at once grand and sweet, as if it were the glow of a vast, warm heart, that embraced all mankind in its affections, and had room for more." There was a tradition in the populous valley that some day would appear a noble man with the very countenance of the Great Stone Face. As little Ernest sat with his mother he wished that such a man might indeed appear. The boy, who grew up under the benignant inspiration of the Face, one day heard it said that Mr. Gathergold had returned to his native place after having become very rich. With ceremony the citizens acclaimed him as the man of prophecy, but as Ernest saw him give out merely coppers in charity, he knew that it was not he. Later another son of the valley returned full of glory — Old Blood-and-Thunder they called this military hero — and thought they had found in him the desired likeness. But in the "war-worn and weather-beaten countenance, full of energy, and expressive of an iron will," Ernest could see no similarity to "the gentle wisdom, the deep, broad, tender sympathies" of the Great Stone Face. Next a great statesman returned to his native valley, and because the people thought he looked like the Face, they called him Old Stony Phiz, but Ernest knew that this one too was lacking.

At length a poet visited the home of Ernest, now an old man. The two conversed profoundly, and in his visitor Ernest sought to find the expected Man, but the poet suddenly "by an irresistible impulse, threw his arms aloft,

and shouted — ‘Behold! Behold! Ernest is himself the likeness of the Great Stone Face!’

“Then all the people looked, and saw that what the deep-sighted poet said was true. The prophecy was fulfilled. But Ernest, having finished what he had to say, took the poet’s arm, and walked slowly homeward, still hoping that some wiser and better man than himself would by and by appear, bearing a resemblance to the Great Stone Face.”

8. Expand the following into a “modern” parable — it is an outline of Tolstoi’s “Where Love Is, There God Is Also.”

Martin Avdyeeich was an honest Russian cobbler whose wife and children had died, leaving him with but one child, a small boy upon whom he had set his heart. But that child also died, and Martin reproached God. A Pilgrim monk, however, directed him to the Gospels and he became a devout follower of their teachings. One day Martin heard a voice which bade him look tomorrow in the streets, for Christ would come to him. But He did not appear, only a chilled old snow-sweeper to whom Martin gave hot tea to drink as he explained the Gospel; whereupon the grateful old man left. Martin continued to look for Christ, but He did not come, though the cobbler saw a poorly-clad woman with a little child, both of whom he fed and warmed, giving the mother an old jacket to cover her thin summer garments. He next acted as mediator between an old woman and a mischievous boy who had stolen her apples; and to her also he expounded the new truth which possessed him — the doctrine of love. All day

long he had looked for the Christ and had not seen Him, but now as he returned to his cellar a Presence declared itself as He who had said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." And Martin then understood that his dream had not deceived him, and that the Saviour had really come to him that day, and he had really received Him.

9. Draft just such an outline of an original parable as the foregoing synopsis, and submit it for class criticism.

10. Expand into a modern parable the outline made in 9, using less than one thousand words. Be particular in seeking to keep your manner of narration free from flippancy, lofty in spirit, simple yet forceful in language, and dignified in tone.

11. Read Joseph Addison's "Vision of Mirza" and say how it approaches the parabolic form.

CHAPTER VI

THE EARLY TALE

Brief tales there have been since the world began, since the art of the story-teller was first attempted, since the Cave-men filled the long evenings around the smoking fire with narratives of the mysterious deeds of the strange creatures of their own primitive fancy, since the earliest travelers who ventured abroad brought back episodic accounts of one or another of their misadventures, commingled of fact and of fiction.

—BRANDER MATTHEWS, *The Short-story*.

In the tale we find apparently the beginning of the narrator's art pursued as a career or profession. Any man with a limber tongue, a tendency to fiction, and a taste for the dramatic (which may be said to be the exemplification of some phase of life chiefly by means of action or mimicry), could wander through many lands in happy vagrancy, sure of his welcome at inn, camp, or palace, and equally certain of immunity not only from manual labor but from the sordid virtue of accuracy as to facts.

The tale (the word comes from the same root as the word "tell") was originally an oral relation, though the term was afterwards applied to any narrative, whether oral or written.

The rise of this form of narration to a highly finished literary product is easy to trace. The fable and the parable, both designed to teach, to reprove, or to point to straight and narrow ways, were often unfit instruments to lure and hold audiences that yearned for delightful or

wonderful stories. The mere anecdote was too brief for an evening's entertainment. But a series of anecdotes, held together by no matter how slender a thread, as in "King Horn," "Gil Blas," or any of the old tales of adventure—or a single long anecdote, padded, embellished, and spun out, such as most of the tales in Boccaccio's "Decameron"—resulted in a narrative full of allurements and charm; one which, moreover, could be ingeniously dressed up by the wandering artist so as to be adapted to his audience, whether nobles or commoners. Most of these narratives were recited in rude verse or rhyme, frequently with the accessories of pantomime, song, or musical instruments. Such were the tales of the Jongleurs, the Troubadours and the Minnesingers—not to go to Asia, Africa, and early America for examples.

Every country has grown its crop of tales,¹ each one typical of the region where it blossomed, from the stories of courage and endurance told by the Norse grandmothers during the long semi-Arctic nights, to the many-tinted wonder-tales of the "Arabian Nights Entertainments." Similar tales are told to this day by the *voyageur* at the camp fire, by the *vanthee* in the Irish cabin, by the professional story-teller in the streets of Bagdad.

From what we know technically as the modern short-story, the tale differs in its looseness of structure, its lack of organic unity, and its rambling style. But, what is more, it never had a well-constructed, compact plot;²

¹ *The Evolution of Literature*, A. S. Mackenzie, traces primitive narration to its sources.

² Later chapters will take up the nature of the short-story and of plot.

indeed, the tale of adventure did not pretend to a plot at all. If a plot there was, it was there rather by accident than by reason of the narrator's understanding of the requirements of plot as we understand it nowadays. Neither was there any deliberate attempt at definiteness of setting, nor at delineation of character. The interest was chiefly in the happenings—the thrilling events, the daring adventures, or the humorous escapades, of its actors. The world was in its intellectual boyhood in the days of the early tale, and as a certain well-beloved story-teller of our own times says: "Character to the boy is a sealed book; for him a pirate is a beard, a pair of wide trousers, and a liberal complement of pistols."¹ And again, "We read story-books in childhood, not for eloquence or character or thought, but for some quality of the brute incident."²

EXAMPLE

*THE FALCON OF SIGNIOR FEDERIGO*³

There lived in Florence a young gentleman named Federigo, son to Signior Fillippo Alberighi, who was reputed both for arms and all other actions beseeing a gentleman, hardly to have his equal throughout all Tuscany.

This Federigo, as is no rare matter with young gentlemen, became enamoured of a gentlewoman named Monna Giovanna, who was esteemed in her time to be the fairest lady in all Florence. In order to win her he made many sumptuous feasts and ban-

¹ Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Humble Remonstrance*, in *Memories and Portraits*.

² Robert Louis Stevenson, *A Gossip On Romance*, in *Memories and Portraits*.

³ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*. Adapted from Henry Morley's *Forty Tales from the Decameron*, Ed. 1884.

quets, besides which he held jousts, tilts, tournaments, and all other noble actions of arms in her honor. He further sent her an infinite number of rich and costly presents, and in fact, lavished on her all that he possessed. But the lady, being no less honest than fair, made no pretence at caring either for what he did for her, or for himself. Federigo, however, continued to spend more than his means warranted, and, no supplies redounding to him, his fortune, as very easily it might, diminished in such fashion that he had nothing left but a small farm, whose trifling revenues scarcely allowed him meat and drink. But above these he owned a fair hawk or falcon, hardly anywhere to be excelled, so sure and swift was she of flight. Now, though his poverty in no wise lessened his love to his lady, but rather set a keener edge thereon, he nevertheless saw that the city life, though greatly enjoyed by him, no longer suited his purse, so he betook himself to his poor country farm, to let his falcon get his dinner and supper, patiently supporting his penurious estate, and asking no one for help or relief in his necessities.

While thus he continued in this extremity it came to pass that the husband of Giovanna fell sick, and his debility being such that little or no hope of life remained, he made his will, leaving to his only son, a half-grown boy, all his lands and riches wherein he greatly abounded. Next unto this son, if he should chance to die without a lawful heir, he willed his wife to have all that he possessed, seeing that most dearly he loved her. Giovanna being thus left a widow, she went to a house of her own in the country, as is the common custom with our city dames during the summer season. This house was in the neighborhood of poor Federigo's farm, where he lived in such honest and contented poverty.

Hereupon the young gentleman, her son, taking great delight in hounds and hawks, grew into familiarity with poor Federigo, and having seen many fair flights of his falcon they pleased him so extremely that he earnestly coveted the bird for his own, yet he durst not hint at his desire, seeing how choicely Federigo esteemed her.

A short while afterwards the young gentleman became very sick, whereat his mother grieved exceedingly as having no one but he. Constantly did she tend him, both day and night, and did her best to comfort him, and asked him continually to tell

her if he had a desire for anything, assuring him that if it were within the compass of possibility she would procure it for him. Hearing how many times she made him these assurances at last the youth said:

"Mother, if you can do so much for me as that I may have Federigo's falcon, I am persuaded that my sickness will depart."

The lady hearing this sate musing awhile, and pondering what she should do. She remembered the great love Federigo had borne to her, and how he had spent on her all that he possessed save only this bird, which was now the only thing he had to comfort him. Entering into private advice with her own thoughts she considered: "How can I send to him, or go to him, to request this falcon, it being the best that ever flew, and moreover, his only jewel of delight? How can I bring myself to rob a gentleman of his felicity, seeing he has no other joy or comfort left him?" These and the like considerations troubled her, yet in tender love to her son, after spending some time in silent meditation, she decided to satisfy him, and even resolved that she would go in person for the bird, and then return home again with it.

Whereupon thus she spake: "Son, comfort thyself, and consider no longer thy sickness, for here I promise thee that the first thing I do tomorrow morning shall be to journey for the falcon, and rest assured that I shall bring it home with me."

Whereat the youth was so joyed that he imagined his sickness began that moment to leave him, and he looked for a speedy recovery.

Early the next morning the lady was up and ready, and taking another gentlewoman with her, she set out, as if for a morning's recreation, and walked to Federigo's poor country home, knowing that it would not a little glad him to see her. At the time of her arrival he was in a poor garden at the back of the house, it being yet too early for hunting, but when he heard that Giovanna desired speech with him he hastened to the door almost beside himself with joy, and saluted her with great courtesy. Modestly and graciously she returned to him like salutations, and thus spake:

"Signior Federigo, may your own best wishes be granted you. I have now come hither to recompense you in some fashion for all that you have suffered for my sake; and my reparation is that

today I have come to dine with you, taking for granted that myself and also this gentlewoman will be welcomed by you as your guests."

Whereto, with lowly reverence, thus he replied: "Madam, I do not remember ever to have suffered any loss on your account, but rather so much good, for, if ever I was worth anything it was owing to your goodness, and to the service to you in which I engaged myself. But your present visit gives me a happiness that cannot be equalled, on account of your gracious favor and more than common kindness in visiting your poor servant. Oh, that I had now as much to spend as heretofore what a welcome would I not bestow on you for gracing this poor house with your presence."

With these words he conducted her within and then into his simple garden, where, not having any fit company for her he said: "Madam, the poverty of this place affords no one meet to present to you; but this poor woman, the wife of my gardener, will attend on you while I do speedily arrange for the dinner."

Signior Federigo, although his necessity was extreme and his grief great remembering his former extravagance, a small part of which would now have stood him in good stead, yet his heart was no whit cast down, but as free and generous as ever. Yet had he not one penny of money, and neither pawn nor pledge wherewith to procure any. Neither had he a neighbor to borrow nor beg of, seeing that all were as needy as himself. But looking round about he saw his beloved falcon standing on her perch, and finding her to be plump and fat—and having no other resource—he immediately thought his precious bird to be but fit food for so noble a lady. So without an instant's demur he wrung her neck, and caused his servant to pluck and prepare her for the spit, whereon in a short time she was daintily roasted. Himself did set the table with fair linen, whereof he had a little left, and after the bread and salt was laid he went with cheerful looks into the garden, to tell the lady that such dinner as he was able to serve her was now ready, and nothing was lacking but her presence. The two gentlewomen went in, and not knowing what they fed on enjoyed their repast—Federigo not a little delighted that they found themselves well served.

When they had risen from the table and had spent some time

in conversation the lady thought it fit to acquaint him with the reason of her coming thither, and therefore, with a sweet and gracious manner she began:

“Federigo, if you do yet remember your former love to me, and my denial of it, which you may very likely have thought harsh and cruel, I make no doubt you will wonder at my present presumption, when you learn the cause which moved me to come hither. But if you were ever possessed of children, thereby to learn what manner of love it is one bears to them, then I durst assure myself you would partly hold me excused. Now, though you never had any, and myself only but one, I stand not exempt from those laws which are common to other mothers, but being compelled to obey their power, though contrary to my own pleasure and even my duty to you, I am come to request of you the gift which I am certain you do account most precious. This is your fair falcon, of which bird my son is become so strangely desirous that if I do not bring it to him at my coming home I much fear that there will ensue such increase in his sickness as will result in his loss of life. Wherefore I beseech you, not in regard of the love you have borne me—for thereby you stand in no way obliged—but for the sake of your own gentle nature (which hath always caused you to do more kind offices than any other gentleman I know), that you will be pleased to give her to me, or at the least let me buy her of you; which if you do I shall then freely confess that only by your means is my son’s life saved, and we shall both forever remain indebted to you.”

When Federigo had heard the lady’s request, which was quite out of his power to grant because the bird had been served to her at dinner, he stood like a man stupefied, and the tears trickled amain down his cheeks, so that he was not able to utter one word. Which she perceiving began to conjecture immediately that these tears proceeded from grief of mind, at being loth to part with his falcon; the which made her ready to say that she would not have it. Nevertheless she did not speak, but rather awaited his answer, which after some small delay he returned in this manner:

“Madam, since the hour when first my affection became solely devoted to your service Fortune hath been contrary to me on many occasions, so that justly and in good reason I may complain of her—yet all seemed light and easy to be endured in com-

parison with her present malicious contradictions, which cause my utter overthrow, considering that you are come hither to my poor house, which while I was rich and able you would not so much as vouchsafe to look upon, and that you have requested a small matter of me, and that she hath therein most crookedly thwarted me, because she hath disabled me from bestowing this mean gift, as yourself will see when it shall be related to you.

“So soon as I heard that it was your gracious pleasure to dine with me, having regard to your excellency and merit, I considered it my bounden duty to entertain you with the best viands my poor means could afford, and far above any which might be offered to common or ordinary persons. Whereupon, remembering my falcon, which now you ask for, and knowing that in goodness she excelled all others of her kind, I thought she would make a dainty dish for your diet, so, having dressed her as well as I could devise, you have fed heartily upon her, and proud am I at having so well bestown her. But perceiving now that you would have her for your sick son, it is no mean affliction to me that I am disabled from yielding you this contentment, when all my life I have desired to please you.”

To approve his words the feathers, feet, and beak of the falcon were now brought in, which when the lady saw she greatly blamed him for killing so rare a bird to content the appetite of any woman; yet she commended his nobility of spirit, which poverty had no power to abase. Lastly, her hopes being frustrated for enjoying the falcon, she thanked Federigo for his kindness, and fearful for the health of her son she returned home very melancholy.

Shortly after, either by grief that he could not have the falcon, or by reason of the force of his sickness, her son died, leaving his mother a woeful lady. After the proper time for her mourning had expired her brethren were urgent that she should marry again, because she was both very rich and still a young woman. Now though she was well contented to remain a widow, yet being continually importuned by her brothers, and remembering the honor and worth of Federigo, and his last poor yet magnificent dinner, when he killed the falcon for her sake, she said to her brethren: “So well doth my present life suit me that willingly I would not leave it, but seeing that you urge me so greatly let

me plainly tell you that I will never accept of any other husband but only of Federigo degli Alberighi.

Her brothers in a scornful manner reproved her, telling her he was a beggar, and had nothing left. "I know it well," quoth she, "and am heartily sorry for it, but give me a man that hath need of wealth, rather than wealth that hath need of a man." The brothers, hearing thus of how she regarded Federigo, and knowing him to be a worthy gentleman, though poor, consented that she should bestow herself and her riches upon him. He, on his part, having so noble a lady to his wife, one whom for so long he had dearly loved, became an excellent husband, and wise in the management of her great fortune, and they lived and loved in equal joy and happiness.

ANALYSIS

This narrative is a good example of the anecdote extended and amplified into a tale.

First, note the obvious "padding," its rambling fullness of detail, its reiteration of facts already stated, its leisurely discursiveness.

Next, see how the interest of the narrative lies entirely in the events described, the characterization being plainly a by-product.

Then observe the lack of individuality in the characters. Monna Giovanna is little more than a wooden doll, and Federigo, lovable as he is, is merely a shadow-man, a dear and charming ghost.

This unreality of the actors in the story is due a good deal to the treatment of the dialogue. The characters are all made to speak alike, and in the same style which the author employs in his narration. It may be questioned whether even in Tuscany, and in mediæval times, men and women made such set and formal speeches, prefaced with

such roundabout introductions to what they really had to say. Note the calm poise with which they enter upon these long-winded sentences, without ever coming to the surface to breathe, for whole paragraphs at a time, and then they emerge, unharmed, unruffled, without even the turning of a hair. Finally, the whole story is told prosaically rather than dramatically, and there is not a gleam of humor anywhere.

Yet, Boccaccio was a born story-teller, and he actually holds our interest until we arrive at the foregone conclusion that Monna Giovanna and Signior Federigo married and lived happy ever afterwards.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Make a brief summary of the events of the foregoing tale.
2. In your own language, briefly describe the characters individually as you have pictured them to yourself.
3. Write a paragraph describing the setting (the surroundings and conditions) in which the tale is placed.
4. Briefly show how the language of this tale differs from our modern tongue.
5. Rewrite the tale, using the original language but condensing it so as to avoid repetition and needless detail.
6. Select or invent an anecdote and expand it into a tale in the style of "The Falcon," but do not allow yourself too many details.
7. From the "Arabian Nights" select a tale which is treated in much the same general manner as "The Falcon."
8. Which do you prefer, and why?

NOTE: Further studies in the Early Tale may be devised from Canby and Jessup's "The Book of the Short Story." (A, p. 6)

CHAPTER VII

THE MODERN TALE

For my part, I consider a story merely as a frame upon which to stretch my materials. It is the play of thought, and sentiment, and language; the weaving in of characters, lightly, yet expressively delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life; and the half-concealed vein of humor that is often playing through the whole — these are among what I aim at, upon which I felicitate myself in proportion as I think I succeed.

—WASHINGTON IRVING, Introduction to *Tales of a Traveler*.

As we may infer from the foregoing quotation from a great nineteenth century story-teller, the modern tale differs from a tale of long-ago in that it shows the elements, at least, of setting and of characterization; and even an embryo plot. It thus bridges the gap between the old-fashioned tale and the short-story of the present day, which must have a plot, however simple, in order to be properly so termed. The modern tale, like the ancient, is rambling and discursive, the introduction is usually excessively prolonged, there is unnecessary amplification of detail, and there are frequent wanderings in by-paths. But, as in the short-story, we find, in greater or less degree, reality of setting and considerable attention to atmosphere, the characters are real people, and instead of an expanded anecdote, or a loosely-jointed string of incidents, there is a succession of incidents so disposed as to form a more or less well-articulated chain — which is some approach to plot.

The narratives of Washington Irving are excellent examples of the transition point between the tale and the

short-story, which occurred in the decade or two prior to 1835. Technically, they are not short-stories in the present acceptation of the word, but they are precursors of the short-story, and fittingly blaze the trail for it. Some of them, indeed, like "Rip Van Winkle," are even a shade nearer to the short-story form than they are to the typical tale; but, generally speaking, Irving was a teller of tales.

EXAMPLE

THE MOOR'S LEGACY

(From "The Alhambra")

By WASHINGTON IRVING

Just within the fortress of the Alhambra, in front of the royal palace, is a broad open esplanade, called the place or square of the cisterns (la plaza de los algibes), so called from being undermined by reservoirs of water hidden from sight, and which have existed from the time of the Moors. At one corner of this esplanade is a Moorish well, cut through the living rock to a great depth, the water of which is cold as ice and clear as crystal. The wells made by the Moors are always in repute, for it is well known what pains they took to penetrate to the purest and sweetest springs and fountains. The one we are speaking of is famous throughout Granada, insomuch that the water-carriers, some bearing great water-jars on their shoulders, others driving asses before them, laden with earthen vessels, are ascending and descending the steep woody avenues of the Alhambra from early dawn until a late hour of the night.

Fountains and wells, ever since the scriptural days, have been noted gossiping places in hot climates, and at the well in question there is a kind of perpetual club kept up during the livelong day, by the invalids, old women, and other curious, do-nothing folk of the fortress, who sit here on the stone benches under an awning

spread over the well to shelter the toll-gatherer from the sun, and dawdle over the gossip of the fortress, and question any water-carrier that arrives about the news of the city and make long comments on everything they hear and see. Not an hour of the day but loitering housewives and idle maid-servants may be seen lingering with pitcher on head or in hand, to hear the last of the endless tattle of these worthies.

Among the water-carriers who once resorted to this well there was a sturdy, strong-backed, bandy-legged little fellow, named Pedro Gil, but called Peregil for shortness. Being a water-carrier, he was a Gallego, or native of Galicia, of course. Nature seems to have formed races of men as she has of animals for different kinds of drudgery. In France the shoeblacks are all Savoyards, the porters of hotels all Swiss, and in the days of hoops and hair powder in England, no man could give the regular swing to a sedan chair but a bog-trotting Irishman. So in Spain the carriers of water and bearers of burdens are all sturdy little natives of Galicia. No man says, "get me a porter," but, "call a Gallego."

To return from this digression. Peregil the Gallego had begun business with merely a great earthen jar, which he carried upon his shoulder; by degrees he rose in the world and was enabled to purchase an assistant of a correspondent class of animals, being a stout shaggy-haired donkey. On each side of this his long-eared aid-de-camp, in a kind of pannier, were slung his water-jars covered with fig leaves to protect them from the sun. There was not a more industrious water-carrier in all Granada, nor one more merry withal. The streets rang with his cheerful voice as he trudged after his donkey, singing forth the usual summer note that resounds through the Spanish towns, "*quien quiere agua in agua mas fria que la nieve*. Who wants water — water colder than snow — who wants water from the well of the Alhambra — cold as ice and clear as crystal?" When he served a customer with a sparkling glass, it was always with a pleasant word that caused a smile, and if, perchance, it was a comely dame or dimpling damsel, it was always with a sly leer and a compliment to her beauty that was irresistible. Thus Peregil the Gallego was noted throughout all Granada for being one of the civilest, pleasantest, and happiest of mortals. Yet it is not he who sings loudest and jokes most that

has the lightest heart. Under all this air of merriment, honest Peregil had his cares and troubles. He had a large family of ragged children to support, who were hungry and clamorous as a nest of young swallows, and beset him with their outcries for food whenever he came home of an evening. He had a helpmate too who was anything but a help to him. She had been a village beauty before marriage, noted for her skill in dancing the bolero and rattling the castanets, and she still retained her early propensities, spending the hard earnings of honest Peregil in frippery, and laying the very donkey under requisition for junketing parties into the country on Sundays and saints' days, and those innumerable holidays which are rather more numerous in Spain than the days of the week. With all this she was a little of a slattern, something more of a lie-a-bed, and, above all, a gossip of the first water; neglecting house, household and everything else, to loiter slipshod in the houses of her gossip neighbors.

He, however, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, accommodates the yoke of matrimony to the submissive neck. Peregil bore all the heavy dispensations of wife and children with as meek a spirit as his donkey bore the water-jars; and however he might shake his ears in private, never ventured to question the household virtues of his slattern spouse.

He loved his children too, even as an owl loves its owlets, seeing in them his own image multiplied and perpetuated, for they were a sturdy, long-backed, bandy-legged little brood. The great pleasure of honest Peregil was, whenever he could afford himself a scanty holiday and had a handful of maravedies to spare, to take the whole litter forth with him, some in his arms, some tugging at his skirts, and some trudging at his heels, and to treat them to a gambol among the orchards of the Vega, while his wife was dancing with her holiday friends in the Angosturas of the Darro.

It was a late hour one summer night, and most of the water-carriers had desisted from their toils. The day had been uncommonly sultry; the night was one of those delicious moonlights which tempt the inhabitants of those southern climes to indemnify themselves for the heat and inaction of the day, by lingering in the open air and enjoying its tempered sweetness until after midnight. Customers for water were therefore still abroad. Peregil,

like a considerate, painstaking little father, thought of his hungry children. "One more journey to the well," said he to himself, "to earn a good Sunday's puchero for the little ones." So saying, he trudged rapidly up the steep avenue of the Alhambra, singing as he went, and now and then bestowing a hearty thwack with a cudgel on the flanks of his donkey, either by way of cadence to the song or refreshment to the animal; for dry blows serve in lieu of provender in Spain, for all beasts of burden.

When arrived at the well he found it deserted by every one except a solitary stranger in Moorish garb, seated on the stone bench in the moonlight. Peregil paused at first and regarded him with surprise, not unmixed with awe, but the Moor feebly beckoned him to approach.

"I am faint and ill," said he; "aid me to return to the city, and I will pay thee double what thou couldst gain by thy jars of water."

The honest heart of the little water-carrier was touched with compassion at the appeal of the stranger. "God forbid," said he, "that I should ask fee or reward for doing a common act of humanity."

He accordingly helped the Moor on his donkey, and set off slowly for Granada, the poor Moslem being so weak that it was necessary to hold him on the animal to keep him from falling to the earth.

When they entered the city the water-carrier demanded whither he should conduct him. "Alas!" said the Moor faintly, "I have neither home nor habitation. I am a stranger in the land. Suffer me to lay my head this night beneath thy roof, and thou shall be amply repaid."

Honest Peregil thus saw himself unexpectedly saddled with an infidel guest, but he was too humane to refuse a night's shelter to a fellow being in so forlorn a plight; so he conducted the Moor to his dwelling. The children, who had sallied forth, open-mouthed as usual, on hearing the tramp of the donkey, ran back with affright when they beheld the turbaned stranger, and hid themselves behind their mother. The latter stepped forth intrepidly, like a ruffling hen before her brood, when a vagrant dog approaches.

"What infidel companion," cried she, "is this you have brought

home at this late hour to draw upon us the eyes of the Inquisition?"

"Be quiet, wife," replied the Gallego; "here is a poor sick stranger, without friend or home; wouldst thou turn him forth to perish in the streets?"

The wife would still have remonstrated, for, though she lived in a hovel, she was a furious stickler for the credit of her house; the little water-carrier, however, for once was stiff-necked, and refused to bend beneath the yoke. He assisted the poor Moslem to alight, and spread a mat and a sheepskin for him, on the ground in the coolest part of the house; being the only kind of bed that his poverty afforded.

In a little while the Moor was seized with violent convulsions which defied all the ministering skill of the simple water-carrier. The eye of the poor patient acknowledged his kindness. During an interval of his fits he called him to his side, and addressing him in a low voice: "My end," said he, "I fear is at hand. If I die I bequeath you this box as a reward for your charity." So saying, he opened his albornoz, or cloak, and showed a small box of sandalwood, strapped round his body.

"God grant, my friend," replied the worthy little Gallego, "that you may live many years to enjoy your treasure, whatever it may be."

The Moor shook his head; he laid his hand upon the box and would have said something more concerning it, but his convulsions returned with increased violence, and in a little while he expired.

The water-carrier's wife was now as one distracted. "This comes," said she, "of your foolish good nature, always running into scrapes to oblige others. What will become of us when this corpse is found in our house? We shall be sent to prison as murderers; and if we escape with our lives, shall be ruined by notaries and alguazils."

Poor Peregil was in equal tribulation, and almost repented himself of having done a good deed. At length a thought struck him. "It is not yet day," said he. "I can convey the dead body out of the city and bury it in the sands on the banks of the Xenil. No one saw the Moor enter our dwelling, and no one will know anything of his death." So said, so done. The wife aided him: they rolled the body of the unfortunate Moslem in the mat on which he

had expired, laid it across the ass, and Mattias set out with it for the banks of the river.

As ill luck would have it, there lived opposite to the water-carrier a barber, named Pedrillo Pedrugo, one of the most prying, tattling, mischief-making of his gossip tribe. He was a weasel-faced, spider-legged varlet, supple and insinuating; the famous Barber of Seville could not surpass him for his universal knowledge of the affairs of others, and he had no more power of retention than a sieve. It was said that he slept with but one eye at a time, and kept one ear uncovered, so that, even in his sleep, he might see and hear all that was going on. Certain it is, he was a sort of scandalous chronicle for the quidnuncs of Granada, and had more customers than all the rest of his fraternity.

This meddling barber heard Peregil arrive at an unusual hour of the night, and the exclamations of his wife and children. His head was instantly popped out of a little window which served him as a lookout, and he saw his neighbor assist a man in Moorish garb into his dwelling. This was so strange an occurrence that Pedrillo Pedrugo slept not a wink that night — every five minutes he was at his loophole, watching the lights that gleamed through the chinks of his neighbor's door, and before daylight he beheld Peregil sally forth with his donkey unusually laden.

The inquisitive barber was in a fidget; he slipped on his clothes, and stealing forth silently, followed the water-carrier at a distance, until he saw him dig a hole in the sandy bank of the Xenil, and bury something that had the appearance of a dead body.

The barber hied him home and fidgeted about his shop, setting everything upside down, until sunrise. He then took a basin under his arm and sallied forth to the house of his daily customer, the Alcalde.

The Alcalde was just risen. Pedrillo Pedrugo seated him in a chair, threw a napkin round his neck, put a basin of hot water under his chin, and began to mollify his beard with his fingers.

"Strange doings," said Pedrugo, who played barber and news-monger at the same time, "Strange doings! Robbery, and murder, and burial, all in one night!"

"Hey? how! What is it you say?" cried the Alcalde.

"I say," replied the barber, rubbing a piece of soap over the nose and mouth of the dignitary, for a Spanish barber disdains

to employ a brush; "I say that Peregil the Gallego has robbed and murdered a Moorish Musselman, and buried him this blessed night — *maldita sea la noche* — accursed be the night for the same!"

"But how do you know all this?" demanded the Alcalde.

"Be patient, senor, and you shall hear all about it," replied Pedrillo, taking him by the nose and sliding a razor over his cheek. He then recounted all that he had seen, going through both operations at the same time, shaving his beard, washing his chin, and wiping him dry with a dirty napkin, while he was robbing, murdering, and burying the Moslem.

Now it so happened that this Alcalde was one of the most overbearing and at the same time most griping and corrupt, curmudgeons in all Granada. It could not be denied, however, that he set a high value upon justice, for he sold it at its weight in gold. He presumed the case in point to be one of murder and robbery; doubtless there must be rich spoil; how was it to be secured into the legitimate hands of the law for as to merely entrapping the delinquent — that would be feeding the gallows; but entrapping the booty — that would be enriching the judge; and such, according to his creed, was the great end of justice. So thinking, he summoned to his presence his trustiest alguazil—a gaunt, hungry-looking varlet, clad, according to the custom of his order, in the ancient Spanish garb — a broad black beaver turned up at the sides; a quaint ruff, a small black coat dangling from his shoulders; rusty black underclothes that set off his spare wiry form; while in his hand he bore a slender white wand, the dreaded insignia of his office. Such was the legal bloodhound of the ancient Spanish breed, that he put upon the traces of the unlucky water-carrier; and such was his speed and certainty that he was upon the haunches of poor Peregil before he had returned to his dwelling, and brought both him and his donkey before the dispenser of justice.

The Alcalde bent upon him one of his most terrific frowns. "Hark ye, culprit," roared he in a voice that made the knees of the little Gallego smite together — "Hark ye, culprit! there is no need of denying thy guilt; everything is known to me. A gallows is the proper reward for the crime thou hast committed, but I am merciful, and readily listen to reason. The man that has

been murdered in thy house was a Moor, an infidel, the enemy of our faith. It was doubtless in a fit of religious zeal that thou hast slain him. I will be indulgent, therefore; render up the property of which thou hast robbed him, and we will hush the matter up!"

The poor water-carrier called upon all the saints to witness his innocence; alas! not one of them appeared, and if there had, the Alcalde would have disbelieved the whole calendar. The water-carrier related the whole story of the dying Moor with the straightforward simplicity of truth, but it was all in vain. "Wilt thou persist in saying," demanded the judge, "that this Moslem had neither gold nor jewels, which were the object of thy cupidity?"

"As I hope to be saved, your worship," replied the water-carrier, "he had nothing but a small box of sandalwood, which he bequeathed to me in reward of my services."

"A box of sandalwood! a box of sandalwood!" exclaimed the Alcalde, his eyes sparkling at the idea of precious jewels; "and where is this box? where have you concealed it?"

"An' it please your grace," replied the water-carrier, "it is in one of the panniers of my mule, and heartily at the service of your worship."

He had hardly spoken the words when the keen alguazil darted off and reappeared in an instant with the mysterious box of sandalwood. The Alcalde opened it with an eager and trembling hand; all pressed forward to gaze upon the treasures it was expected to contain; when, to their disappointment, nothing appeared within but a parchment scroll, covered with Arabic characters, and an end of a waxen taper!

When there is nothing to be gained by the conviction of a prisoner, justice, even in Spain, is apt to be impartial. The Alcalde, having recovered from his disappointment and found there was really no booty in the case, now listened dispassionately to the explanation of the water-carrier, which was corroborated by the testimony of his wife. Being convinced, therefore, of his innocence, he discharged him from arrest; nay, more, he permitted him to carry off the Moor's legacy, the box of sandalwood and its contents, as the well-merited reward of his humanity; but he retained his donkey in payment of cost and charges.

Behold the unfortunate little Gallego reduced once more to the necessity of being his own water-carrier, and trudging up to the well of the Alhambra with a great earthen jar upon his shoulder. As he toiled up the hill in the heat of a summer noon his usual good-humor forsook him. "Dog of an Alcalde!" would he cry, "to rob a poor man of the means of his subsistence — of the best friend he had in the world!" And then, at the remembrance of the beloved companion of his labors, all the kindness of his nature would break forth. "Ah, donkey of my heart!" would he exclaim, resting his burden on a stone, and wiping the sweat from his brow, "Ah, donkey of my heart! I warrant me thou thinkest of thy old master! I warrant me thou missest the water jars — poor beast!"

To add to his afflictions his wife received him, on his return home, with whimperings and repinings; she had clearly the vantage-ground of him, having warned him not to commit the egregious act of hospitality that had brought on him all these misfortunes, and like a knowing woman, she took every occasion to throw her superior sagacity in his teeth. If ever her children lacked food or needed a new garment, she would answer with a sneer, "Go to your father; he's heir to King Chico of the Alhambra. Ask him to help you out of the Moor's strong box!"

Was ever poor mortal more soundly punished for having done a good action! The unlucky Peregil was grieved in flesh and spirit, but still he bore meekly with the railings of his spouse. At length one evening, when, after a hot day's toil, she taunted him in the usual manner, he lost all patience. He did not venture to retort upon her, but his eye rested upon the box of sandalwood, which lay on a shelf with lid half open as if laughing in mockery of his vexation. Seizing it up he dashed it with indignation on the floor. "Unlucky was the day that I ever set eyes on thee," he cried, "or sheltered thy master beneath my roof."

As the box struck the floor the lid flew wide open, and the parchment scroll rolled forth. Peregil sat regarding the scroll for some time in moody silence. At length rallying his ideas, "Who knows," thought he, "but this writing may be of some importance, as the Moor seems to have guarded it with such care." Picking it up, therefore, he put it in his bosom, and the next morning, as he was crying water through the streets, he stopped

at the shop of a Moor, a native of Tangiers, who sold trinkets and perfumery in the Zacatin, and asked him to explain the contents.

The Moor read the scroll attentively, then stroked his beard and smiled. "This manuscript," said he, "is a form of incantation for the recovery of hidden treasure, that is under the power of enchantment. It is said to have such virtue that the strongest bolts and bars, nay, the adamantine rock itself, will yield before it."

"Bah!" cried the little Gallego, "what is all that to me? I am no enchanter, and know nothing of buried treasure." So saying he shouldered his water-jar, left the scroll in the hands of the Moor and trudged forward on his daily rounds.

That evening, however, as he rested himself about twilight at the well of the Alhambra, he found a number of gossips assembled at the place, and their conversation, as is not unusual at that shadowy hour, turned upon old tales and traditions of a supernatural nature. Being all poor as rats, they dwelt with peculiar fondness upon the popular theme of enchanted riches left by the Moors in various parts of the Alhambra. Above all, they concurred in the belief that there were great treasures buried deep in the earth under the tower of the Seven Floors.

These stories made an unusual impression on the mind of honest Peregil, and they sank deeper and deeper into his thoughts as he returned alone down the darkling avenues. "If, after all, there should be treasure hid beneath that tower — and if the scroll I left with the Moor should enable me to get at it!" In the sudden ecstasy of the thought he had well nigh let fall his water-jar.

That night he tumbled and tossed, and could scarcely get a wink of sleep for the thoughts that were bewildering his brain. In the morning, bright and early, he repaired to the shop of the Moor, and told him all that was passing in his mind. "You can read Arabic," said he, "suppose we go together to the tower and try the effect of the charm; if it fails we are no worse off than before, but if it succeeds we will share equally all the treasure we may discover."

"Hold," replied the Moslem, "this writing is not sufficient of itself; it must be read at midnight, by the light of a taper singularly compounded and prepared, the ingredients of which are not within my reach. Without such taper the scroll is of no avail."

"Say no more!" cried the little Gallego. "I have such a taper at hand and will bring it here in a moment." So saying he hastened home, and soon returned with the end of a yellow wax taper that he had found in the box of sandalwood.

The Moor felt it, and smelt of it. "Here are rare and costly perfumes," said he, "combined with this yellow wax. This is the kind of taper specified in the scroll. While this burns, the strongest walls and most secret caverns will remain open; woe to him, however, who lingers within until it be extinguished. He will remain enchanted with the treasure."

It was now agreed between them to try the charm that very night. At a late hour, therefore, when nothing was stirring but bats and owls, they ascended the woody hill of the Alhambra, and approached that awful tower, shrouded by trees and rendered formidable by so many traditionary tales.

By the light of a lantern they groped their way through bushes and over fallen stones, to the door of a vault beneath the tower. With fear and trembling they descended a flight of steps cut into the rock. It led to an empty chamber, damp and drear, from which another flight of steps led to a deeper vault. In this way they descended four several flights, leading into as many vaults, one below the other, but the floor of the fourth was solid, and though, according to tradition, there remained three vaults still below, it was said to be impossible to penetrate further, the residue being shut up by strong enchantment. The air of this vault was damp and chilly, and had an earthy smell, and the light scarce cast forth any rays. They paused here for a time in breathless suspense, until they faintly heard the clock of the watch-tower strike midnight; upon this they lit the waxen taper, which diffused an odor of myrrh, and frankincense, and storax.

The Moor began to read in a hurried voice. He had scarce finished, when there was a noise as of subterraneous thunder. The earth shook, and the floor yawning open disclosed a flight of steps. Trembling with awe they descended, and by the light of the lantern found themselves in another vault covered with Arabic inscriptions. In the center stood a great chest, secured with seven bands of steel, at each end of which sat an enchanted Moor in armor, but motionless as a statue, being controlled by the power of the incantation. Before the chest were several jars

filled with gold and silver and precious stones. In the largest of these they thrust their arms up to the elbow, and at every dip hauled forth handfuls of broad yellow pieces of Moorish gold, or bracelets and ornaments of the same precious metal, while occasionally a necklace of Oriental pearl would stick to their fingers. Still they trembled and breathed short while cramming their pockets with the spoils; and cast many a fearful glance at the two enchanted Moors who sat grim and motionless, glaring upon them with unwinking eyes. At length, struck with a sudden panic at some fancied noise, they both rushed up the staircase, tumbled over one another into the upper apartment, overturned and extinguished the waxen taper, and the pavement again closed with a thundering sound.

Filled with dismay they did not pause until they had groped their way out of the tower, and beheld the stars shining through the trees. Then seating themselves upon the grass, they divided the spoil, determining to content themselves for the present with this mere skimming of the jars, but to return on some future night and drain them to the bottom. To make sure of each other's good faith, also, they divided the talismans between them, one retaining the scroll and the other the taper; this done, they set off with light hearts and well-lined pockets for Granada.

As they wended their way down the hill the shrewd Moor whispered a word of counsel in the ear of the simple little water-carrier.

"Friend Peregil," said he, "all this affair must be kept a profound secret until we have secured the treasure and conveyed it out of harm's way. If a whisper of it gets to the ear of the Alcalde we are undone!"

"Certainly!" replied the Gallego; "nothing can be more true."

"Friend Peregil," said the Moor, "you are a discreet man, and I make no doubt can keep a secret; but — you have a wife——"

"She shall not know a word of it!" replied the little water-carrier sturdily.

"Enough," said the Moor, "I depend upon thy discretion and thy promise."

Never was promise more positive and sincere; but alas! what man can keep a secret from his wife? Certainly not such a one as Peregil the water-carrier, who was one of the most loving and

tractable of husbands. On his return home he found his wife moping in a corner.

"Mighty well!" cried she, as he entered; "you've come at last, after rambling about until this hour of the night. I wonder you have not brought home another Moor as a housemate." Then bursting into tears she began to wring her hands and smite her breast. "Unhappy woman that I am!" exclaimed she, "what will become of me! My house stripped and plundered by lawyers and alguazils; my husband a do-no-good that no longer brings home bread for his family, but goes rambling about, day and night, with infidel Moors. Oh, my children! my children! what will become of us; we shall all have to beg in the streets!"

Honest Peregil was so moved by the distress of his spouse that he could not help whimpering also. His heart was as full as his pocket, and not to be restrained. Thrusting his hand into the latter he hauled forth three or four broad gold pieces and slipped them into her bosom. The poor woman stared with astonishment, and could not understand the meaning of this golden shower. Before she could recover her surprise the little Gallego drew forth a chain of gold and dangled it before her, capering with exultation, his mouth extended from ear to ear.

"Holy Virgin protect us!" exclaimed the wife. "What hast thou been doing, Peregil? Surely thou hast not been committing murder and robbery!"

The idea scarce entered the brain of the poor woman than it became a certainty with her. She saw a prison and a gallows in the distance, and a little bandy-legged Gallego dangling pendant from it; and overcome by the horrors conjured up by her imagination, fell into violent hysterics.

What could the poor man do? He had no other means of pacifying his wife and dispelling the phantoms of her fancy than by relating the whole story of his good fortune. This, however, he did not do until he had exacted from her the most solemn promise to keep it a profound secret from every living being.

To describe her joy would be impossible. She flung her arms round the neck of her husband, and almost strangled him with her caresses. "Now, wife!" exclaimed the little man with honest exultation, "what say you now to the Moor's legacy? Henceforth never abuse me for helping a fellow creature in distress."

The honest Gallego retired to his sheepskin mat, and slept as soundly as if on a bed of down. Not so his wife. She emptied the whole contents of his pockets upon the mat and sat all night counting gold pieces of Arabic coin, trying on necklaces and earrings, and fancying the figure she should make one day when permitted to enjoy her riches.

On the following morning the honest Gallego took a broad golden coin, and repaired with it to a jeweler's shop in the Zacatin to offer it for sale, pretending to have found it among the ruins of the Alhambra. The jeweler saw that it had an Arabic inscription and was of the purest gold; he offered, however, but a third of its value, with which the water-carrier was perfectly content. Peregil now bought new clothes for his little flock, and all kinds of toys, together with ample provisions for a hearty meal, and returning to his dwelling set all his children dancing around him, while he capered in the midst, the happiest of fathers.

The wife of the water-carrier kept her promise of secrecy with surprising strictness. For a whole day and a half she went about with a look of mystery and a heart swelling almost to bursting, yet she held her peace, though surrounded by her gossips. It is true she could not help giving herself a few airs, apologized for her ragged dress, and talked of ordering a new basquina all trimmed with gold lace and bugles, and a new lace mantilla. She threw out hints of her husband's intention of leaving off his trade of water-carrying, as it did not altogether agree with his health. In fact, she thought they should all retire to the country for the summer, that the children might have the benefit of the mountain air, for there was no living in the city in this sultry season.

The neighbors stared at each other, and thought the poor woman had lost her wits, and her airs and graces and elegant pretensions were the theme of universal scoffing and merriment among her friends, the moment her back was turned.

If she restrained herself abroad, however, she indemnified herself at home, and putting a string of rich Oriental pearls round her neck, Moorish bracelets on her arms, an aigrette of diamonds on her head, sailed backward and forward in her slattern rags about the room, now and then stopping to admire herself in a piece of broken mirror. Nay, in the impulse of her simple vanity, she

could not resist on one occasion showing herself at the window, to enjoy the effect of her finery on the passers-by.

As the fates would have it, Pedrillo Pedrugo, the meddlesome barber, was at this moment sitting idly in his shop on the opposite side of the street, when his ever-watchful eye caught the sparkle of a diamond. In an instant he was at his loophole reconnoitering the slattern spouse of the water-carrier, decorated with the splendor of an Eastern bride. No sooner had he taken an accurate inventory of her ornaments than he posted off with all speed to the Alcalde. In a little while the hungry alguazil was again on the scent, and before the day was over the unfortunate Peregil was again dragged into the presence of the judge.

"How is this, villain!" cried the Alcalde in a furious voice. "You told me that the infidel who died in your house left nothing behind but an empty coffer, and now I hear of your wife flaunting in her rags decked out with pearls and diamonds. Wretch that thou art! prepare to render up the spoils of thy miserable victim, and to swing on the gallows that is already tired of waiting for thee!"

The terrified water-carrier fell on his knees and made a full revelation of the marvelous manner in which he had gained his wealth. The Alcalde, the alguazil, and the inquisitive barber listened with greedy ears to this Arabian tale of enchanted treasure. The alguazil was dispatched to bring the Moor who had assisted in the incantation. The Moslem entered half-frightened out of his wits at finding himself in the hands of the harpies of the law. When he beheld the water-carrier standing with sheepish look and downcast countenance, he comprehended the whole matter. "Miserable animal," said he as he passed near him, "did I not warn thee against babbling to thy wife?"

The story of the Moor coincided exactly with that of his colleague; but the Alcalde affected to be slow of belief, and threw out menaces of imprisonment and rigorous investigation.

"Softly, good Señor Alcalde," said the Musselman, who by this time had recovered his usual shrewdness and self-possession. "Let us not mar fortune's favors in the scramble for them. Nobody knows anything of this matter but ourselves; let us keep the secret. There is wealth enough in the cave to enrich us all.

Promise a fair division, and all shall be produced; refuse, and the cave shall remain forever closed."

The Alcalde consulted apart with the alguazil. The latter was an old fox in his profession. "Promise anything," said he, "until you get possession of the treasure. You may then sieze upon the whole, and if he and his accomplice dare to murmur, threaten them with the fagot and the stake as infidels and sorcerers."

The Alcalde relished the advice. Smoothing his brow and turning to the Moor — "This is a strange story," said he, "and may be true, but I must have ocular proof of it. This very night you must repeat the incantation in my presence. If there be really such treasure, we will share it amicably between us, and say nothing further of the matter; if ye have deceived me, expect no mercy at my hands. In the meantime you must remain in custody."

The Moor and the water-carrier cheerfully agreed to these conditions, satisfied that the event would prove the truth of their words.

Toward midnight the Alcalde sallied forth secretly, attended by the alguazil and the meddlesome barber, all strongly armed. They conducted the Moor and the water-carrier as prisoners, and were provided with the stout donkey of the latter, to bear off the expected treasure. They arrived at the tower without being observed, and tying the donkey to a fig-tree, descended into the fourth vault of the tower.

The scroll was produced, the yellow waxen taper lighted, and the Moor read the form of incantation. The earth trembled as before, and the pavement opened with a thundering sound, disclosing the narrow flight of steps. The Alcalde, the alguazil, and the barber were struck aghast and could not summon courage to descend. The Moor and the water-carrier entered the lower vault and found the two Moors seated as before, silent and motionless. They removed two of the great jars filled with golden coin and precious stones. The water-carrier bore them up one by one upon his shoulders, but though a strong-backed little man, and accustomed to carry burdens, he staggered beneath their weight, and found, when slung on each side of his donkey, they were as much as the animal could bear.

"Let us be content for the present," said the Moor; "here is

as much treasure as we can carry off without being perceived, and enough to make us all wealthy to our heart's desire."

"Is there no more treasure remaining behind?" demanded the Alcalde.

"The greatest prize of all," said the Moor; "a huge coffer, bound with bands of steel, and filled with pearls and precious stones."

"Let us have up the coffer by all means," cried the grasping Alcalde.

"I will descend for no more," said the Moor, doggedly. "Enough is enough for a reasonable man; more is superfluous."

"And I," said the water-carrier, "will bring up no further burden to break the back of my poor donkey."

Finding commands, threats, and entreaties equally vain, the Alcalde turned to his two adherents. "Aid me," said he, "to bring up the coffer, and its contents shall be divided between us." So saying he descended the steps, followed, with trembling reluctance by the alguazil and the barber.

No sooner did the Moor behold them fairly earthed than he extinguished the yellow taper: the pavement closed with its usual crash, and the three worthies remained buried in its womb.

He then hastened up the different flights of steps, nor stopped until in the open air. The little water-carrier followed him as fast as his short legs would permit.

"What hast thou done?" cried Peregil, as soon as he could recover breath. "The Alcalde and the other two are shut up in the vault!"

"It is the will of Allah!" said the Moor devoutly.

"And will you not release them?" demanded the Gallego.

"Allah forbid!" replied the Moor, smoothing his beard. "It is written in the book of fate that they shall remain enchanted until some future adventurer shall come to break the charm. The will of God be done!" So saying, he hurled the end of the waxen taper far among the gloomy thickets of the glen.

There was now no remedy, so the Moor and the water-carrier proceeded with the richly laden donkey toward the city; nor could honest Peregil refrain from hugging and kissing his long-eared fellow-laborer, thus restored to him from the clutches of the

law; and, in fact, it is doubtful which gave the simple-hearted little man most joy at the moment, the gaining of the treasure or the recovery of the donkey.

The two partners in good luck divided their spoil amicably and fairly, excepting that the Moor, who had a little taste for trinketry, made out to get into his heap the most of the pearls and precious stones, and other baubles, but then he always gave the water-carrier in lieu magnificent jewels of massy gold four times the size, with which the latter was heartily content. They took care not to linger within reach of accidents, but made off to enjoy their wealth undisturbed in other countries. The Moor returned into Africa, to his native city of Tetuan, and the Gallego, with his wife, his children and his donkey, made the best of his way to Portugal. Here, under the admonition and tuition of his wife, he became a personage of some consequence, for she made the little man array his long body and short legs in doublet and hose, with a feather in his hat and a sword by his side; and, laying aside the familiar appellation of Peregil, assume the more sonorous title of Don Pedro Gil. His progeny grew up a thriving and merry-hearted, though short and bandy-legged, generation; while the Señora Gil, be-fringed, be-laced, and be-tasseled from her head to her heels, with glittering rings on every finger, became a model of slattern fashion and finery.

As to the Alcalde and his adjuncts, they remained shut up under the great tower of the Seven Floors, and there they remain spell-bound at the present day. Whenever there shall be a lack in Spain of pimping barbers, sharking alguazils, and corrupt Alcaldes, they may be sought after; but if they have to wait until such time for their deliverance, there is danger of their enchantment enduring until doomsday.

In this delightful recital, we find that special ear-mark of the tale, the long introduction, in which the chief character is described, his profession, his nationality, his physique, his wife, his children, and his donkey. By way of good measure, we are given an introduction to the introduction, which describes a Moorish well, its origin, its

situation, the nature of its water, and the general habits of the citizens who made use of it.

On the other hand, we have some quite definite character delineation. The cheerful, impulsive little Peregil, his nagging wife, the meddlesome barber, the greedy Alcalde, who is the villain of the piece, and the long-headed Moslem who outwitted him, are all real people, and possess a vitality not to be found in the Signior of the preceding chapter, his lady, or his falcon. The dialogue, too, though slight, has freedom and naturalness, and the whole narrative is deliciously touched with humor, from the description of Peregil's purchase of a donkey as "an assistant of a correspondent class of animals," to that of the Moslem's pious resignation to the will of Allah, on the occasion of his enemies being securely shut up in the vault.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Select another tale from Irving and show why you classify it as such.
2. (a) Re-write "The Falcon of Ser Federigo," omitting all the unnecessary discursiveness, reiteration, etc. (b) Re-write the same, curtailing it to a brief anecdote.
3. Treat "The Moor's Legacy" as you treated the older tale, first cutting out the non-essentials, then curtailing it further into the limits of an anecdote. (b) Compare the two from the standpoint of structure, discursiveness, cumbrous elaboration of detail, etc.
4. Select an anecdote from any source you please, and expand it into a tale, done in the style of Irving, omitting

the cumbrous introduction. (b) Combine a series of anecdotes or personal experiences into a tale of adventure.

5. What characteristics of the tale are to be found in "Soldiers Three," in the "Pa Glidden" stories,¹ the "Emma McChesney" stories,² the "Miss Gregory" stories?³

6. Select a tale from any magazine and show why you have so classified it.

¹ Elizabeth Cherry Waltz, *The Century Magazine*, Vols. 65, 66.

² Edna Ferber, *American Magazine*, Vols. 73, 74.

³ Percival Gibbon, *The Adventures of Miss Gregory*. *McClure's Magazine*, Vols. 35, 36, 38.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LEGEND

And the reader droned from the pulpit
Like the murmur of many bees,
The legend of good saint Guthlac
Or saint Basil's homilies.

—H. W. LONGFELLOW, *King Wiltlaf's Drinking Horn*.

The word "legend" comes from the Latin *legenda*, which signifies "*things to be read*." Hence in the evolution of narrative the legend apparently comes later than the early tale, which was merely told by the tongue.

The legend was originally "a chronicle, biography, or register of the lives of the saints, formerly read in the refectories of religious houses, and as lessons at matins."¹ This restricted application of the word has long since been relaxed, so that it is now broadly applied to divers sorts of narrative, but chiefly to stories of marvellous or incredible character, such as might never hope to be believed by serious-minded persons who boast of possessing the "historic sense" — unless, as in certain instances, the stories are accepted as an act of religious faith, in which case the legend is removed from the field of fiction or tradition and embraced in religious history.

In the legend may be traced a relation to all the forms of narrative already studied. It resembles the tale in being the outgrowth of an anecdote; it is akin to the parable in so far as it may be designed for spiritual edification; it

¹ Cassell's *Encyclopædic Dictionary*.

bears some relation to the fable in that its events were often outside the realm of probability; and, as we have seen, the religious legend is related to history itself in that it chiefly attaches itself to persons prominent in the past life of a church, and a national legend to the history of a people.¹

An attempt has been made to differentiate legend from myth, in the statement that the myth is "the evolving of an imaginary fact from an idea; e. g., when the Romans of the Augustan times, out of the idea of how their polity arose, created the narrative of Æneas, his misfortunes, his wanderings, and his settlement in Italy, they framed a myth."² While the legend, it is said, is "the evolving of an idea from a fact. When real historic facts become embellished by fiction they are legendary."³

In the following example the nucleus of historic fact is probably the existence, once upon a time, of a holy man named Christopher.

THE LEGEND OF SAINT CHRISTOPHER⁴

There once lived a heathen giant named Reprobus, who determined to serve the strongest king he could find. He went to the mighty Pharaoh and served him; but whenever the Devil was mentioned, the king crossed himself, by which Reprobus perceived that he feared the Devil. Consequently the giant went off in search of the Devil to serve him. At length he found Satan, and the Evil One took him into his service; but one day Reprobus saw the Devil start aside from a cross. Then he realized that

¹ *Legends of the Middle Ages*, H. A. GUERBER.

² Cassell's *Encyclopædic Dictionary*.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Adapted from S. Baring-Gould, *Lives of the Saints*, Vol. VIII, pp. 557-8.

there is one stronger than Satan, so he left the service of the Devil, and went off in search of Christ. On his journey he found a hermit, who ordered him to pray.

"That I cannot do," said Reprobus.

"Then you must carry travellers over the deep river."

So the giant Reprobus undertook the good work. One night a voice called him. He went out and found a little child, whom he took on his shoulders to carry over. But the child nearly weighed him down, and when he had placed the child on the other side the giant said, "You seem to weigh as heavy as the whole world."

"Well said, Reprobus," answered the Child. "I created the world, I redeemed the world, I bear the sins of the world." And he vanished.

Thus Reprobus saw that he had borne Christ over the stream. And from that day he took the name Christopher — *Christoferro*, the Christ-bearer.

It is thus that Saint Christopher is usually represented in Western art. It is evident that an allegory is contained in this beautiful story.

It will readily be seen that the foregoing legend could be expanded into a tale, by amplifying the adventures of Reprobus, while it lacks but one essential of the parable — that is, the events related are hardly "such as might naturally occur." But the play of imagination, allowing the superaddition of fancy to fact, its touch of charm — due to the glamor of the aforesaid imagination — and its unmistakable purpose to edify, mark it as a legend. The element of the miraculous of course does away with the demand for human probability and relegates the question of its truth to the realm of faith, as in the case of all miracles.

The legend, in various forms, has a prominent place in literature. Many of the mediæval epics were collections of legends brought together to glorify, almost to deify, the

hero. Such a collection is the *Nibelungenlied*. The famous Golden Legend, the *Legenda Aurea*, of the thirteenth century, is a collection of the marvellous and miraculous deeds of the saints. Similarly, not one but many legends, went to make up the Song of Roland, the old Saxon Legend of Beowulf, and the romance of the Morte d'Arthur. The delightfully non-critical attitude of the mediæval mind was tolerant to the blending of Christianity and paganism, as well as to the general mixing-up of dates, persons, and places, in defiance not only of probability but of possibility, which mark the legends of that time.

In distinguishing between the legend and the tale, it should be particularly noted that the legend is a narrative of a single incident, while the tale is usually compounded of manifold incidents. The tale is also more prone to digression, and consequently to length.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Transpose the following legendary poem into prose form:

*THE LARK*¹

By FLORENCE EARLE COATES

There is a legend somewhere told
Of how the skylark came of old
To the dying Saviour's cross
And, circling round that form of pain,
Poured forth a wild, lamenting strain,
As if for human loss.

¹ Copyright, 1907, J. B. Lippincott Co., and used by permission of publishers and author.

Pierced by those accents of despair,
Upon the little mourner there
Turning his fading eyes,
The Saviour said, "Dost thou so mourn,
And is thy fragile breast so torn,
That Man, thy brother, dies?"

"O'er all the world uplifted high,
We are alone here, thou and I;
And, near to heaven and thee,
I bless thy pity-guided wings!
I bless thy voice — the last that sings
Love's requiem for me!

"Sorrow shall cease to fill thy song;
These frail and fluttering wings grown strong,
Thou shalt no longer fly
Earth's captive — nay, but boldly dare
The azure vault, and upward bear
Thy raptures to the sky!"

Soon passed the Saviour; but the lark,
Close hovering near him in the dark,
Could not his grief abate;
And nigh the watchers at the tomb,
Still mourned through days of grief and gloom,
With note disconsolate.

But when to those sad mourners came,
In rose and amethyst and flame,
The Dawn Miraculous,
Song in which sorrow had no part
Burst from the lark's triumphant heart —
Sweet and tumultuous!

An instant, as with rapture blind,
He faltered; then, his Lord to find,
Straight to the ether flew —
Rising where falls no human tear,
Singing where still his song we hear
Piercing the upper blue!

2. Similarly put one of these into prose (a) "The Vision of Sir Launfal," by Lowell; (b) "The Son of the Evening Star," or "The Hunting of Pau-Puk-Keewis," or "The Death of Kwasind," from Longfellow's "The Song of Hiawatha," (c) "The Legend of the Monk Felix," from Longfellow's "The Golden Legend."

3. Expand into a legend designed for spiritual edification either the first incident in Beowulf (the birth and death of Skiold), the last incident in Gudrun (Horant's refusal of the crowns), or the story of Merlin and the Siege Perilous. (See H. A. Guerber's "Legends of the Middle Ages.")

4. Relate in your own words some Indian legend with which you are familiar.

5. Frame an original story in the form of a legend which shall account for such a natural phenomenon as the Great Stone Face in the White Mountains, or the Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone Park, or any other remarkable natural object that you have seen.

6. From any surname or Christian name signifying a mental or physical characteristic, such as Strong, Bold, Frank, Grace, etc., construct a "legend" which shall account for the origin of the name, after the manner of the Saint Christopher legend.

CHAPTER IX

THE SKETCH

You should never write about anybody until you persuade yourself, at least for the moment, that you love him.

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, in *Vailima Letters*.

An artist, with eyes always open to the picturesque and the beautiful, will fill his portfolio with sketches—perhaps a bit of landscape, a building, a bridge, or the vista of a village street; or a hint at the sunrise glory; or maybe a group of figures, quaint, amusing, or beautiful.

Some of these sketches will be merely crude memoranda, some will be rich in their suggestiveness as fragments; and some will be carefully and completely finished. Many of these sketches will be used later as details for some large canvas; others will be thrown aside; others, not fitted for accessories of some great picture, will be preserved for their own worth-whileness.

In like manner does the artist in words make sketches—bits of nature-description, humorous incidents, phases of emotion, character-revealing situations, inspiring all the more for their very incompleteness. Viewed as material, a number of these will be used later in a short-story, more will be thrown aside, while a few will be kept because of what they are. It is this last class that we must now consider.

Such a sketch will differ from a rounded-out story in that it may be a study of still-life, a bit of description, a

portrayal of emotion, while in a story there will be action, and a sense of progress from point to point. Then again, a sketch may deal with something done, some vividly dramatic incident, but it will present an *appearance*, not a *working out*; a *condition*, not that progression of incidents which, skilfully *composed*, to use the language of art, will form a story. As we have said, a sketch will often *suggest* a story, but it will never fully tell one—it will give an impression, but never relate the beginning, middle, and end of a plotted work of fiction — it will be wholly without plot.

EXAMPLE

AN ANTIDOTE FOR ORDER¹

A SKETCH

By Elizabeth Maury Coombs

The Road to Nowhere winds away between low, grassed hills, and always the mountains loom before you — turquoise, sapphire, or emerald, as the day is fair, cloud-shadowed, or after summer rain.

To-day the leaves are falling, and each house-keeping tree has laid her Persian prayer-rugs on the floor of the old road, where lately only her own shadows lay. Before the wind had cleaned their carpets for them — and then wilfully whirled them away — my horse's feet found soft padding along the lane, so that I came quite unannounced upon an old man who hobbled along with a tiny paper bag in his hand. Plainly, he was just from the little country store that supplies our must-haves at Rabbit Run. I pulled in my horse a little way ahead, and, pointing to the empty seat of the runabout, said:

¹ Copyright, 1913, J. B. Lippincott Company, and used by permission.

"Might you and I be going the same way?"

"We might," he answered, "but mine leads to the almshouse."

"Friend," I smiled, "perhaps mine also, for I am collecting magazine dejection slips."

"I'll just put my little poke here" — placing his small bag carefully as he scrambled up by my invitation — "and my wooden leg can ride outside" — with a wintry smile which time had not robbed of its childlikeness. "It'll ride jest as nice out there." So on the step he propped it — that well-worn contraption of wood, with iron bands, and padded in wearing-spots with rags.

We held some converse of weather and crops, as is our country-neighbor way, and then, as we fell silent, he said:

"I be n't as feeble as some of us, Miss — only a touch of rhu-matiz on dampish days. 'Times now, when the leaves ain't rustlin', I kin crope up an' git a squirrel in a mulberry tree, and," with a self-respectful air he further confided, "I ain't obliged to stay at the County Home. I've got a granddaughter as would take keer er me. But I'm happier here — I can whittle when I want."

"Then your granddaughter is a single woman?"

"No, 'm, not to say exactly; but sometimes them what's married and ain't got no little fellers — seems like they's sometimes more singler than them whar's jest happened not to marry."

"I've seen them."

"I went to live with her when Mother—that's my wife—died. Sarah, my granddaughter, had the name er bein' a powerful housekeeper. Everything had its place, and everything was in its place—'cep'n me. Seems like there was n't no place that fitted me — or that I fitted, ruther. Seems like," he mused on, "er man is just allers kinder litter, after his wife dies, don't it, Miss?"

And again, "Do *you* clean house often, Miss?"

"Well, no; only enough to allay public opinion."

"'Pears like you looked sorter that er way ter me when I fust laid eyes on you!"

I never had a compliment that pleased me more.

"Well — Sarah, she cleaned often, with a towel pinned over her head. Seems like they clean harder with a towel on their heads! And 'peared like my feet was allers in the very place

she'd wanted ter sweep, and then when I'd git up ter go outen the door, I'd let in a fly—I'd be jest about sure to! Seems like that fly'd wait on that porch fer hours jest fer me ter be the one ter open the screen door fer him! Now," he reflected with an indulgent smile, "I ain't never had no great anxiety against a fly — no more had Mother. 'Pears like ter me that he be the harmlesst creetur Gord Almighty made. No bite nor sting has he! Sometimes when a feller gets lonesome a fly's right nice to be with, a sociable little body settin' right on yer knee an' a-cleanin' o' his wings with his little hind legs, an' a-rubbin' o' his little black hands tergether fer ter clean his own little face — an' a-doin' nothin' ter nobody!"

He paused awhile and then back-tracked on his thought, as is the habit of age.

"So I moved along, an' I'm right happy. I brought my old white oak chair — with the patchwork cushion Mother made fer it that fust winter I had rhumatiz — an' it sets mighty comfortable by the fire. 'Times I sets by the fire and whittles jumpin' jinnys — you know them kind? Chilluns loves 'em, an' Mother she used ter say I made 'em that funny a parson would 'a' laughed. 'Times I seems to hear her laughin' yet; she was fat and had a great big shaky laugh — an' war n't never no great hand at house-cleanin'.

"Yes'm, this is where I turn in, an' the road was most amazin' short this evenin'." Then, taking out his little bag, he looked at me so anxiously and queried:

"Miss, do you like sugar?"

As it happens I do not, but, remembering my old grandfather's secretary, as we called his desk, and a certain pigeonhole wherein lay a delectable oozy bag containing brown sugar, which made an appearance only on tooth-pulling occasions when unattended with tears, I said:

"If it's brown ——"

"Brown it is, Miss!" he cried with his glad child-smile. So in I dipped my fingers.

He added as I left him:

"Now, was n't that lucky! I just had five cents, an' the white cost six a pound!"

Sometimes I wonder — as the Road to Nowhere in my mind

leads along to where, far in front, the mountains of Truth loom turquoise, sapphire, and emerald battlemented against the horizon of the world — if maybe with the litter and the whittlings — we housekeepers — that in the largest sense are house-mothers — may not be sweeping out some human souls with the trash? If, possibly, we may not have kept out the little children — along with the mud on their shoes? If, in our eternal sweeping away of cobwebs, we may not unwittingly have swept away those fine filaments of love crossing from mother to child that by-and-by would have doubled and strengthened into the cable cords of love that would have held them to the home?

ANALYSIS

This sketch has excellent characterization. The two persons in the narrative, the contented old Derelict, and the Lady who did not look like the house-cleaning-kind, are no more complete and distinct than are the two who are merely mentioned and who do not appear — the vigorously orderly Granddaughter, and the Mother who was tolerant of flies, and had a “big, shaky laugh.”

There is atmosphere too, on “The Road to Nowhere,” and a well-defined setting.

This sketch has humor and pathos, and it is pervaded by charm, nowhere greater than in the tender moralizing of the closing paragraph.

But though it suggests a story, it was more fitting to crystallize the situation into its present sketch-form than further to amplify it, and we feel that in this presentation it has most worth-whileness.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. (a) Name some narratives from current magazine fiction which you consider are sketches—descriptive,

humorous, emotional, or character-portraying. (b) Criticise one fully.

2. Make a list of situations which strike you as being suitable for original sketches.

3. Write two sketches, of from one thousand to two thousand words each, illustrating different phases of nature or of human life.

4. Select a situation or a mood from some famous short-story and do that section over into sketch form.

5. Do you think the narrative style of a sketch admits of as much delicacy as that of a short-story, or more? Why?

CHAPTER X

THE SHORT-STORY AND ITS ESSENTIALS

There is no greater mistake than the supposition that a true originality is a mere matter of impulse or inspiration. To originate, is carefully, patiently, and understandingly to combine.

—EDGAR ALLAN POE, *Magazine Writing*.

The tale may be said to bear the same relation to the short-story that a string of beads does to a jewelled brooch. The beads may be few or many, and they may vary in size and color—the string upon which they are strung is the only thing that holds them together. But in the brooch, the jewels are arranged in such a well-defined pattern that the symmetry of its design would be lost by the removal of a single gem or even the alteration of its position.

The short-story is the youngest of all forms of narrative, for its conscious development began less than a hundred years ago—in France, with “Mateo Falcone” (1829), by Prosper Mérimée; and in America, with Poe’s “Berenice” (1835).

While Poe himself began to write technically perfect short-stories several years later than some foreign writers—notably the Frenchmen Mérimée and Balzac, and the Russian Pushkin—it must be remembered that the American author first publicly recognized the short-story as

something different from, and superior to, the story that is short, and actually set forth its principles so broadly that we accept them generally today.

Thus the modern short-story has developed, until now it is recognized to be as distinct a form of composition as the writing of verse or drama—it is an elastic, living thing, ready to receive new beauties of form from whosoever may approach it with a skillful hand.

More than this, the short-story is said by men of parts to be one of the highest forms of the narrator's art. Poe writes that in his opinion it "affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose."¹ And a more recent critic asserts that "in its capacity for perfection of structure, for nice discrimination in means, and for a satisfying exposition of the full power of words, it is much superior to the novel and can only rank below the poem."²

When we come to christen this modern form we are embarrassed, for it would seem that all the good names were used for various types of narrative before the birth of this particular fictional form. One of its most intelligent exponents finds no better way out of the difficulty than this: "I have written 'Short-story' with a capital S and a hyphen because I wished to emphasize the distinction between the Short-story and the story which is merely short. The Short-story is a high and difficult department

¹ Poe's critique on Hawthorne.

² Henry Seidel Canby, *Yale Studies in English*.

of fiction. The story which is short can be written by anybody who can write at all."¹

This distinction will appear more clearly as we proceed; and as for the name, it is too late a day now to attempt to change it, so we shall always use the hyphen while writing of the modern short-story, though it seems best not to insist upon the capital S, except in titles, and when the word opens a sentence.

1. Essentials of the Short-Story

(a) *A Singleness of Impression.* The standard to which the would-be short-story must inevitably conform is what a great story-writer² has called "totality of effect." This means that the story must leave at its close one dominant, well-defined sensation. To illustrate, let us compare the impression we feel after reading the tale of "Sinbad the Sailor" with that produced by Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." The first gives us the broken and diversified sensations made by a vivid and brilliant series of incidents which do not have a single central idea powerful enough to fuse all these incidents into a whole. The second gives a single, strong impression—that of gloomy desolation, to which all the incidents of the story have contributed, and in which they are all merged. The whole story *is* gloom—gloom begins and gloom ends it; and after we have read the story, gloom is the single impression that remains.

It is no easy matter to explain to the young writer how

¹ Brander Mathews, *The Philosophy of the Short-story.*

² Poe.

this singleness of effect may be secured, because many really good short-stories are somewhat weak in this regard, just as a person may be a very good man and yet be weak in some one important respect. Then too, there is something in all art which may be seen and felt more readily than explained.

There are several things, however, which we ought to remember when seeking to secure singleness of effect as we write a short-story: (1) Determine at the outstart what tone you wish to strike, what effect you wish to produce—for example, that of a young man whose character develops by his struggle to remain true to his ideals while under heavy pressure brought to bear to make him unfaithful. (2) Do not put into your story a single word, or action, or bit of description, or character, or *anything*, that does not in some direct or indirect way help to produce the effect you desire. (3) Do not omit anything that may help to bring about the same result.

Naturally, these are merely principles, and you cannot learn to apply them without both care and practise; but they are important, and well worth your earnest attention. In proportion as they are carried out will a short-story leave a definite impression on the reader.

(b) *A Well-Defined Plot.* An anecdote, or a tale developed from an anecdote, a fable, a legend, or a sketch, may leave a unified impression. For example, a fable may leave the single effect of folly, or of stinginess. Singleness of effect, then, is not the sole essential of the short-story, even if it is one of the most important. The short-story *must* have a well-defined plot, otherwise it is some-

thing else than a modern short-story. This necessary plot is the very foundation of the story, or to quote from a recent study of the subject, it is "the working plan used by the building author."¹ The plot is the *arrangement* of the action of the story so that each incident shall be a necessary step in the progress towards the climax.

The plot should be consciously designed and adapted so as to produce the singleness of effect already mentioned; therefore it should be regarded as a means to an end. In structure, it should be simple rather than complex; that is, it should be direct, forceful, and swift in its action, and never very elaborate, as are the plots of most novels. Compare the direct simplicity of the plot of Maupassant's "The Necklace" with the complexity of that of "The Gold Bug" by Poe. The latter is 15,000 words in length—much longer than the average short-story of today—yet even 15,000 words appear too few to carry so cumbersome a plot, and the story staggers under its weight.

(c) *A Dominant Incident.* The plot should revolve about a single, central, dominant incident, which in many cases will be the nucleus (in the mind of the author) from which the story originally developed. The short-story is too brief a literary form to carry either too large a number of incidents, or more than one that is central and really dominant. All the other incidents must therefore help to develop this main incident. Thus the unity of effect which we have said is the first essential, will best be secured. "Mrs. Knollys," by H. J. Stimson, "The Ambitious Guest," by Hawthorne, and "The Substitute," by François

¹ Henry Albert Phillips, *The Plot of the Short Story.*

Coppée, are all stories having a single big incident, and the minor incidents and details are introduced solely to expand and accentuate this one.

(d) *A Prèëminent Character.* "The short-story," says Professor James Weber Linn, "should be a turning-point in the life of a single character." The plot of the modern short-story is concerned with one, or at most two, persons. If others are introduced, their parts are so slight as to be merely tributary, serving only to aid in the plot action of the chief actors. Such stories are "Tennessee's Partner," by Bret Harte, where the main actors are only two, and "Markheim," by Stevenson, wherein the hero plays practically a solo part, with the old Dealer, his servant, and the Visitant, as accompanists. The true short-story *concentrates* its interest instead of *spreading* it. The surest way to spread, and hence to weaken, interest is to divide attention among too many characters.

(e) *A Complication and Its Resolution.* If the chief actors in the story were able to pursue the even tenor of their way to joy and good fortune, their lives would perhaps be happy, but like the nations that have no history they would not be worth writing about. So, the short-story plot must involve some difficulty or complication, and the interest of the story will lie in the outcome of this difficulty—whether it dominates, or is dominated by, the chief actors; in other words, after you have shown the complication, the interest hinges upon how it all turns out.

Let us now examine a short-story plot embodying the foregoing essentials.

*THE NECKLACE**By Guy de Maupassant*

The discontented young wife of a petty clerk, always longing for luxuries she could not have, borrows a diamond necklace from a wealthy friend to go to a reception. On her return home she discovers she has lost the necklace. All search for it is fruitless, and her husband feels obliged to borrow largely, and to mortgage all their future to raise money to replace the costly ornament. The pair sink into a life of sordid drudgery. The once frivolous, pleasure-loving wife spends day after day, year after year, in degrading toil. She washes dirty linen, she scrubs floors, she does all manner of rough work, losing all her beauty and grace. At the end of ten dreary years the debt is paid. Then one Sunday she meets the rich friend. She is so coarsened, so aged, that the latter does not recognize her. The wife speaks to her friend, and is moved to tell her the cause of her unhappy transformation. The friend, to whom the substitution had been until that moment unknown, exclaims in pity, "My poor Mathilde!" and tells her that the lost necklace had not been of diamonds, but of comparatively worthless paste.

Here is "Singleness of Impression," the tragedy of needless suffering. The "Dominant Incident" is the ball and what havoc it works in two lives. The "Preëminent Character" is Mathilde. The "Complication" is the loss of the Necklace. The "Resolution" of the complication is the discovery of the truth at the end. The combination

of all these elements constitutes the "plot." Technically, "The Necklace" is a perfect short-story.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Using what books of reference you may have at command, (a) quote as many definitions of the short-story as you can find; (b) make a list of the several elements the various authors find in the short-story; (c) add any essentials which you think have been omitted; (d) give your reasons for your belief that they should be added; (e) using the foregoing material, construct a definition of your own.

2. Find a short-story not named in this chapter which seems to you to leave a single impression, as, for example, the failure of kidnappers to subdue the spirit of a lively youngster, in "The Ransom of Red Chief," by O. Henry.

3. Find a short-story which is weak in this element because it leaves a divided impression.

4. Is the story good otherwise?

5. Write out the plots of two short-stories and then say how they do or do not show the five essentials mentioned in this chapter.

6. Construct a short-story plot of your own and do the same with it.

7. Criticise any short-story you can find, noticing particularly whether the main incident is brought out or partially hidden by the introduction of minor or subordinate incidents.

8. Do the same with any short-story, having in mind the

relative importance of the leading and the minor characters.

9. Pick out the complication (or crisis, or "mix-up") and its resolution (or solution, or outcome), in any two short-stories.

10. Invent at least three original complications for plots and briefly suggest how they might be worked out.

11. Invent an original plot for a short-story and state it in not more than three hundred words.

12. Somewhat in the following manner, analyze its several parts under four essential heads—the *whole* will be "b," the "well-defined plot," omitted in the following sample outline.

(a) SINGLE IMPRESSION

The failure of an undeserved success.

(c) DOMINANT INCIDENT

The plot of a play is stolen by a weak but ambitious young man from a comrade whose sudden illness prevents his offering his plot for a prize competition.

Minor Incidents.

How the theft occurs.

The first moral effect on the thief.

The surprise and pleasure of his friends to learn of "his success."

The beginning of doubt upon the part of his friends, etc.

(d) PREËMINENT CHARACTER

Name and characteristics.

Minor Characters.

The victim, and others.

(e) COMPLICATION AND RESOLUTION

How the theft threatens to ruin the offender.

How he deals with the situation.

The sudden exposure.

Generosity of the victim.

CHAPTER XI

A SPECIMEN SHORT-STORY

The short-story must be short, i. e., capable of being read at one sitting, in order that it may gain the immense force derivable from *totality*. Second, the short-story must possess *immediateness*; it should aim at a single or unique effect—"if the very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then it has failed in its first step." Thirdly, that the short-story must be subjected to *compression*; in the whole composition there should not be one word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preëstablished design. Fourthly, that it must assume the aspect of *verisimilitude*; "truth is often, and in very great degree the aim of the tale—some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination." Fifthly, that it must give the impression of *finality*; the story, and the interest in the characters which it introduces, must begin with the opening sentence and end with the last.—W. J. AND C. W. DAWSON, *The Great English Short-Story Writers*.

It is now time to examine a typical specimen of the short-story, and in doing so, we shall have in view a two-fold purpose: to see how a skillful writer handles the essentials of the short-story, as set forth in the preceding chapter; and also to familiarize ourselves with a good specimen of the form so that we may refer to it as we study succeeding chapters.

In studying this story, first read it over without paying any attention to the marginal notes, for many of them will become more clear as later chapters are reached. Remember that not all good stories are perfect stories, therefore

be independent in forming your opinions regarding the merits and the defects of this example.

THE DUB¹

A HARVARD-YALE FOOTBALL STORY

By *Ralph Henry Barbour*

"Briggs, Bayard Newlyn, Hammondsport, Ill., 1 L., H 24."

2. That's the way the catalogue put it. Mostly, though, he was called "Bi" Briggs. He was six feet and one inch tall and weighed one hundred and ninety-four pounds stripped, and was built by an all-wise Providence to play guard. Graduate Coaches used to get together on the side-line and figure out what we'd do to Yale if we had eleven men like Bi.

Characterization.

3. Then after they'd watched Bi play awhile they'd want to kick him.

Foundation for plot.

4. He got started all wrong, Bi did. He came to college from a Western university and entered the junior class. That was his first mistake. A fellow can't butt in at the beginning of the third year and expect to trot even with fellows who have been there two years. It takes a chap one year to get shaken down and another year to get set up. By the time Bi was writing his "life" he had just about learned the rules.

Not in full sympathy with his college.

KEY.

5. His second mistake was in joining the first society that saw his name in

For the college annual.
"The rules" not literal.

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the catalogue. It was a bum frat, and it queered Bi right away. I guess he made other mistakes too, but those were enough.

6. In his junior year Bi was let alone. He was taking about every course any of us had ever heard of — and several we had n't — and had no time for football. We got licked for keeps that fall, and after the *Crimson* and the *Bulletin* and the *Graduates' Magazine* and the newspapers had shown us just what ailed our system of coaching, we started to reorganize things. We had n't reorganized for two years, and it was about time. The new Coach was a chap who had n't made the 'Varsity when he was in college, but who was supposed to have football down to a fine point; to hear the fellows tell about the new Coach made you feel real sorry for Walter Camp. Well, he started in by kidnapping every man in college who weighed over a hundred and sixty-five. Bi did n't escape. Bi had played one year in the freshwater college at left tackle and knew a touchdown from a nose-guard, and that was about all. Bi was for refusing to have anything to do with football at first: said he was head-over-ears in study and had n't the time. But they told him all about his Duty to his College and Every Man into the Breach, and he relented. Bi was terribly good-natured. That was the main trouble with him.

7. The fellows who did football for the papers fell in love with him on the spot. He was a good-looker, with

Note relation of frat to college life, and especially to athletics.

Note satire.

KEY. FOUNDATION FOR
MAIN CRISIS.

sort of curly brown hair, nice eyes, a romantic nose, and cheeks like a pair of twenty-four-dollar American Beauties, and his pictures looked fine and dandy in the papers. "Bayard Briggs, Harvard's new candidate for guard, of whom the Coaches expect great things." That's the way they put it. And they were n't far wrong. The Coaches did expect great things from Bi; so did the rest of us. When they took Bi from the second and put him in at right guard on the Varsity we all approved.

8. But there was trouble right away. Bi did n't seem to fit. They swapped him over to left guard, then they tried him at right tackle, then at right guard again. Then they placed him gently but firmly back on the second. And Bi was quite happy and contented and disinterested during it all. *He* did n't mind when six Coaches gathered about him and demanded to know what in the name of This and That and the Other Thing was the matter with him. He just shook his head and assured them good-naturedly that he did n't know; and intimated by his manner that he did n't care. When he came back to the second he seemed rather glad; I think he felt as though he had got back home after a hard trip. He stayed right with us all the rest of the season.

9. I think the trouble was that Bi never got it fully into his fool head that it was n't just fun — like puss-in-the-corner or blind-man's-buff. If you talked to him about Retrieving Last

Characterization.

Foundation for surprise.

Minor complication—foundation for main complication.

KEY.

Narrator writes as from the second eleven.

Year's Overwhelming Defeat he'd smile pleasantly and come back with some silly remark about Political Economy or Government or other poppycock. I fancy Bi's father had told him that he was coming to college to study, and Bi believed him.

10. Of course, he did n't go to New Haven with us. He did n't have time. I wished afterwards that I had n't had time myself. Yale trimmed us 23 to 6, and there was n't a ten-dollar bill to be found from one end of college to the other when we got home.

11. The papers threshed it all out again, and all the old grads who weren't too weak to hold pens wrote to the *Bulletin* and explained where the trouble lay. It looked for awhile like another reorganization, but Cooper, the new Captain, was different. He did n't get hysterical. Along about Christmas-time, after everyone had got tired of guessing, he announced his new Coach. His name was Hecker, and he had graduated so far back that the *Crimson* had to look up its old files to find out who in blazes he was. He had played right half two years, it seemed, but had n't made any special hit, and Yale had won each year. The *Herald* said he was a successful lawyer in Tona-wanda, New York. He did n't show up for spring practice; could n't leave his work, Cooper explained. Bi did n't come out either. He could n't leave *his* work. At the end of the year he graduated summa cum laude, or something like that, and the *Crimson* said

Developing incident. Note how everything shows Bi's attitude to the game.

Preparation for the main incident.

he was coming back to the Law School and would be eligible for the team. Just as though it mattered.

12. We showed up a week before college began and had practice twice a day. At the end of that week we knew a whole lot about Hecker. He was about thirty-six, kind of thin, wore glasses and was a devil for work. When we crawled back to showers after practice we'd cuss Hecker up hill and down dale. And half an hour later, if we met him crossing the Square, we'd be haughty and stuck-up for a week if he remembered our names. He was a little bit of all right, was Hecker. I never heard him swear all season, but he could talk to make the blood come. He was one of the quiet kind. He'd always say "please," and if you did n't please mighty quick you'd be sitting on the bench all nicely snuggled up in a blanket before you knew what had struck you. That's the sort of Indian Hecker was, and we loved him.

Use of contrast.

Character drawing.

13. Ten days after college opened we had one hundred and twenty men on the field. If Hecker heard of a likely chap and thought well of his looks, it was all up with Mr. Chap. He was out on the gridiron biting holes in the sod before he knew it. That's what happened to Bi. One day Bi was n't there and the next day he was.

14. We had two or three weeding-outs, and it got along towards the middle of October, and Bi was still with us. We were shy on plunging halves that fall and so I got my chance

at last. I had to fight hard, though, for I was up against Murray, last year's first sub. Then a provisional Varsity was formed and the Second Team began doing business with Bi at right guard again. The left guard on the Varsity was Bannen — "Slugger" Bannen. He did n't weigh within seven pounds of Bi, but he had springs inside of him and could get the jump on a flea. He was called "Slugger" because he looked like a prize-fighter, but he was a gentle, harmless chap, and one of the Earnest Workers in the Christian Association. He could stick his fist through an oak panel same as you or I would put our fingers through a sheet of paper. And he did pretty much as he darn pleased with Bi. I'll bet, though, that Bi could have walked all over "Slugger" if he'd really tried. But he was like an automobile and did n't know his own strength.

Characterization.

15. We disposed of the usual ruck of small teams, and by the first of November it was mighty plain that we had the best Eleven in years. But we did n't talk that way, and the general impression was that we had another one of the Beaten But Not Humiliated sort.

16. A week before we went to Philadelphia I had a streak of good luck and squeezed Murray out for keeps. Penn had a dandy team that year and we had to work like thunder to bring the ball home. It was nip and tuck to the end of the first half, neither side scoring. Then we went back and began

kicking, and Cooper had the better of the other chap ten yards on a punt. Finally we got down to their twenty yards, and Saunders and I pulled in eight more of it. Then we took our tackles back and hammered out the only score. But that did n't send our stock up much because folks did n't know how good Penn was. But the Eli's Coaches who saw the game were n't fooled a little bit; only as we had n't played anything but the common or garden variety of football they did n't get much to help them. We went back to Cambridge and began to learn the higher branches.

17. We were coming fast now, so fast that Hecker got scary and laid half the team off for a day at a time. And that's how Bi got his chance again, and threw it away just as he had last year. He played hard, but — oh, I don't know. Some fellow wrote once that unless you had football instinct you'd never make a real top-notch. I think maybe that's so. Maybe Bi did n't have football instinct. Though I'll bet if someone had hammered it into his head that it was business and not a parlor entertainment, he'd have buckled down and done something. It was n't that he was afraid of punishment; he'd take any amount and come back smiling. I came out of the Locker Building late that evening and Hecker and Cooper were just ahead of me.

18. "What's the matter with this man" — Hecker glanced at his notebook — "this man Briggs?" he asked.

No writer who did not know the game could write this convincingly.

Further foundation for crisis.

19. "Briggs?" answered Cooper. "He's a dub; that's all — just a dub."

KEY TO MAIN CHARACTER.

20. That described him pretty well, I thought. By dub we did n't mean just a man who could n't play the game; we meant a man who knew how to play and would n't; a chap who could n't be made to understand. Bi was a dub of the first water.

21. We did n't have much trouble with Dartmouth that year. It was before she got sassy and rude. Then there were two weeks of hard practice before the Yale game. We had a new set of signals to learn and about half a dozen new plays. The weather got nice and cold and Hecker made the most of it. We did n't have time to feel chilly. One week went by, and then — it was a Sunday morning, I remember — it came out that Corson, the Varsity right guard, had been protested by Yale. It seemed that Corson had won a prize of two dollars and fifty cents about five years before for throwing the hammer at a picnic back in Pennsylvania. Well, there was a big shindy and the Athletic Committee got busy and considered his case. But Hecker did n't wait for the Committee to get through considering. He just turned Corson out and put in Blake, the first sub. On Tuesday the Committee declared Corson ineligible and Blake sprained his knee in practice! With Corson and Blake both out of it, Hecker was up against it. He tried shifting "Slugger" Bannen over to right and putting the full-back at left.

Note suggestive expressions throughout.

Satire.

DIRECT MINOR CRISIS.

Jordan, the Yale left guard, was the best in the world, and we needed a man that could stand up against him. But "Slugger" was simply at sea on the right side of center and so had to be put back again. After that the only thing in sight that looked the least bit like a right guard was Bayard Newlyn Briggs.

22. They took Bi and put him on the Varsity, and forty-'leven Coaches stood over his defenceless form and hammered football into him for eight solid hours on Wednesday and Thursday. And Bi took it all like a little woolly lamb, without a bleat. But it just made you sick to think what was going to happen to Bi when Jordan got to work on him!

23. We had our last practice Thursday, and that night we went to the Union and heard speeches and listened to the new songs. Pretty rotten they were too; but that's got nothing to do with the story. Friday we mooned around until afternoon and then had a few minutes of signal practice indoors. Bi looked a little bit worried, I thought. Maybe it was just beginning to dawn on him that it was n't all a blooming lark.

24. What happened next morning I learned afterwards from Bi. Hecker sent for him to come to his room, put him in a nice, easy chair, and then sat down in front of him. And he talked.

25. "I've sent for you, Mr. Briggs," began Hecker in his quiet way, "because it has occurred to me that you

KEY.

MAIN INCIDENT OPENS.

don't altogether understand what we are going to do this afternoon."

26. Bi looked surprised.

27. "Play Yale, sir?"

28. "Incidentally, yes. But we are going to do more than play her; we are going to beat her to a standstill; we are going to give her a drubbing that she will look back upon for several years with painful emotion. It is n't often that we have an opportunity to beat Yale, and I propose to make the best of this one. So kindly disabuse your mind of the idea that we are merely going out to play a nice, exhilarating game of football. We are going to simply wipe up the earth with Yale!"

29. "Indeed?" murmured Bi politely.

30. "Quite so," answered the Coach dryly. "I suppose you know that your presence on the team is a sheer accident? If you don't, allow me to tell you candidly that if there had been anyone else in the college to put in Corson's place we would never have called on you, Mr. Briggs."

31. He let that soak in a minute. Then, —

32. "Have you ever heard of this man Jordan who will play opposite you to-day?" he asked.

33. "Yes, sir; a very good player, I understand."

34. "A good player! My dear fellow, he's the best guard on a college team in twenty years. And you are going to play opposite him. Understand that?"

35. "Er — certainly," answered Bi, getting a bit uneasy.

36. "What are you going to do about it?"

37. "Do? Why, I shall do the best I can, Mr. Hecker. I don't suppose I am any match for Jordan, but I shall try——"

38. "Stop that! Don't you dare talk to me of doing the best you can!" said the Coach, shaking a finger under Bi's nose — "for all the world," as Bi told me afterwards, "as though he was trying to make me mad!" " 'Best you can' be hanged! You've got to do better than you can, a hundred per cent. better than you can, ever did, or ever will again. That's what you've got to do! You've got to fight like the devil from the first whistle to the last without a let-up! You've got to remember every instant that if you don't, we are going to be beaten! You've got to make Jordan look like a base imitation before the first half is over! That's what you've got to do, my boy!"

39. "But it is n't fair!" protested Bi. "You know yourself that Jordan can outplay me, sir!"

40. "I know it? I know nothing of the sort. Look at yourself! Look at your weight and your build! Look at those arms and legs of yours! Look at those muscles! And you dare to sit there, like a squeaking kid, and tell me that Jordan can outplay you! What have you got your strength for? What have we pounded football into you for?"

41. Over went his chair and he was

shaking his finger within an inch of Bi's face, his eyes blazing behind his glasses.

42. "Shall I tell you what's the matter with you, Briggs? Shall I tell you why we would n't have chosen you if there had been anyone else under God's blue sky? Because you're a coward — a rank, measly coward, sir!"

FIRST MAIN CRISIS.

43. Bi's face went white and he got up slowly out of his chair.

44. "That will do, sir," he said softly, like a tiger-puss purring. "You've done what no one else has ever done, Mr. Hecker. You've called me a coward. You're in authority and I have no redress — now. But after to-day —." He stopped and laughed unpleasantly. "I'll see you again, sir."

KEY.

HINT OF CLIMAX.

45. "Heroics!" sneered the Coach. "They don't impress me, sir. I've said you're a coward, and I stand by it. I repeat it. You are a coward, Briggs, an arrant coward."

46. Bi gripped his hands and tried to keep the tears back.

47. "Coward, am I? What are you, I'd like to know? What are you when you take advantage of your position to throw insults at me? If you were n't the Head Coach I'd — I'd —"

48. "What would you do?" sneered Hecker.

49. "I'd kill you!" blazed Bi. "And I'll do it yet, you — you —"

50. "Tut, tut! That's enough, Briggs. You can't impose on me that way. I have n't watched you play football all the fall to be taken in now

by your melodrama. But after to-day you will find me quite at your service, Mr. — Coward. And meanwhile we'll call this interview off, if you please. The door, Mr. Briggs!"

51. Bi seized his hat from the table and faced Hecker. He was smiling now, smiling with a white, set, ugly face.

52. "Perhaps I am wrong," he said softly with a little laugh. "I think I am. Either that or you are lying. For if you are really willing to meet me after to-day's game you are no coward, sir."

Suspense.

53. Then he went out.

54. We lined up at two o'clock.

Preparation for climax
begins.

55. Our chances were thought so poorly of that the Elis were offering seven to five, while over in New York on the floor of the Stock Exchange they were laying two to one on Yale. There was a huge crowd and a band. I did n't mind the crowd, but that band got me worried so that I could n't do a thing the first ten minutes. It's funny how a little thing like that will queer your game. One fellow I knew once was off his game the whole first half because some idiot was flying a kite over the field advertising someone's pills.

56. We had the ball and began hammering at the Yale line and kept it up until we had reached her fifteen yards. Then she got together and stopped us; neld us for downs in spite of all we could do. Then she kicked and we started it all over again. It was n't exciting football to watch,

maybe, but it was the real thing with us. We had to work — Lord, how we had to work! And how we did work too! We made good the next time, but it took us fifteen minutes to get back down the field. Cooper himself went over for the first touchdown. Maybe the crowd did n't shout! Talk about noise! I'd never heard any before! It was so darned unexpected, you see, for almost everyone had thought Yale was going to do her usual stunt and rip us to pieces. But in that first half she was on the defensive every moment. Seven times she had the ball in that first thirty-five minutes, but she could no more keep it than she could fly. Altogether she gained eighteen yards in that half. It was one-sided, if you like, but it was no picnic. It was hammer and tongs from first to last — man's work and lots of it.

57. We did n't rely on tricks, but went at her centre and guards and just wore them down. And when that first half was over — 11-0 was the score — the glory of one Jordan was as a last season's straw hat. A new star blazed in the football firmament; and it was in the constellation of Harvard and its name was Bi Briggs. What I'm telling you is history, and you need n't take my word alone for it. I never really saw a man play guard before that day — and I'd watched lots of fellows try. Bi was a cyclone. To see him charge into Jordan — and get the jump on him every time — was alone worth the price of admission. And as for block-

ing, he was a stone wall, and that's all there is to it. Never once did the Elis get through him. He held the line on his side as stiff as a poker until quarter had got the ball away, and then he mixed things up with the redoubtable Jordan, and you could almost see the fur fly! Play? O Lord! He was simply great! And the rest of us, watching when we had a chance, just felt our eyes popping out. And all the time he smiled; smiled when he went charging through the Blue line, smiled when he took Toppan on his shoulder and hurled him over the mix-up for six yards, smiled when we pulled him out of a pile-up looking like a badly butchered beeve, and still smiled when we trotted off the field in a chaos of sound. But that smile was n't pretty. I guess he was thinking most of the time of Hecker; and maybe sometimes he got Hecker and Jordan mixed up.

58. When we came back for the second half we were n't yet out of the woods, and we knew it. We knew that Yale would forget that she was bruised and battered and tired and would play harder than ever. And she did. And for just about ten minutes I would n't have bet a copper on the game. Yale had us on the run and plugged away until we were digging our toes into our twelve-yard line. Then, thank Heaven! we held her. After that, although she still played the game as though she did n't know she was beaten, she was never dangerous. We scored twice more in that half. When

"Smiled." See ¶ 51.

Hurdling was allowed then.

KEY.

there was still ten minutes of play the whistle blew and Jordan, white, groggy, and weepy about the eyes, was dragged off the field. Bi had sure used him rough, but I'm not pretending Jordan had n't come back at him. Bi's face was something fierce. The blood had dried in flakes under his nose, one eye was out of commission, and his lip was bleeding where his tooth had gone through it. But he still smiled. When we trotted off for the last time the score-board said: "Harvard 22; Opponents, 0." And those blurry white figures up there paid for all the hard work of the year.

MINOR CLIMAX.

59. It was past seven when we assembled for dinner. About all the old players for twenty years back were there and it sounded like a sewing-circle. Bi was one of the last to come in. He pushed his way through the crowd about the door, shaking off the fellows' hands, and strode across to where Hecker was standing. Hecker saw him coming, but he only watched calmly. Bi stopped in front of him, that same sort of ugly smile on his face.

CLIMAX BEGINS.

60. "We've broken training, sir?" he asked quietly.

FULL CRISIS.

61. "Yes," answered the Coach.

62. Then Bi's hand swung around and that slap was heard all over the room. There was a moment of dead silence; then half-a-dozen of us grabbed Bi. We thought he'd gone crazy, but he did n't try to shake us off. He just stood there and looked at Hecker. The Coach never raised a

hand and never changed his expression. — only one cheek was as red as the big flag at the end of the room. He held up his hand and we quieted down.

63. "Gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Briggs was quite within his rights. Please do not interfere with him."

64. We let Bi go.

65. "The incident demands explanation," continued the Coach. "As you all know, we were left in a hole by the loss of Corson and Blake, and the only man who seemed at all possible was Mr. Briggs. But Mr. Briggs, playing as he had been playing all year, would have been no match for Jordan of Yale. We tried every means we could think of to wake Mr. Briggs up. He had, I felt certain, the ability to play football, — winning football, — but we could n't get it out of him. As a last resort I tried questionable means. I asked Mr. Briggs to call on me this morning. I told him we must win to-day, and that in order to do so he would have to play better than he'd been doing. He told me that he would do his best, but that he knew himself no match for Jordan. That spirit would n't have done, gentlemen, and I tried to change it. I told Mr. Briggs that he was a coward, something I knew to be false. I insulted him over and over again until only my authority as Head Coach kept him from trying to kill me. He told me he would do so when we had broken training and I promised to give him satisfaction. What I did is, I am well aware, open

DÉNOUEMENT.

KEY TO ENTIRE THEME.

to criticism. But our necessity was great and I stand ready to accept any consequences. At least, the result of to-day's contest in a measure vindicates my method. You who saw Mr. Briggs play will, I am sure, find excuses for me. As for the gentleman himself, it remains with him to say whether he will accept my apology for what passed this morning, taking into consideration the strait in which we were placed and the results as shown, or whether he will demand other satisfaction."

66. Half a hundred surprised, curious faces turned towards Bi, who, during Hecker's statement, had looked at first contemptuous, then bewildered and finally comprehending. For about ten seconds the room was as still as a graveyard. Then Bi stepped up with outstretched hand like a little man, and for the second time that day we went crazy!

Moral victory.

67. Bi was hailed as the greatest guard of the year, and they put him on the All-America Team, but I don't think Bi cared a button. Anyhow, when they tried to get him to come out for the Eleven the next fall he absolutely refused, and nothing anyone could say would budge him. He said he was too busy.

Consistency in character.

Final "twist," or surprise.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Besides the general qualities of compression and completeness, which may be assumed in the very name short-story, write out under five heads an analysis of

“The Dub,” showing how all the essentials are employed by the author. Be careful to state the plot briefly.

2. Nearly every good short-story lays strong emphasis upon its “big moment.” (a) Which is the “big moment” in this one? (b) Does any other moment rival it in either interest or importance?

3. Make a list of the incidents, or separate (though connected) events of “The Dub,” setting down the paragraph numbers of each.

4. By using the letters P (plot) and D (developing), separate the list you made for Question 3 into PLOT incidents and DEVELOPING incidents. Notice that a plot incident is one which is absolutely essential to the story—that is, one that could not be either dispensed with or totally changed without totally changing the story. A developing incident is one which serves to develop the progress of the story, yet it might be omitted, or another incident might be substituted for it, without vitally altering the story.

5. Can you state the final impression left by “The Dub” in one short sentence?

6. What are the things in “The Dub” which seem to you to be handled with special skill from the standpoint of good story-telling?

7. Criticise any points which seem to you to be weak.

8. Would you omit any paragraphs? If so, which?

9. Would you omit any sentences? Which, if any?

10. Suggest any additions or changes which in your opinion would improve the story.

11. Is the story told convincingly—that is, does it

seem like a true story, or merely a concocted narrative?

12. Suggest any improvements in this respect that may occur to you.

13. Does the language have the college flavor? Point out examples, favorable or unfavorable.

14. Compare "The Dub" with any story of sport with which you may be familiar.

15. Is the complication worked out, or resolved, satisfactorily?

16. Construct a plot in outline (synopsis) of a short-story dealing with school or college sport.

NOTE: The members of the class should be asked to criticise the plots submitted.

17. Following the ideas suggested by these questions, criticise a story selected from a magazine.

CHAPTER XII

SELECTING A THEME

There is too much joy in life, too much that is clearly good and beautiful, and too strong an instinct in man of its mystic import, for him long to endure the books that merely disillusion and defile. — RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, *How to Get the Best Out of Books*.

1. What Is a Theme?

If the plot is “the building author’s working plan,” the theme may be compared to the ground on which the house is erected. To multiply metaphors, the theme of the story may be called its keynote; it is the motive force of the story; it is the pivot on which the plot moves. Plainly, the theme is *specifically* what the story is about.

The theme of the story should never be confounded with the title of the story. The title is one of the important adjuncts of the story, as we shall see later, but the theme is more than the *name* of the story — it is the germ from which the story grew. For example: How a minister whose son had committed some crime, and who was constantly preaching on the punishment due to sin, was moved to forgiveness of that son by sympathy with a paroled prisoner in whom he became interested — this might be the theme of a story; while the title might be, “A new Theme for the Pastor of All Souls.”

2. What Not to Write About

There are some themes which people have grown tired of, because they have been used so often that interest in them has palled. The poor apprentice with a noble soul who wins the love of the rich merchant's daughter has not a chance in a thousand of winning the favor of an editor. The long-lost wanderer who returns at Christmas or Thanksgiving will be sent back — with a rejection slip — by the magazines. The story of the child who writes to Santa Claus for delicacies for his sick mother, and thereby discovers wealthy relatives, could not be sold for so much as the price of a pint of milk. The missing will that is providentially found; the noble revenge that heaps coals of fire on the wrong-doer's head, and, incidentally, glorifies and crowns with a halo the party of the first part; the angel child who converts the sinner, or who re-unites parents on the brink of a separation, or who reconciles parents and grandparents; the young workman who turns out to be heir to a dukedom; the Southern youth who enlists in the Union army, and fires on his brother or loses his sweetheart or is disowned by his father; even the millionaire who is converted to Christian socialism — have long been calling in vain at the magazine offices, and it may be taken as a foregone conclusion that editors today are "not at home" to a single one of them.

Besides these trite themes, there are others which are commonly taboo, such as those which are on the shady side of sex morality, the controversial or polemical themes, the didactic themes, those which are crazily absurd, and

all those which deal with persons, places, or things unfamiliar to the writer.

3. General Sources of Themes

(a) *Race and Country*. The themes that deal with racial types — from negro stories, and those dealing with the Indian, to the stories of the Pennsylvania Germans — may be found under this head. So may all the themes of patriotism and love of native land.

(b) *Work and Play*. Man's pursuits and avocations are fruitful sources of story theme. The soldier, the sailor, and the candle-stick maker, the work of the scholar, the politician, and the engineer, the daily round of the farm and the shop, are all represented in fiction, and always will be. Likewise are the play-themes. The football field, the summer resort, the theatre, the social "set," all furnish good ground on which to build plots.

(c) *The Emotions*. From the beginning until now, the emotions have furnished most of the themes for the storyteller, and will furnish them during all time to come. Love and hate, sorrow and joy, jealousy and revenge — all the deeps and the billows of the inner life — are ever-new sources of plot-motive.

(d) *Philosophy and Religion*. Under this more intellectual head may be grouped the psychological problem themes, and all that deal with the occult, the mysterious, the supernatural — with crime and with virtue in their relation to human character.

(e) *Men as Characters*. All the varied types of mankind, as they represent classes and localities, and as they stand

out as individuals, will yield story-themes in infinite variety. The stories of child-life, of youth, of married life, of old age, of strong and vigorous individuality, of men and women who were greater than their race, or work, or religion, or loves, or sorrows, will be depicted in the short-story with never-ending interest.

One word of caution here: It must be reiterated that a theme must not be general, like Love of Country, but it must be specific, and develop, for instance, how one man in a particularized crisis chooses between self-interest and the love of his adopted land.

4. Where to find Materials

(a) *In Your Own Locality.*

“That is best which liest nearest,
Shape from thence thy work of art.”

wrote a great literary artist,¹ and the truth is worth attention. The best source of material should be the field with which you are best acquainted. Thus, New York life, the breezy civilization of our Southwest, and the colorful republics of Central America, were constantly used by “O. Henry.” The New England village has been depicted by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman. John Fox has found rich material in the Kentucky mountains, and Hamlin Garland has told the stories he found in the vast Rockies.²

Similarly we have war stories, sea stories, college stories, stories of the factories, the mills, and the schoolroom —

¹ Longfellow, *Gaspar Becerra*.

² See Elias Liebermann, *The American Short-Story*, which deals with the short-story as local-color fiction.

stories of all sorts and conditions of life, by writers who knew places and people at first hand. But be sure you *know* the field of which you write, for imagination — which is a fine thing in its place — cannot always be trusted to create local color in the absence of first-hand observation.

(b) *In the Things that Interest You.* What you are naturally interested in and drawn to ought to be a good source of material. The adventurous, the mysterious, the problems of psychological reaction, the occult, will draw one writer — a historical epoch, another — racial peculiarities, a third. Think of the limitless field of nature which spreads all around you, and, in one or another of its phases, is always awakening your interest.

(c) *In Men and Women.* The chit-chat of the hotel veranda, the stories told in the camp, on the steamer-deck, in the club-rooms, in the church, in the heart-to-heart-talk with a friend — all may be gold-mines of rich material.

(d) *In Yourself.* "Look, then, into thine heart, and write!" wrote Longfellow,¹ paraphrasing Sir Philip Sidney. Your own life-experiences, your aspirations and failures and successes, the happenings that befall you, the "scrapes" you fall into — should be a living spring of story material. So should be your inner, emotional life, if you cultivate that objective subjectivity — which means in plain English, getting outside yourself to look in at yourself — a practice that will enable you to rejoice even at your own grief as affording an opportunity to make splendid "copy," or will help you to analyze your own joy

¹ Longfellow, *Prelude to Voices of the Night.*

so as to "write it up." This kind of faculty once developed, the writer can find themes wherever he goes, whatever he does, and so long as he lives, for he is his own treasure-house, from which he can constantly draw new things or old.

(e) *In Newspaper Cuttings.* The incidents and reporters' stories in the newspapers will always yield material. The events related can be transplanted to the locality with which you are most familiar, and the types of men and women you know best can be made to act in them. You can choose the phase of life that is most attractive to you, you can "subjectify" and translate the incidents into your own life experience. Maupassant sought the newspaper for his materials, so did "Octave Thanet," so does Richard Harding Davis. Many of the stories of "O. Henry" bear the stamp of the reporter.

One word of caution, however, regarding the use of themes from newspapers, books, and plays: be sure to alter them so as to avoid giving offence to the originals; and be equally sure that you handle the incidents with such invention that the story becomes your very own. Originality gathers its material where it wills, but stamps it with personality. When you borrow, return with compound interest, and so borrow that you do not mar all the results of your borrowing by one mistake in your facts.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. In a few words, state the theme of "The Dub."
2. Do the same for any three magazine stories you may select. Be careful not to confuse the title (which is merely

the convenient name) of a story, with its theme, which is the subject of the story — what it is about.

3. Under each of the five “general sources of themes” (pages 136-137), make a list of such themes as occur to you as offering good material for short-stories. Be specific.

4. Choose one from each group as being most attractive to you.

5. Construct a plot on *c*, or on any one of the themes in *c* that you prefer.

6. Criticise any theme from the list submitted by one of your classmates, on the following points:

(a) Is the theme too big for a successful short-story?

(b) Is it too trifling or slight?

(c) Has it been treated too often — that is, is it trite or hackneyed?

(d) Is it suitable for general reading?

(e) Is it interesting enough to make an experienced editor want to read it?

(f) Has the same theme been so well handled before that it would require especially brilliant work to make the story a good one?

(g) Would it make a pleasant or an unpleasant story?

7. Make a list of any sources of themes that may occur to you other than those named in this chapter.

8. Which source of short-story themes seems richest to you, and why?

NOTE. — It is earnestly urged that representative short-story collections (see the Reading List given in Chapter 1), and the stories in the best magazines be compared in order to discover what difference may exist be-

tween the themes that were popular twenty-five, fifty, and seventy-five years ago and those which are used today. A classified list of a hundred short-story themes found in the magazines of the current year would form a helpful guide to the student — provided he did not *imitate* those on the list, but rather studied them to learn what kinds now interest the public.

CHAPTER XIII

BUILDING A PLOT

A mere succession of incidents, even the most spirited, will no more constitute a plot than a multiplication of zeros, even the most infinite, will result in the production of a unit. This all will admit—but few trouble themselves to think further. The common notion seems to be in favor of mere *complexity*; but a plot, properly understood, is perfect only inasmuch as we shall find ourselves unable to detach from it or *disarrange* any single incident involved, without *destruction* to the mass. This we say is the point of perfection—a point never yet attained, but not on that account unattainable. Practically, we may consider a plot as of high excellence when no one of its component parts shall be susceptible of *removal* without *detriment* to the whole.

—EDGAR ALLAN POE, *Essays: The American Drama*.

After dealing with several thousand novices in story-writing, it is quite safe to say that we have found their chief difficulties to be two: comparatively few have really superior stories to tell; and even fewer know how to plot their stories effectively. Other difficulties there are, of course, but these are decidedly paramount.

The first of these obstacles to good story-writing we have discussed in the chapter on "Selecting a Theme," but it could be merely touched upon there, whereas those who constantly examine short-story manuscripts might give endless advice on this important subject. It will be enough now to emphasize the fact that most beginners labor to tell stories which are not worth telling—that is, not worth printing in competition with stories which are so much

more striking, unusual, pointed, and interesting. Because a story seems worth while to its author and his indulgent friends, offers no conclusive reason why anyone should assume that a vast public will prefer it to a carefully chosen and skilfully written story by an experienced writer. The truth is that the public makes absolutely *no* allowances for the fact that the writer is a beginner. He, she, may get friendly applause for a feeble "essay" on high-school commencement day; even the sophomore oration will be wildly cheered, and the college story in the monthly *Pink and Purple* may help to sell out the issue—but when a youth takes his first story to a magazine which is run to pay dividends to hard-headed stock-holders, all favor ends, and the story must make its way to the stony editorial heart on a basis of "Will our readers like it better than this story by A. or B.?"

Therefore, before plotting your story you must determine whether the theme, the story germ, the idea of the story as it will finally come to the reader, is so good—that is, so fresh, so clear, so pointed, so interesting, even so surprising—that it is worth the labor of plotting, writing, and offering it for sale.

To be sure, all this applies in a much more limited degree to the story written as an assigned exercise or for voluntary practice, for in such cases the standards will not be so high; furthermore, there are plenty of periodicals published both within and outside of college walls in which light, pleasing, and only fairly-well-done stories are regularly used. But even in these circumstances you had better set high standards of *interest* and *unusualness* for your own story-

ideas—their chance of success will then be all the greater.

Having decided on a theme, you must get a clear idea of

1. What Is a Plot?

A fictional plot is such an arrangement of the events in a story as will bring out effectively the basic situation, the main crisis, the minor crises, if any, and the dénouement.¹

The several terms of this definition will require some discussion, though not in the precise order of their statement above.

(a) A plot deals with events, and not merely with descriptions, remarks by the characters, clever comments by the author, or a series of pleasing or striking pictures. In a plot—which is the skeleton of the story, the story in brief—there must be an action. By this we do not mean merely a deed, but an action which hinges upon a character or characters in *a definite situation*, or condition of affairs, the working out of which constitutes the story. A plot is never a single photograph, however interesting the scene may be; it is a moving-picture presenting a number of carefully prearranged events—one event working upon another, one incident leading to another, one character influencing another, all in such a manner as to produce a definitely recognizable, concentrated, and climax-reaching result.

It is important to remember that the events of a plot

¹ The student is referred to *The Plot of the Short Story*, Henry Albert Phillips; and the chapters on plot in the following treatises: *The Short-Story*, Evelyn May Albright; *Short-Story Writing*, Charles Raymond Barrett; *Short-Story Writing*, Walter B. Pitkin; *Writing the Short-Story*, J. Berg Esenwein, and *Writing the Photoplay*, J. Berg Esenwein and Arthur Leeds.

need not be outward, or visible to the eye, for they may take place in the soul and have their results in character changes. But in the greater number of instances the events which go to make up a plot *will* be outward happenings, because it is natural for man to act out his feelings and to put his decisions into effect—what a man *is* will usually appear in what he *does*, and not merely in what he thinks, feels, and says. Internal action—the events of mind and heart and the decisions of the will—will therefore usually and best be displayed in a story-plot by external action. A story in which nothing happens is an impossibility; and the importance of the story will very largely depend on the importance of the events which go to make up its plot.

(b) *A plot is an arrangement*, and not a mere transcript of the natural order of events as you may find them in daily life. It is conceivable that a series of events in your experience might occur in such an order that without any readjustment they would form a perfect short-story plot; but such a thing is most unlikely—some planning, some shifting in the order of happenings, some additions, some eliminations, some toning down and some exaggerations, are pretty sure to be necessary in order to produce a good plot. Remember that a tale is not a plotted short-story.

Hence a plot is artificial—it is a work of art, an artifice, and not a growth of nature. But be neither alarmed nor deceived by this word *artificial*, for we use it in a carefully restricted sense, in its true original meaning—*made by art*. Now art is effective in direct proportion as it produces an effect of reality; and so it must be with a fictive plot—

the best plot is the one in which the events of real life are so arranged by the plotter as to produce a more effective impression than if they were not shifted artfully into a new combination but related just as they actually occurred. This is what we mean by saying that a story is *typical*, instead of being a mere transcript of actualities. Just as a painter has two courses set before him, so does the storyteller. The painter may compose a landscape or an action-scene by selecting parts of several scenes, imagining some others, then arranging the whole so as to produce a certain preconceived effect. The writer does precisely this in plotting a short-story. Or the pictorial artist may transfer a scene to his canvas, faithfully following his original. The writer may do likewise and thus produce a realistic tale.

Each of these courses has its merits, but they are distinct and must not be confused—let us repeat, a plot is a composition and not a perfect transcription from nature. It may be, and—except in the case of fantasy and romance and highly-wrought adventure—should be, truth-seeming to the last degree, indeed it should be typical of life and not a warped picture of the author's imperfect fancies; nevertheless, a plot departs from real happenings while yet remaining true to the spirit of reality.

The truth of all this will become more apparent when you consider some striking event in the life of an acquaintance. Interesting as it may be, in telling it as a short-story, which is so much more condensed and limited than the novel, would you not have at least to cut out a great many preliminaries and after-effects, or alter some of the

circumstances so as to heighten the dramatic effect, or contrive a stronger motive for the deed so as to preserve the reader's sympathy for the chief character—in a word, to take the same liberties with the actual facts that an anecdotist does with his story germ?

“But,” you say, “truth is stranger than fiction.” Yes, but not when considered as a *completed plot*—only when regarded as *plot material*. The events of real life are unsurpassed for interest, but some—though not always a great deal of—change is almost sure to be required to build them into a short-story plot. It is often said that *all* the events of a certain life are worth recording. How thoughtless! It would become most tiresome to record *all* of the happenings of a single day, be that day as dramatically exciting as it might be. The most extreme realist draws a discreet veil over the dull routine of shoe-shining, and hair-brushing, and hand-cleansing, and banal street-car conversation. He chooses and arranges so as to *seem* to be telling all in a natural order, yet all the while artfully subdues the unimportant so as to lead up to the points of major interest.

(c) *The EFFECT of a plot is its reason for being*, hence everything in the arrangement must cast a shrewd look toward what that effect (on the reader) is going to be, and further constant and equally acute glances at all the schemes you adopt to bring out the effect most strongly, pleasingly, surprisingly—or whatever may be your object.

(d) *A plot must feature a crisis in the life of the chief character in the story*. “A mere chain of happenings which do not involve some change or threatened change in the

character, the welfare, the destinies of the leading 'people,' would not form a plot. Jack goes to college, studies hard, makes the football team, enjoys the companionship of his class-mates, indulges in a few pranks, and returns home—there is no plot here, though there is plenty of plot *material*. But send Jack to college, and have him there find an old enemy, and at once a struggle begins. This gives us a complication, a 'mix-up,' a crisis; and the working out of that struggle constitutes the plot.

"So all dramatic and all fictional plots give the idea of a struggle, more or less definitely set forth. . . . The struggle in a plot may be comical as well as tragic. Mr. Botts ludicrously fights against a black-hand enemy—who proves to be his mischievous small son. Plump and fussy Mrs. Jellifer lays deep but always transparent plans to outwit her daughter's suitor, and is finally entrapped into so laughable a situation that she yields gracefully in the end.

"And so on indefinitely. Hamlet wars against his hesitating nature. Macbeth struggles with his conscience that reincarnates the murdered Banquo. Sentimental Tommy fights his own play-actor character. Tito Melema goes down beneath the weight of his accumulated insinuerities. Sometimes light shines in the end, sometimes the hero wins only to die. To be sure, these struggles suggest merely a single idea, whereas plots often become very elaborate and contain even sub-plots, counter-plots,¹

¹ The short-story plot must never contain a sub-plot, or a rival complication that might divert interest from the main complication.

and added complications of all sorts. But the basis is the same, and always in some form struggle pervades the drama; always this struggle ranges the subordinate characters for or against protagonist and antagonist, and the outcome is vitally part and substance of all that goes before—the end was sown when the seeds of the beginning were planted.”¹

It will be worth your while to pause at this point long enough to make it perfectly clear to your mind what are *the* big crises in each of a group of short-stories you may select. Notice what a *water-shed* the crisis really is, even when it may be hidden among circumstances—just as in real life one may not suspect that the hour of decision has struck, until suddenly confronted by its momentous issues. So softly does the crucial moment creep upon us at times that it comes and goes before we realize that the opportunity is forever past—some decisions are made by neglecting to make them!

The crisis, then, is a cross-roads, a parting of the ways, a decision in the balance, a necessary choice, a poised destiny, sudden recognition that something must be done, the appearance of an obstacle, the rise of a danger—*anything* that means a change or a threatened change in life.

If this crisis should prove to be unreal, trivial, obscure, or—and *this is a vital point*—not well concentrated, not sharply focused, then it is useless to waste time in trying to make it an effective story—it is sick at the very heart. If your reader cannot be brought to a pitch of real concern as to what your heroine is going to do about it, how your

¹ *Writing the Photoplay*, J. Berg Esenwein and Arthur Leeds.

hero is going to surmount the barrier, or what forces will enter the scene and finally resolve the difficulty, you have failed in your plot. In a real sense, the plot is the story, and the crisis, is the plot, so be careful of your crisis.

One caution seems important here: not every big story is built on a colossal crisis, for much depends on the results that accrue from the crisis. The main crisis in Maupassant's wonderful short-story, "The Necklace," consists in a woman's losing a diamond necklace borrowed from a friend. Let her husband merely buy another, and what a tepid story you have! But see the years of struggle required to pay the loans made necessary to replace the necklace with one which the friend would not suspect to be a substitution, consider the break-down of fineness and ideals under all this decade of terrible self-denial, and finally realize that the years of slavery were practically wasted because the borrowed necklace proved to be only paste after all, and we see how out of a commonplace crisis may grow a tremendous story. So bear this one thing in mind—a crisis is big in proportion as it leads to big things.

(e) *A plot may contain minor crises.* The main crisis—the big struggle, the chief obstacle, the tragic moment—in the story may be the outcome of an earlier lesser crisis, or even of several such. In "The Monkey's Paw," by W. W. Jacobs, if the son had not snatched the dried paw from the fire into which its owner had thrown it, thus deciding a foundation crisis in the lives of the whole family, there would have been no series of increasingly

terrible crises brought about by the three wishes—and of course, there would have been no story.

The play of minor crises in a short-story is well typified by Marguerite's testing of her love-fortunes by plucking the daisy petals: "He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me." With each minor crisis an element of suspense enters the story; this is followed by a resolution of the suspense; then a new element enters, causing an entirely new sort of suspense, which in turn is dispelled, only to make way for another difficulty—and thus the story zig-zags its way to the end. Indeed the progress of the plot may be compared to a not-too-elaborate maze in which one makes several ineffectual turnings and enters one or two blind alleys before finding the way out.

(f) *A plot must have a dénouement*—literally, as we have seen,¹ an untying of the knot. Of course, the knot is to be tied solely that it may be untied—therefore it is well not to tie it too tight! You must interest your readers in the complication, but the greater the crisis the greater the disappointment if you fail to provide a satisfying outcome. A tantalizing tangle is good fictional art only if you can untwist the yarn *swiftly, deftly, and with just the right amount of surprise*. Do not let your plot peter out—March may without dispute come in like a lion and go out like a lamb, but not so a short-story plot.

The dénouement of the plot must be a natural, inevitable, plausible, satisfying, and—usually—a surprising climax to the whole story. "Novelty and interest in the situations throughout the story, with an *increasing in-*

¹ Chapter XVIII.

terest in the dénouement, are the essential demands of a plot.”¹

When the interest rises to its apex, toward or at the close, the climax—the high-tide—is reached. A story without a climax is a mountain view without a mountain. Cherish your climax as a small boy does his circus ticket, for else there will be no “grand finale.”

2. The Process of Plot Building

(a) *The plot-germ* is likely to take on one of two forms: an *impression* which the author has strongly felt and wishes to transfer to his readers; or an interesting *situation*—by which we mean an interesting condition of affairs involving a complication and its outcome—which the writer feels could be worked up effectively. Whichever of these two forms your plot-germ, your inspiring idea, your *motif*, may take, the process of plot-building will directly lead to the big crisis of the plot.

There will always be room for discussion as to whether a given writer of stories is chiefly an artizan or an artist. Here are some very practical words from Mr. George Allan England, a college-bred writer whose stories are in wide demand, and range from the powerfully realistic and artistically wrought to the frankly sensational. These quotations are from a recent article in *The Independent*, in which Mr. England freely discusses his methods. Whether the young writer accepts his viewpoint or not, he cannot but find help in these intensely business-like records of how one story-writer gathers his material.

¹ Evelyn May Albright, *The Short-Story*.

“My eye is ever open, also my ear, for every bit of good material coming my way. Into the note-book goes now a bit of scenery, a face, a phrase, again some new idea, a plot-germ, an odd garment, a deformity, a beauty. The *olla podrida* receives all; and in good time, each bit is fished out and consumed. For example, I open the book at random and read:

“Aug. 21, '12.—Man on boat, dark Dago; hair gray, brushed back; eyes slant up, heavy lids; thick, up-curved lips, mustache waxed up, goatee, swarthy, handsome, looks like Pan.

“(He'll be the villain in some still-unwritten tale.)

“Sept. 1. Sea-view.—Dappled white and slate clouds, breeze, sun in dazzling shine, beach wet, black, green, shiny; seaweed smells. Weed, lank and wet. Haze over beach. Big surf makes lather. Sea very pale green, running to white at top of wave. Thunder of surf, mist of spray, wind from surf in face.

“(This will form part of the scene of reconciliation between M. and N. at some future date.)

“Gormin'. Any God's a-mint o' things to tell ye. Swell up on your leavin's. Make long arms. All puckered up to a gool-thrite. Double up the prunes! All of a high to go. He ain't goin' to stan' it a gret sight longer. Jillpoke. Hotter'n a skunk. Fatter'n a settled minister, etc., etc.

“(Local color stuff, Maine dialect.)

“So much for the minutia. My books contain a world of every kind of 'property,' like that at the stage-director's hand. No situation can arise where I cannot find a character, scenery and dialect to fit the case. Now for the plots.

“‘Where do you get your stories?’

“Everywhere! The writer who is alive, can pick up stories right from the air. On trains and boats, from the

newspapers, from the living speech of humans, from a thousand and one sources, good fiction can be culled. All you have to do is to watch for it—and grab it. And after years of work, the watching becomes second nature; you can't help it. Writers are just big tom-cats stalking plot-rats through the attics and cellars of life, or sitting at incident-holes waiting for the story-mice to pop out. It's so easy. Sometimes a chance bit of conversation will detonate a whole story or series of stories. About two years ago I took a morning walk with a friend. We got to speculating on what would happen if all the people in the world were killed, save two. From this germ has grown a trilogy of serials. Two have already been published in the *Cavalier*, and the third is now in course of preparation. They are 'Darkness and Dawn,' 'Beyond the Great Oblivion,' and 'The After-glow,' and they have kept bread and cheese on the shelf for a long time. . . .

"At the same time I employ myself and exploit my own labor. So I'm both slave and master. It's confusing. Then, too, arises the matter of disassociating myself from my work. As time passes, I find the factory more and more absorbs my personality.

"The business makes one cold-blooded. From observing other people and outside events, all with an eye to fiction, one comes to observe one's own self and acts with a similar view. One begins to capitalize one's own emotions, which is shocking.

"No longer can I enjoy a sunset, an opera, a foreign town, a friendship, or a flower, with disinterested frankness. No, always the shop intrudes! The note-book ever

itches to be in the hand. Alas! I leave the reader to figure it out for himself. When one's own woes and blisses, romancings, hates, loves, ambitions, passions, begin to assume the note-book stage, wherein lies any spontaneous enjoyment of life? Ask any writer, and—if he be not a 'short and ugly word' fellow—see if he won't tell you that his inner shrines have really become an annex to the shop!

"There lies something fundamentally tragic in the drying of a tear with the thought: 'No matter—even this grief, too, will make good copy!'"

"Perseverance, note-books, cold-bloodedness, scenarios, contracts, many hours a day in the factory, an observant eye, and some knowledge of what the public, 'that big baby,' really wants—these supply the lack of genius with most satisfactory sufficiency.

"Some day when I am very, *very* rich—oh, worth maybe \$5,000—I'm going to be a genius. Till then I shall remain a mechanic, sawing wood like any other, making the chips fly, capitalizing myself and everybody and everything else I can get my hands on, and in general enjoying life through the very function of trying to interpret it.

"Everything and everybody must pay toll to me and go into the note-books."

(b) *Where to start* in telling the story. This does not mean the *verbal* opening, but the scene, the condition of affairs, which ought first to be presented to the reader.

Naturally, you may begin anywhere—literally anywhere—in the story. Only, you must do so by deliberate intention and not by careless accident.

For instance, you may begin at the end, by showing Jack as a failure at college, and then presenting the conditions, the crucial struggle, and the outcome, all of which ended in his failure. Such a course demands considerable skill in story-telling, for there must be some absorbing happenings if our interest is to be maintained when all the time the outcome is known from the start. Such stories depend for their interest upon what *happens* before the final moments rather than on the outcome itself.

Again, the plot may begin in the very midst of the action and first show the chief character in the act of making the decision which is all-important because it leads to one resultant complication after another until the final crash—or triumph—ends the story. In such stories the foundation material is either suggested in a swift sentence or two, or skilfully revealed as the story goes on.

Or, the story may begin at the beginning, lay the foundation in full view of the reader, present the essential situation, bring the chief character to his hour of testing, and show the outcome, all in a natural way. This is the *obvious* way to tell a story, and therefore the way chosen by eleven amateurs out of a dozen. Do this sort of thing well or do it not at all. Superior story-telling is required to justify the laying of the scene and the gradual introduction of the characters before you have captured—don't slide over this word—captured the reader's interest, for the chances are in favor of his being absorbed in some subject other than the one you are writing about.

But wherever you begin in your plot-building, let your opening incident be a vital part of the plot and not a pre-

liminary cough to clear your throat. If, as Stevenson said, you, the writer, should be able to see the end from the beginning, it is none-the-less essential that you should see the end *in* the beginning—that your plot-roots, big and tiny, should verily grapple every inch of earth in which you have chosen to plant your story. The end of the story will be inevitably logical only if its plot-beginnings contain the end in germ.

(c) *Carrying on the story* is a process which you must determine to fit the case. Shall your plot be unfolded in a simple, direct order, or had it better back-track and cross-country until the final swift dash to the finish? No one can tell you. Study the plot-methods of good *present-day* story-tellers, jot down in outline the plots of the best twenty stories of today that you can find and observe the varying methods of narration—whether they are told in the first person, the third person, or partly in each way; whether the order of events is direct or indirect; whether the story is chiefly the *result* of a crisis, or the main interest depends on the action which *leads up to* the crisis. But when you have studied the work of other writers—and good ones only—dare to be yourself and choose a course which seems good to you. Only do not be too self-sufficient or you may get stuck in a bog.

(d) *The end of the plot.* Enough has been said elsewhere to show the importance of a striking, surprising, yet natural climax at the close of the story, for when once the high point has been reached, do not dawdle, but end swiftly. Moralizing and belated explanations at the close of a plot are like soup after dessert. Let the closing scene be the

logical, though generally the unexpected, outcome of the crisis; let it be a simple, compact, concentrated scene and not a complex one which may scatter interest and awaken other questions; let it be free of all taint of displeasing anticlimax; and let it be your best possible work.

DON'TS FOR PLOT-BUILDERS

Don't digress. When Kipling was tempted to enter a bypath he said, "But that's another story."

Don't confuse complexity with complication. Complexity is confusing, whereas the true complication throws a strong light forward toward the dénouement.

Don't think that big-sounding words can dress up a feeble crisis in the semblance of vigor.

Don't neglect the element of surprise, but let it enter naturally as the outcome of the situation; never drag it in.

Don't depend greatly on accidents or coincidences for your plot-situations. "It couldn't help but happen so" is much more convincing than "It just happened so."

Don't over-elaborate. It never pays to crowd two plots into one.

Don't neglect the unities—one time, one place, one *small* set of *big* characters, and one *vital* crisis, are better than a plot that wanders without restraint.

Don't plagiarize—don't make a mosaic—don't even imitate. Be yourself,—rather than be a trailer, fail like a man who has done his own best.

Don't model your plot-methods on those of writers who are unable to get into magazines of good standing. Study the masters.

Don't assume that all plots constructed by great storytellers are necessarily models, for many are not. Be discriminating.

Don't fail to test your plot for balance—it may be top-heavy, or weak in the middle, or feeble at the end.

Don't be obvious—nothing is more painful to an editor than to discern on page two what the Young Hopeful fondly hopes he has concealed until page sixteen.

Don't confuse the silly with the light, the lurid with the strong, or the immoral with the fascinating. Sensible readers are the only ones to whom the modern editor caters.

Don't assume that all great short-stories excel chiefly in plot. Many are masterpieces for other reasons. That does not prove that you can afford to ignore the present-day importance of plot—you are not living in the year 1832.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

NOTE: It is suggested that, since this is a long chapter and likely to cover the work of some days, the earlier exercises be taken up in connection with the first section of the chapter.

1. Plot Analysis

1. Make a very brief *plot-skeleton* of "The Dub" by setting down the events of the story in order, thus:

Bayard Newlyn Briggs enters Harvard.

Effect of entering as a junior is to keep him out of touch with his class.

Is induced to try for the team, etc.

2. Make a *plot-scenario* of "The Dub" by outlining

the action of each event more fully than the foregoing, being careful to keep each "scene" separate so as to indicate the progress of the story. The first section might be done thus:

Bayard Newlyn Briggs enters Harvard. Big six-footer, with foot-ball experience in a Western university.

Entering as a junior puts him out of touch with his classmates, etc.

3. Make a *plot-synopsis* of "The Dub" by briefly telling the story in the present tense, using terse but careful English, thus:

Bayard Newlyn Briggs, a big young athlete from a Western university, enters the junior class at Harvard, etc.

4. In a single sentence, state the situation—the state of matters that constitutes the essence of the story—in "The Dub."

5. What is the main crisis?

6. What are the minor crises? Give paragraph numbers.

7. What is the *dénouement*?

8. What is the climax?

9. Are there any minor climaxes?

10. Mark on the plot-skeleton the points where the main and minor crises and the climax occur.

NOTE: It is earnestly urged upon the student that the foregoing analytical processes be followed out persistently with really good stories in short-story collections and in magazines until it becomes comparatively easy to pick out the plot-elements of a story.

11. Criticise any two magazine stories for plot-structure on the following points: (*a*) Interest; (*b*) Probability; (*c*) Surprise; (*d*) General merits of the crisis; (*e*) Order of events; (*f*) Proportion or balance; (*g*) Climax; (*h*) The presence of irrelevant material; (*i*) Any other points you may think important. Confine your criticisms to plot-structure.

12. See if you can find in the magazines a story which is built on a rather commonplace crisis but which is redeemed by an ingenious series of resulting events.

13. Fully discuss the following plot-synopsis of "The Monkey's Paw" by W. W. Jacobs. The story contains about 3500 words and is found complete in *Harper's Magazine*, 105: 634; in a volume of Mr. Jacobs' short-stories, "The Lady of the Barge," and in "Studying the Short-Story," by J. Berg Esenwein.

Plot-synopsis

While visiting an elderly couple and their grown son in an English village, a British soldier, who has just returned from India, shows them a dried monkey's paw, upon which, he declares, an Indian fakir once cast a spell, so that by means of it each of three men could have three wishes granted him. He tells them that the previous owner had three wishes, the last being for death; and that he himself had three also, but he refuses to explain further in either case what the wishes were. He seems to fear the gruesome object and finally throws it on the fire, from which it is rescued by the son. The soldier finally consents to the old man's keeping it, though he warns him that no good

will come of it. The visitor then leaves and the old man takes the paw in his hand and wishes for two hundred pounds to clear their home of its mortgage. The next day a stranger comes and tells them that their son has been mangled to death by being caught in some machinery, and on behalf of the mill-owners offers them two hundred pounds. Ten days later the old woman again thinks of the monkey's paw, and insists that her husband wish their boy alive again. Under protest he does as she wishes. In the night they are aroused by a familiar rapping on their door. Expecting to see her boy, the woman runs to open the door, despite the entreaties of her husband, who remembers the awful condition of their son's body. While she is struggling with the door fastenings, the husband hurriedly finds the monkey's paw, and utters his third and last wish. Immediately the knocking ceases, and when the woman gets the door open, the street lamp flickering opposite is shining on a quiet and deserted road. His third wish has been granted.

2. Plot Construction

14. Set down a list of five plot-germs, or plot ideas.
15. Select the most promising and make (a) a plot-skeleton; (b) a plot-scenario; and (c) a plot-synopsis.
16. Criticise your own plot according to question 11.

NOTE: When questions 14, 15 and 16 have been satisfactorily developed, the other plot-germs called for in 14 should be developed in like manner, or new plots devised. It is by no means insisted on that this is the only way to build a plot—it is merely one good way.

17. Make a list of original plot-germs, or ideas, setting them down under the following heads, which may stimulate your invention: (a) Thwarted intrigues; (b) Surprising or alarming discoveries; (c) Betrayals of trust; (d) Revenge, with a new twist; (e) Struggle for possession of the same thing; (f) Treachery; (g) Humorous mistakes; (h) Influence of one character on another; (i) Power of environment to influence a decision; (j) Struggle against evil combinations. *Be sure that each germ is specific and not merely a general situation, like the foregoing.*

NOTE: The student should expand this list indefinitely and set down all original plot-germs in a note-book. This will stimulate invention. The habit of plot-invention may be cultivated astonishingly.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OPENING OF THE STORY

In so brief a piece of work as the short-story, the first impression and the last are of supreme importance, and there is little opportunity to redeem a bad beginning. Here the reader's taste must be consulted, rather than the author's ease. The story must begin where it has some interest, even if it would have been more convenient to begin somewhere else.

—EVELYN MAY ALBRIGHT, *The Short-Story*.

A good first impression is half the battle. The opening of your story is like the introduction of one friend to another, and opens the way to interesting things to come.

1. Where to Begin

The tale-writers usually began at the beginning, if not ages and ages before the beginning, and after a more or less long-winded introduction — which could just as well as not be skipped — they arrived at the story-part of their narratives. Even Irving, who wrote at the transition period between the tale and the short-story, revelled in long introductions, and sometimes, as we have seen, in introductions to the introductions. Hawthorne, not a generation later, made a stride in advance by generally beginning at the beginning; but Poe, the radical, the innovator, turned everything upside down by very often beginning in the middle, or even at the end. An examination of several of Poe's plots will illustrate his varied methods.

“The Purloined Letter” begins in the middle. The Prefect of Police, in a difficulty, seeks the aid of Monsieur

Dupin, the detective after whom so many later sleuths of crime have been modeled. In the conversation that follows, the reader is gradually told the story up to the point where the author's narrative began. A letter has been stolen, the thief is known, the motive for the theft is evident, the consequences threaten to be disastrous, so far the search has been fruitless — all this is told quite fully. The story then proceeds more rapidly to its climax, which is the presentation of the purloined letter to the astonished Prefect. Lastly, by a kind of double-back-action in the dénouement, or untying of the tangle, the reader is told the precise method of reasoning the detective pursued and how the letter was obtained.

“A Descent Into the Maelstrom” begins at the end, at the final consequence. A man has been physically wrecked by a horrible experience. Then he relates the experience, retracing his steps, so to say, for the benefit of the reader. Similarly, in “The Cask of Amontillado,” we are at once introduced to a man who gloats over a satisfied revenge. The story of the vengeance is then told, in direct order of incidents, just like a tale.

“If Poe had written ‘Rip Van Winkle,’” says the Edgar Allen Poe professor of English in the University of Virginia,¹ “he would have inverted the sequence of the story. He would have begun with Rip's return from the mountain. He would have directed the reader's attention, first of all, to the mysterious problem presented by the sudden emergence of a stranger who did not know that the Revolutionary War had been fought.”

¹ C. Alphonso Smith, *The American Short Story*, p. 13.

The advantage of beginning in the middle or at the end is that the reader is at once introduced to a dramatic crisis, so that his curiosity is immediately aroused and stimulated, whereas first to lay all the foundation of the plot in full view of the reader often proves to be a sleeping potion. To present the complication at once is the method used in detective stories. The disadvantage of this procedure, in perhaps all but detective stories, lies in the difficulty of sustaining interest while working back to the beginning, for the author has risked all upon the reader's deep desire to learn the outcome, and counts on this to hold interest in the meanwhile.

But in whatever part of the plot the story opens, the first and chief commandment for the short-story writer of today is to waste no time in beginning. With this commandment written in his heart, he is free to choose the where and the how to open his story.

2. How to Begin

It is good to begin with the setting of the story. A comparison of the narratives classified as short-stories which were published in the *Atlantic*, the *Century*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and *Lippincott's* magazines in the first volume of 1912 — covering six issues — shows that about four-tenths of these stories open with the setting. In other words, the reader is at once, and as a rule swiftly, given the environment, whether material or spiritual — the time, place, local color, weather conditions, and mood or mental atmosphere, which form the background of the narrative and interpenetrate its framework.

*THE LADY OF THE GARDEN*¹

The moonlight drifted down through the orchard, flooding the garden with dreamy radiance. It was a young moonlight, and its quality was mystic and ethereal, visions lurked in it.

*A SCION OF ADAM*²

Do you know Poketown? Have you ever driven through its one long, straggling street, guiding your horse carefully that you may avoid injuring the speckled hens and the pickaninnies that luxuriate promiscuously in the dust of the public highway?

*THE UNSUCCESSFUL ALUMNUS*³

The dinner was a long one. There were songs between the courses, and the courses were many. The banquet hall was gay with light and color. The class of 1898 was proud of its college spirit and class loyalty. This was 1908, but there were few empty chairs at the long table. The toasts were beginning at last. The master of ceremonies arose, bland and smiling, to present the first speaker.

The device of mingling a bit of dialogue with the setting, or of giving the setting by means of dialogue instead of direct description, or of mingling dialogue, setting, and a touch of characterization, will often enhance the interest of the opening. Such devices may be studied in the following examples:

*A TRANSFORMATION SCENE*⁴

"Keep her right on — right on!" said the skipper to the man at the wheel, just glancing back at the compass, and then back again at the waves that struck heavily against the port bow and

¹ Zephine Humphrey, *The Atlantic*, April, 1912.

² Ella Middleton Tybout, *Lippincott's*, April, 1912.

³ Rose Henderson, *Lippincott's*, June, 1912.

⁴ Henry W. Nevinson, *Harper's*, May, 1912.

flung the trawler's nose high out of water, letting her down with a splash of white foam into the trough.

"Right on it is," repeated the man methodically.

STRAIGHT GOLF¹

"Beastly of you, Pritchard, to keep us in town on a day like this!" puffed Darragh, that fattest and fussiest of the directors, as he plumped into a chair near the window, and mopped his face on one of the three clean handkerchiefs with which he provided himself in sultry weather.

"Too bad, Darragh! — How are you, Kent? — I fancy we are all in the same boat as to not liking the city to-day."

"I wish I *were* in a boat!" said McGlade, mournfully.

THE MIRACLE²

"It's the Second National! Mr. Stearns wishes to speak with you," said the stenographer, in a low tone, pushing the instrument across the desk toward her employer.

As Langdon took the receiver from her hand he glanced sharply at the woman; his eyes continued to study her face while he talked with the official of the bank.

"Yes, Langdon! — No, not today. — I'll call the first thing in the morning — I said the first thing in the morning!" His usual low, controlled telephone voice rose irritably at the last words, and he clanged the receiver on the instrument brusquely.

"We'll finish that letter now, Miss Condon," he said, and as he dictated the conventional business terms he was thinking: "Does she suspect? Of course, she must! How much does she know?"

A little more than two-tenths of the short-stories examined began by the direct introduction of one of the characters, sometimes the chief actor, sometimes the one who looked on. This method is time-saving, bringing the reader at once into the human relation — but it has some

¹ Anna Alice Chapin, *The Century*, November, 1910.

² Robert Herrick, *Harper's*, December, 1911.

of the disadvantages of staging a play without scenery, for the figures, especially when introduced by direct description, may seem to be as detached from their environment as silhouettes.

*RENTIN' HENS*¹

Mr. Barnaby was the type of man who called women angels and treated them as fools. He seemed to feel that by doing the former he had done all that could be expected of him, and with this once off his conscience he could form his conduct more closely according to facts as he saw them.

Characterization is given in the next examples, but less directly than in the foregoing, and the setting is also well suggested.

*THE BALANCE OF POWER*²

Joe Matson was not popular with his neighbors. He had had trouble with all of them every day for years. If Sam Peters' hogs found a defective panel of fence and foraged over in Matson's meadow, Matson promptly penned them up and demanded damages. If Silas Casey's turkeys strayed down the public road to Matson's barn and mingled with Matson's turkeys, they thereby were instantly amalgamated into Matson turkeys, and calmly claimed as such when Casey went for them.

*THE MAN WHO FAILED*³

As Robert Brockton started across the bridge toward Brooklyn, he turned and glanced hopelessly at the sky-scrapers behind him. In the gathering darkness they loomed, huge symbols of the triumphant force of New York. Brockton shrank from them because he knew that he was a failure; a failure in this country of ambition, this city of success.

¹ Florida Pier, *The Century*, December, 1911.

² John Reed Scott, *Lippincott's*, June, 1912.

³ Helen Ormsbee, *The Atlantic*, April, 1912.

About three-tenths of the remaining short-stories could be divided pretty evenly between those that opened with an incident, and those that opened with dialogue. The remaining one-tenth opened in various fashions.

The rapid plunge into the plot, necessitated by opening with incident, secures interest at once, but calls for experience and skill in gradually introducing setting and characterization as the story progresses, without allowing interest to flag. Such a beginning implies courage to cut out — a virtue essential to authorship.

MARY FELICIA ¹

When Larry Gordon came back to East Windsor to look at his grandfather's place, just inherited, and make up his mind about selling it, he found the little neighborhood in an uproar. Mary Felicia Blake had left her uncle's house, where she was the adopted daughter and "kindly treated," and walked fifteen miles on the road to running away.

The advantages of opening a story with dialogue are that it is interesting, for one always likes to hear what worth-while people have to say; and that it introduces the characters at once — it "hits them off," and reveals them directly. The disadvantages are that unless the actors deliver themselves of "information speeches" — and these are deadly if not very well handled — the writer will have to get down to his real introduction after he has brought his people on the stage, a palpable loss of time. This will have the effect of making them wait around while the writer speaks a piece himself. The reader will not like such an interruption after he has become interested in the folks,

¹ Alice Brown, *Harper's*, March, 1912.

and no matter how interesting the writer tries to be in his solid paragraph, it will taste dry and flat — like a chunk of bread — after the fizz and sparkle of conversation.

THE FROG IN THE WELL¹

“Oh, how can I work with all this noise?” Elsa burst out, petulantly, after a prolonged scratching of pencil against paper.

“Why don’t you take your work upstairs?” Mrs. Morgan asked.

“Oh, it’s too quiet up there, mother,” Elsa answered, discontent succeeding the petulance in her tone. “I feel lonesome away from everybody.”

Here the relation between the speakers, and a good deal of the character of at least one of them, are quickly brought out. Two short paragraphs of setting follow.

In the following example it is what “Miss Ladd did not say” that gives the setting and the information, while apparently continuing the dialogue.

THE HOMELIEST CHILD²

“I want a pretty baby,” Mrs. Thornton said, “about two years old — a happy, wholesome, healthy baby — and preferably a baby with golden curls — but above all a pretty baby.”

Miss Ladd did not say: “You are asking, my dear lady, for exactly what everybody else asks. All babies can’t be happy, wholesome, healthy, pretty, and golden-haired.” In fact, she did not say any of the things that on these occasions invariably recurred to her. She had had charge of the State’s orphans for five years, and had learned to suppress her college-bred free-spokenness.

¹ Inez Haynes Gilmore, *Harper’s*, May, 1912.

² Inez Haynes Gilmore, *Harper’s*, December, 1911.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Choose any brief, direct narrative and re-write it, beginning it in the middle or at the end — that is, invert, wholly or in part, the simple, direct sequence of incidents in the story.

2. Write original opening paragraphs for three stories designed to give the setting of (*a*) a congested district in a great city, (*b*) a lonely country place, (*c*) colonial times, or ante-bellum times in the South.

3. Write three dialogue openings which shall both reveal character and give the setting.

4. Write two introductory paragraphs which shall introduce at once the chief character in the story.

5. Write several brief, dramatic incidents suitable for the introductory paragraphs of stories which shall open with incident.

6. Select two stories from the magazines and criticise the openings favorably or unfavorably.

7. Re-write the description of setting on page 167, by giving the same information in the form of conversation.

8. Reverse the process with "The Frog in the Well," on page 171.

9. Recast at least three openings taken from the magazines, striving to make them more interesting. Do not *strain* after very new effects.

10. Write the opening of an original short-story in any manner you prefer, saying why you chose the particular method you adopted.

11. Give your opinion of the opening of "The Dub."

CHAPTER XV

THE SETTING

In writing the description in your stories, of places as well as of persons, draw on as many senses as you can. Everybody knows the commonplace observation of the power of smells to recall places and scenes and people and all kinds of associations. For example, at this moment, what does the smell of fresh lumber recall to you, or the smell of fresh-cut hay, or the smell of burning leaves? If these or other like words can stir in you a rich and thronging mass of associations, they will do the same for your reader if you put them in a story. . . . The best advice—in the case of description, is to avoid still life as much as you can.

. . . . where a painter would lay the emphasis on the color and outlines you can lay it on the things that move and flash.—J. H. GARDINER, *Forms of Prose Literature*.

The setting of a story may be described as the visible stage-scene, the atmosphere, and even the enveloping mood in which the actors play their parts—the surroundings of place, and tone, in which their lives, for the period of the story, are set. Let the setting be vague and general, and the story fails to produce a sense of reality, but let the setting be clearly, vividly, and exactly set forth, and the story-people are furnished with a convincing background against which their actions take on a naturalness that makes the whole story a thing of life.

So, generally speaking, the function of the setting is to enhance the “values” of the story; it is “description in the service of narrative,” description deftly applied not to what the characters feel and do, but to what they see

around them, for a man is as really set in the framework of his era, his country, his town, his home, his occupations, and his associates, as a picture is set in its frame and larger surroundings.

But setting is more than merely physical—it is the *spirit* of the time and place; it takes us into the surroundings and causes us to breathe their very air. The setting of the French Revolution was much wider than the visible France—it was the whole mood and tone of that turbulently awakening era, and no story set in that time would be convincing that pictured the one without somehow suggesting the other.

One potent means of producing the conviction of reality in setting is to awaken in the reader a response in his senses. The portrayal of the physical environment must appeal to the physical senses: a sea story must bring to us the smell of the sea, the sound of the waves, the sight of the tossing white crests—the *feeling* of it all, as Loti does in “An Iceland Fisherman;” while in a shoe-shop story the writer may let us hear the hum of the machines, see the mechanical movements of the stitchers, and feel the weariness of the long, long day.

Likewise, where the environment touches more on the psychical, we must have the mood flung over us like a mantle. The glamor of a touch of mystery, the creepiness of ghosts, the loneliness of a great solitude, as well as such moods as mental unrest, disappointment, expectancy, or joy, must be vicariously experienced by us through the medium of this subtle thing, the setting.

Ordinarily, as has been said, the setting is merely

tributary to the story, like the setting of a jewel, the scenery of the stage, the background of a picture. But sometimes the setting is the dominant note, it influences the actions of the characters and is the compelling force in shaping their lives—just as environment often is in real life. Thus, in “The Fall of the House of Usher”¹ the setting dominates, and plot and characterization are subordinate. In “The Outcasts of Poker Flat”² the climax actually results from the setting, and in “The Solitude”³ the setting is fundamental to the plot.

Yet this is not to say that the story exists *for* the setting even when it exists *on account* of the setting—the story must ever be the big element in fiction. And just here many writers—particularly beginners—err. A taste for writing naturally leads one to description, and facility in description craves expression; from this it is an easy step to writing a story so as to air a series of fine phrases. It is a deadly literary fault. A story worth telling will be like a good picture, it will warrant a good frame, but to put a miserable daub in an ornate frame will only bring the painter to ridicule, and a rich stage setting will not atone for dull lines in the mouths of the actors.

This brings up the important question of proportion. Do not overweight your story by too much setting. The question of what is the happy “just enough” will, of course, be decided by tact and experience, and is well worth your utmost care. A good story may be spoiled by too much attention to atmosphere and local color, yet

¹ Poe; ² Harte.

³ Fleta Campbell Springer, *Harper's*, March, 1912.

when the story is inextricably interwoven with the setting, and by it is actually made possible, much attention must be given to its faithful portrayal. In "The Dub" the whole story depends upon the pictures of the football field and the training quarters. To cut them down materially would be to mar the story.

The choice of a setting grows out of the story. Such a theme as that of "The Dub" naturally implies its setting, and the surroundings form the dominant element in the story. The writer takes us immediately not only into college life, but into the life of one particular college—the traditional rival of Yale—and into one intensive phase of college life, the football team, both on the "gridiron" and in the training house. To this strongly defined setting both characterization and plot are subordinate.

In choosing a setting for your story, stick to what you know. Do not guess at the nature of a Klondike landscape when your farthest north has been the upper tier of counties in Ohio. To be sure, a very fair knowledge of settings may be gotten at second hand, but be certain that your authorities are trustworthy, and spare no pains to verify minor points—otherwise you may unwittingly add to the gayety of those who read.

A setting may serve as a contrast to the action of the story or it may be in perfect harmony with it. Consider carefully which method will better serve your purpose.

Finally, be specific, and do not scatter your setting over a large extent of space or a long duration of time. The tendency of the *good* short-story is to *focus* interest—to focus it on one central incident, one small group of char-

acters, one period of time, and one dominating place. All that tends to divergence is weakness, all that tends to convergence is good.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. By numbers, list the paragraphs in "The Dub" which are wholly given to setting.

2. (a) Which are physical? (b) Which convey the tone or spirit of the surroundings?

3. Criticise any of them for accuracy, needless length, naturalness, and any other points which occur to you.

4. Select a magazine short-story in which setting is prominent and apply to it questions 1, 2, and 3.

5. Analyze the method used by Hawthorne, or Poe, or Stevenson, in any one short-story from any of them, that gives much attention to setting.

6. Find a short-story anywhere in which setting influences the destinies of the characters, as, for instance, it does in Jack London's long story, "White Fang."

7. What kind of story needs little setting?

8. What kinds need much more?

9. Outline briefly three settings in (a) a locality, (b) an occupation, and (c) a period of time, with which you are familiar.

10. Write (approximately) the opening five hundred words of an original story with special attention to setting.

11. Do the stories you admire give all the setting in lumps or do they scatter the setting throughout?

12. Construct an original plot in which the setting has a strong bearing on the chief character in some hour of crisis.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CHARACTERS

What is an original writer good for if he cannot compare, and combine, and invent? Here is a skeleton interview:

"Is it true, sir, that Mr. Pea Green sat for the villain in your last book?"

"Not exactly. The ears only are his, and them I lengthened and pointed somewhat. The nose is Brown's, turned a little to one side. The legs I took from Gray, but not the trousers; he never wears plaids. One mustn't be too personal, you know."

—F. REID, *Lippincott's Magazine*.

After all is said and done, people, living "human" people — people with the qualities which make us *feel* their humanity — are the most interesting things in the world, and much more worth while than what happens to them (plot), or where it happens (setting). We remember Kipling's Terence Mulvaney and Mrs. Deland's Dr. Lavendar—we know and love them after the stories we read about them have all merged into a blur.

There are two pre-requisites to successful character portrayal. You must first know your characters, know them so well that you can tell exactly what they would do and say in given circumstances, know them so well that you feel sense-impressions of their height, and complexion, and clothing, and gestures, of the sound of their voices and all their little mannerisms.

But knowledge alone, cold-blooded, analytical knowledge, will not give you the power to create living, "human"

people. For this you must *feel* your characters, you must be able to live inside of them — actually to transform yourself into each one of them, to rejoice, to suffer, to be tempted — in your own person to live their lives and experience their emotions so that you may portray them, whether saints or sinners or half-way-betweens, with understanding sympathy.

1. *How to Make the Reader Know the Characters*

The characters may be directly explained and interpreted by the writer:

Not a day passed by that the world was not the better because this man, humble as he was, had lived. He never stepped aside from his own path, yet would always reach a blessing to his neighbor. Almost involuntarily, too, he had become a preacher. The pure and high simplicity of his thought, which, as one of its manifestations, took shape in the good deeds that dropped silently from his hand, flowed also forth in speech. He uttered truths that wrought upon and molded the lives of those who heard him.¹

And after all this fine description the man remains an amiable shadow! This direct method of characterization is perhaps time-saving, and is sanctioned by the example of writers of repute, but it is one which was more frequently employed in the past than it is at present. The writer who uses it runs the risk of being unconvincing, and his characters often will lack reality. Perhaps as citizens of a democracy we are not so apt to believe statements supported only by the word of authority. Perhaps we have been trained by modern educational methods to accept

¹ Hawthorne, *The Great Stone Face*.

only what we discover for ourselves: the chemistry teacher no longer tells his classes that ammonia gas is soluble in water — he lets them mix the gas with water and see for themselves. So the modern writer no longer makes pages of statement about his characters, but he much more cleverly leads the reader to form his own opinions of them.

Characters in fiction may be made to reveal themselves in this more forcible and convincing, but less direct fashion, by telling what they say and what they do, by disclosing their thoughts, and describing their acts and gestures. In "A Coward," by Maupassant, the author in his own person makes no mention of the intense pride, the craven body, and the will impotent to control the betrayal of emotion, that made up the personality of the Viscount Gontran Joseph de Signoles. But he makes the man think, speak, and act before us — he *lives* on the printed page. In Kipling's "A Bank Fraud," we are not told that Reggie Burke was tolerant, patient, and sympathetic. We are told what he did and said, and we know the rest.

Dress and appearance may be used as aids to characterization. Writers of modern drama, and stage managers, make a great point of appropriate costuming and "make up," as a help to the audience to understand the persons in the play. Chaucer, in the prologue to "The Canterbury Tales," minutely described the dress and appearance of each member of the party. But in doing so he described a type *as* a person. Before we are acquainted with people we are apt to judge them largely by their clothes, and to form our private opinion of the woman who wears a sleazy

pink silk shirtwaist and a soiled collar, of the man with a diamond pin and dirty finger nails. Such a man and woman may be found on later acquaintance to be possessed of all the cardinal virtues, but if so, the outcome of knowing them better in the story, as in real life, will be a surprise.

The names of the characters should be carefully and appropriately chosen. A woman of dignity and maturity would be seriously handicapped by the name "Flossie." A fop or a dandy could hardly act the part if he were named after one of the Minor Prophets. A grandmother would not be natural as "May."

2. Where to Find the Characters

The old injunction, "Look into thine own heart and write," may always be followed with profit. Without transforming himself into his characters, the writer can imagine his own reactions to the stimulus of different situations, can fit himself — while retaining his own personality — into the time, the place, and the incident, so perfectly as to be aware of what he would feel and think and do in the circumstances. Then, if he is not able to perform so simple a feat as to turn himself inside out and write himself up, he had better adopt some profession whose first pre-requisite is not creative imagination.

Persons whom the writer knows in daily life may serve as models, or suggestions, for the characters in his story. Their dialect may or may not be reproduced; the conditions of their lives, liberties, and pursuit of happiness may be altered; the mannerisms of one may be grafted on the

personality of another — but a mental or an actual notebook should be kept to preserve their characteristics for future fictional use. The best characterization is not a matter of portraiture, of slavish and faithful copying and reproduction of traits in one's self or others. The author's models must be molded and re-created by his own fancy. *Then* he must put himself into them.

Sometimes a character will spring into the mind, full-grown, spontaneously generated to fit some dramatic incident — the right one in the right place — and to the writer such a character will have a reality as unquestionable as his own existence. But oftener it must be built up with patient care.

3. Ten Reminders for Character-Drawing

1. Learn to characterize by suggestion, as Kipling does in "The Captive": "I sat on his left hand, and he talked like — like the *Ladies' Home Journal*."

2. Keep each character consistently like itself, unless you are drawing an inconsistent character.

3. Distinguish between a type and an individual; not all soldiers are soldierly.

4. Remember that your characters have characters — good, or bad, or mixed, and they will be mostly mixed, if they are human.

5. Determine on what each character is like precisely, before you write, else the result will be a haphazard vagueness.

6. Don't think that constant harping on a single trait,

like the habit of cracking the knuckles, is enough to make a characterization vivid.

7. Remember that to caricature your characters by exaggerating all their traits is not likely to be convincing.

8. Do not have too many characters in the foreground; characters in the background will help strengthen the one or two principals.

9. It requires more ability to make a pleasant character interesting than to bring out a villain, but the villain is much over-worked in fiction.

10. Differentiate your characters perfectly; it will not do to let them all talk and act by the same set of rules.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Write four names appropriate to each one of the following characters: (*a*) A scholarly physician; (*b*) a country store-keeper; (*c*) a woman settlement-worker; (*d*) a society girl; (*e*) a college flirt; (*f*) a rough workman; (*g*) a brow-beaten clerk. Add to this list at will.

2. Further characterize the persons named in (1), by: (*a*) direct description; (*b*) indirect description of any kind, such as conversation, acts and gestures, dress and appearance.

3. Analyze at least four characterizations from current magazine fiction, showing the method employed in each case, and comparing the forcefulness of the presentation.

4. Write out a list of the actual (*a*) mental, (*b*) physical, (*c*) business or professional, and (*d*) social qualities of at least four characters that seem to you interesting enough to introduce into a work of fiction.

5. Add to these *actual* qualities some *imagined* ones which would make the characters more interesting if put into stories.

6. Which qualities would you dwell upon as being most striking?

7. Write about five hundred words, just as though it were in the heart of a short-story, in which special attention is given to character drawing. REMEMBER that what a character does and how he does it is often a better index to his character than the author's description of what he is. Furthermore, let the character's own words describe himself by revealing his own character indirectly.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CONVERSATION

Dialogue should have an interest of its own, aside from its function of characterization and suggestion of the circumstances. It should be made attractive, if possible, by wit, humor, brightness, or sheer individuality. The best way to accomplish this is by placing the characters in an interesting situation—EVELYN MAY ALBRIGHT, *The Short-Story*.

Our attention is held, as we turn over the magazine pages for rest and refreshment, not by solid chunks of unbroken paragraph, but by those stories that are variegated by conversation. As a rule, the lighter and frothier the story, the more will it effervesce and bubble-over with conversation, while the thought-breeding and serious narrative will be less and less "talky." Nevertheless, the stories are few that win their way into print without being somewhere lightened by dialogue.

Conversation may be used as a means to three chief ends — and several subordinate ends.

1. To Give Information

"Information speeches" are not easy things to handle. When the inexperienced writer is adjured to let his characters tell their own story he will often, to his sorrow, make them ostentatiously and unnaturally drag in lumbering biographical facts, declaim their relation to other characters, or explicitly inform the reader of their race,

color, or previous condition of servitude. Such bald and palpable artifice is sure to breed contempt. The information speech should be designed so skilfully as to conceal its design. Note in the following examples how time, place, character, and opening incident are all told in brief and well-handled dialogue:

"Nor I," cried John Harcourt, pulling up in the moon-silvered mist and clapping his hand to his pocket, "not a groat! Stay, here is a crooked sixpence of King James' that none but a fool would take. The merry robbers left me that for luck."

Dick Barton growled as he turned in his saddle. "We must ride on, then, till we find a cousin to loan us a few pounds. Sir Empty-purse fares ill at an inn."

"By my sore seat," laughed Harcourt, "we'll ride no farther tonight. Here we light, at the sign of the Magpie in the Moon. The rogues of Farnborough Cross have trimmed us well; the honest folks of Market Farnborough shall feed us better!"

"For a crooked sixpence!" grumbled Barton. "Will you beg our entertainment like a pair of landlopers, or will you take it by force like our late friends on the road?"

"Neither," said Harcourt, "but in the fashion that befits gentlemen — with a bold face, a gay tongue, and a fine coat well carried. Remember, Dick, look up, and no snivelling! Tell your ill-fortune and you bid for more. 'Tis Monsieur Debonair that owns the tavern."¹

"O mother, mother, how can we let you go!" wailed Kathleen.

"Kitty! how can you!" exclaimed Nancy. "What does it matter about us when mother has the long journey and father is so ill."

"It will not be for very long — it can't be," said Mrs. Carey wistfully. "The telegram only said 'symptoms of typhoid,' but these low fevers sometimes last a good while and are very weakening, so I may not be able to bring father back for two or three

¹ Henry Van Dyke, *The Return of the Charm*, *Harper's Magazine*, December, 1911.

weeks; I ought to be in Fortress Monroe day after tomorrow; you must take turns in writing to me, children.”¹

2. To Advance the Plot

The conversation is sometimes made an integral part of the plot structure, when at critical points in the story dialogue is used to voice a catastrophe, to reveal a mystery, to make, in some way, a turning-point. The dramatic effect is rendered more vivid and forceful when a crisis is revealed by the spoken word. This has been very effectively done in “The Necklace,” by Guy de Maupassant, where the grand climax is presented in the form of the last speech by Mme. Forestier.

Mme. Forestier stopped.

“You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine.”

“Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like.”

And she smiled with a joy which was at once naive and proud.

Mme. Forestier, strongly moved, took her two hands.

“Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!”

3. To Reveal Character

Though Talleyrand said that language was given us in order to conceal our thoughts, such a misuse of the gift is not allowable in fiction. There, what a man thinks in his heart — which is what he is — must in some way be disclosed, and this can be skilfully done through his speech. Thus Ameera’s mother, in Kipling’s “Without Benefit of Clergy,” lets us know that she is greedy and tricky and

¹ Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Mother Carey’s Chickens*.

careless regarding her daughter's death, by a word or two that she utters in response to the news, and that is far more effective than if the author had asserted those qualities in his own words.

"Is she dead, *sahib*?"

"She is dead."

"Then will I mourn, and afterwards take an inventory of the furniture in this house. For that will be mine. The *sahib* does not mean to resume it? It is so little, so very little, *sahib*, and I am an old woman. I would like to lie softly."

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT DIALOGUE

Is it intrinsically interesting, and not merely true to life — is the talk really worth recording?

Does *every word* of the dialogue serve some definite purpose in telling the story?

Does each character talk *throughout* consistently with his own nature?

Does the conversation perfectly fit the age, sex, nationality, education, station in life, mood, and present surroundings of the character speaking?

Is the dialogue well differentiated so as to distinguish one character from another?

Do the characters talk like real people, or do they converse on stilts?

Do the characters try to *say* everything, instead of using hints and — using the expression in a good sense — suggestive language?

Is the dialogue accompanied by expressive actions and gestures so as to cut out needless talk?

Is the dialogue well introduced?

Is dialogue well interspersed with action and explanation, or crowded all in a lump?

Is there *enough* dialogue?

What is the specific purpose of the dialogue in this story?

Finally, does the dialogue actually serve the purpose for which it is evidently intended?

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. From an examination of a number of magazine short-stories, make as large a list as you can of the different purposes which dialogue may serve in fiction; as, *to convey information, to delineate the character of the speaker*, etc. In each instance, make a cutting of a short example and properly mark it for identification.

2. What several purposes does dialogue serve in "The Dub?"

3. (a) Criticise minutely the dialogue in any short-story you choose. (b) Alter the dialogue so as to improve it.

4. Make a list of at least fifty past-participles which may be used in dialogue instead of "he *said*," or "she *remarked*;" as, *questioned, laughed, marvelled, stammered*, etc.

5. Alter the dialogue in any magazine story you choose by substituting more minutely descriptive verbs as indicated in Question 4.

6. (a) By counting the lines (so many to a column), find out what proportion of several magazine short-stories is given to dialogue. (b) Would a greater or smaller proportion of dialogue improve or mar these stories?

7. Re-write the first part of any magazine story you choose so as to tell the story almost entirely by dialogue.

8. Write three brief dialogues, one designed to give information, one to advance the plot, and one to reveal character.

9. Revise any of your own short-stories so as to improve its dialogue.

10. Write a short-story having a simple plot, using a large proportion of dialogue.

11. What types of stories demand a large proportion of dialogue?

12. What sorts of stories may profitably use little?

13. What difficulties do you find in reading conversations in dialect?

14. Try to find examples of dialect when words are needlessly misspelled, like *iz* for *is*.

15. (a) Try to find examples in which characters talk in one style in one part of the story and in another style elsewhere. (b) Correct the fault.

16. (a) Try to find examples in which characters talk unnaturally. (b) Correct the fault.

17. What do you understand by colloquial speech?

18. Illustrate by an original example how contractions and loose, easy speech may be allowed in fictional dialogue which would not be proper in a descriptive passage.

19. Cut from a magazine an example (a) of dialogue in which the introducing or the explanatory expression (like "then he challenged") precedes the remark; (b) follows the remark; (c) is inserted between two parts of the remark; (d) where no explanatory expression accompanies

the remark. Note the value of using a variety of styles in the same story.

20. Find and correct an instance of misleading or of obscure dialogue in fiction.

21. Can you think of a short-story or a novel in which the characters all talk alike, that is, not each "in character?" Note how important it is that the individuality of each character should be disclosed by the *manner* of his speech as well as by its *matter*.

22. Write a brief short-story almost wholly in dialogue, somewhat in the style of one of Anthony Hope's "Dolly Dialogues," or Eleanor Hoyt Brainerd's "The Misdemeanors of Nancy."

23. Write a paragraph criticizing, favorably or unfavorably, the dialogue in S. Weir Mitchell's "Dr. North and His Friends," or "Concerning Isabel Carnaby," by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ENDING OF THE STORY

I cannot drop this topic without urging the student to study carefully the maturer work of O. Henry, who surpasses all writers past and present in his mastery of the direct dénouement. What a host of his complications do not solve themselves until the last fifty words! — WALTER B. PITKIN, *The Art and Business of Story Writing*.

In a large sense, the ending generally includes three parts: the full climax, the dénouement, and the actual conclusion. Though the short-story may open at the beginning, the middle, or the end, there is only one legitimate place for its close, that is, immediately after the high-water-mark of greatest interest in the plot, known as the climax.

“Climax,” in the original Greek, meant a ladder, but as applied to narration it signifies the topmost rung of this ladder, or “the highest point of anything reached by gradual ascent.”¹ In the anecdote the time to stop is when you have made the “point,” in the fable when you have illustrated the moral; so in the short-story the time to stop is when the story is told, the “point” is made, the climax is reached. Since, however, the short-story is a longer and more highly developed literary form than either the anecdote or the fable, a brief dénouement is generally necessary.

“Dénouement” means *the untying*, and the orthodox

¹ Murray's *New English Dictionary*.

dénouement is the final unravelling of the complications, and its proper place is immediately following the climax. In some cases the climax and the dénouement are identical, as in Maupassant's "The Necklace." In stories where the mystery is unsolved, as in Hawthorne's "The White Old Maid," the dénouement is necessarily absent.

After the dénouement there may be a brief word of conclusion, to avoid the possibility of abruptness — the shock of a sudden leave-taking, as it were, on the part of the author. But it must be remembered that as a rule the story ends when the plot is complete, and that the dénouement and conclusion must move swiftly.

The Happy Ending

Long ago, the ancient Greeks, in the best period of their art, refused to portray grief or suffering of any kind, because they regarded these phases of life as abnormal and transient, and therefore not fit to be given permanent form.

Today the modern Americans like happy endings to stories — they like the lovers to marry, and the sick folks to get well, and the poor ones to have their salaries raised, and young people of all ages to go on trips to Europe. So, man's instincts, in ancient and modern times, seek happiness as the normal and usual condition, and tacitly decide that to be unhappy is as unnatural as to be sick or deformed.

The tragic ending is an effort to depict things as they are, rather than as they ought to be. Wise men have said that the great tragedies of human life are the result of some defect of character — hence, inevitable — and the

thoughtful reader finds in them a certain satisfaction for his sense of justice. Where the tragedy is one of circumstance rather than of character, as in Hawthorne's "The Ambitious Guest," the pleasure afforded to the reader will result from contrast, and from the welling-up of his sympathies.

But whether the story ends happily or unhappily, the writer must remember that he has to satisfy his reader — either by the contagious joyousness of the ending, or by a kind of intellectual satisfaction in its *rightness*, or by the pleasure of an opportunity to overflow with sympathy.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. From your own reading, say whether the happy ending is more frequent today than in "classic" short-stories, or if the reverse is true.
2. What is your own preference, and why?
3. Show how an unhappy ending may be a just ending.
4. Define Tragedy.
5. Clip from the magazines five short-story endings which will illustrate several different methods of concluding the stories, and point out the merits of each.
6. Briefly outline the plot of any one of these stories and write out an original conclusion in two forms: (*a*) altering the dénouement entirely, (*b*) retaining the dénouement (as a part of the plot) but using your own language in narrating it.
7. Find a short-story whose ending strikes you as being too long; re-write the closing sentences so as to condense it without marring the effect of the story.

8. Outline briefly the plot of an original story and write out the ending in full, using for the latter purpose no more than one hundred words.

9. Cite three short-stories whose endings you thoroughly approve and say why.

10. Criticise three endings of short-stories selected from any magazines or books. (b) Re-write one of the endings.

11. What is the effect on the reader when the climax of a story comes too early in the narration?

12. How is it possible to disclose the dénouement too soon?

CHAPTER XIX

THE TITLE OF THE STORY

A title that piques curiosity or suggests excitement or emotion will draw a crowd of readers the moment it appears, while a book soberly named must force its merits on the public. The former has all the merits of a pretty girl over a plain one; it is given an instantaneous chance to prove itself worth while.

—LITERARY CHAT, in *Munsey's Magazine*.

"The title of the story," says somebody, "is like the smear of honey on the outside of the jar, a foretaste of the good things within."

Since the title is the first thing we know about the story, it ought to be attractive enough to make us want to know more. For this reason it should not be too specific, as are many of the titles framed by beginners. "How Tom Won the Game," "Jenny's Surprise Party," or "An Unfortunate Choice," fairly thrust information upon us, telling so much that we hardly care to know any more. Similarly, the titles of a past generation sometimes sated curiosity in advance. "The Fair Jilt," "The Apparition of Mrs. Veal," "The Taking of the Redoubt," "Mrs. Perkins' Ball," are titles which half tell the tale.

On the other hand, the title should not be so vague and indeterminate as to give no hint of what is to come. Who could guess from the title "Up the Coulée" that the story is about two strongly contrasted characters; the whole interest of the title centers in what may be disclosed in that interesting locality.

Nor should the title be too meager of information. Merely the name of the leading character is hardly enough to attract: "Editha," "Monica," "Jim," "Henry Dunbar," are insufficient in themselves to allure; but "Editha's Burglar," "Molly Make-Believe," "Monica's Chief Engineer," and "Jim Lancey's Waterloo" may stimulate interest — though the last named is a rather old type.

There is a kind of ostentatiously simple title, implying a frankness and honesty that disdains to represent things better than they are: "The Dull Miss Archinard," "Just Folks," "The Unsuccessful Alumnus," "The Man Who Failed," "The Homeliest Child" are titles which seem to reveal shortcomings and limitations with such candor that the reader scents a surprise — he knows these must be worth-while people, or their sponsors would not have dared to disparage them.

A title which involves a piquant contradiction or incongruity, such as "Her Dearest Foe," "The Madonna of the Tubs," "Cabbages and Kings," "The Blind Who See," can be counted on to arrest attention.

Well-known quotations, too, are often effectively used as titles: "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," "The Fruit of the Tree," "When Half-Gods Go" and many others like these somehow lead us to expect a touch of novelty in the story.

The suggestive, symbolic title, that lures by a touch of mystery, that baffles yet attracts, will be to many readers irresistible. "The Opened Shutters," "At the Foot of the Rainbow," "Lavender and Old Lace," "Come and Find Me," "The Ship of Stars," "The Tree of Heaven," "The

House of a Thousand Candles" — such titles as these will be nearly sure to pique a glance through the pages, to see what the story can possibly be about.

A good criterion for a good title would be to ask yourself whether it is one that would make you choose that story to read first when you saw the name in the "Contents" page of a magazine.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Write appropriate titles, three of each kind, for detective stories, adventure stories, psychological problem stories, love stories, and stories about children.

2. Choose any story from a current magazine, and write six new titles for it.

3. Write titles for six stories, making them as attractive as possible, and state in each case why you believe the title to be one adapted to win attention.

4. Criticise the titles of three stories from a single issue of a magazine, having in mind the assertion that a title should fit the story, pique curiosity or interest, be brief, and not be misleading.

5. Do you like sub-titles or alternate ("or") titles?

6. Make a list of ten short-story titles which attracted you in books or magazines.

CHAPTER XX

PREPARING AND MARKETING THE MANUSCRIPT

There is no royal road to authorship. It is fight, fight, and keep on fighting to the end.—ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE, in *Practical Authorship*, by James Knapp Reeve.

1. The Work of Revision

While the methods of authors vary as widely as do their personalities, it is safe to say that most successful writers compose rapidly and then revise at leisure. When inspiration is at its height, the first glowing product may need but little revision, but this is so rare an attainment that the young writer had far better count on the necessity of a careful, painstaking revision of all literary composition.

The advantages of *scrutinizing* the first draft in a mood of coolness are obvious: the writer can then see his work through other eyes, he can carefully weigh the value of his own inventions, he can test the balance of the various parts of his story, he can see if he has succeeded in accomplishing his purpose, and he can decide which elements of the whole need retouching, which require rewriting, and which must be discarded and replaced by entirely new material.

The importance of cultivating the habit of impartial self-criticism cannot be over-estimated.¹ The greatest

¹ In Dr. Frederic Taber Cooper's *The Craftsmanship of Writing* are two admirable chapters which the young writer would do well to read: "The Power of Self-Criticism" and "The Gospel of Infinite Pains."

authors sometimes find it necessary to rewrite many times, and *always* review and polish until the story cannot be bettered, from their viewpoint. Surely no beginner can afford to be content with less faithful effort.

POINTS FOR SELF-CRITICISM

Is my plot clear, progressive, and natural?

Is the complication (main crisis) a real one, or does it seem artificial?

Is the outcome natural yet surprising?

Have I introduced any useless incidents?

Does the plot proceed without needless delays and roundabout digressions?

Are the chief characters brought out prominently?

Is the dialogue bright and natural?

Does the dialogue actually help to develop the story?

Are the opening and closing passages well suited to the style of story-telling I have selected?

Have I used any needless words?

Have I repeated any words when synonyms might better be used?

Are my sentences clear and grammatically correct?

Have I used a good variety of sentence forms?

Does each paragraph stand out as a little composition in itself, leading up to a climax of its own, and does it both naturally follow the preceding paragraph and prepare for the succeeding one?

Does the whole story drag at any point?

Does the story leave precisely the impression I designed that it should?

Is the story long enough to bring out the plot in a well-rounded manner?

Is the story short enough to make it compellingly interesting?

2. Preparing the Manuscript

Use white, heavy paper, size $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ — letter size.

Use a typewriter if it is at all possible.

Never write a story in "single space"; double space is better than triple space, except for the first draft.

Leave generous margins on all four sides of the paper.

Do not use a copying ribbon on your typewriter; it smudges readily.

Never write on both sides of the paper.

If you use a pen, do not write in a small hand and never crowd your lines.

Study any good magazine as a model to see how conversation is paragraphed and how quotation marks are used.

Every new remark of a new speaker in dialogue must be regarded as the beginning of a new paragraph and as such set in at least an inch to the right of the usual margin of lines on the left side of the sheet.

At the top of the first sheet of your manuscript place the following information:

Submitted by	2500 words
Henry L. Potter	
136 Drew St.,	
Binghamton, N.Y.	

MR. ULYSSES OF ITHACA

BY HENRY L POTTER

Number all sheets consecutively.

Do not fasten the sheets with a permanent fastener.

Fold the sheets no more than once or twice.

Never roll a manuscript — it annoys an editor to have to take time to straighten it for reading.

3. Marketing the Manuscript

Do not send a manuscript to any periodical without being absolutely sure that it is suited to it in length, general character, and grade of literary merit. A study of your market is just as necessary in disposing of manuscripts as it is in trying to sell any commodity. Writing is an art; but manuscript selling is a business, and your competitors will observe the conditions of the market even if you do not.

Never send out an untidy manuscript — it gives the impression of having been often rejected by editors. If you do not respect your work enough to recopy it neatly when once it is soiled, how can you expect an editor to give it a respectful reading?

Always address your manuscript to the magazine or paper and not to the editor or a member of the staff personally.

Do not write long letters to a busy editor — he is not interested in what you think of your work; he will judge the work itself. *No* letter is necessary; but if you write, let it be only a line or two.

Do not try to exact a high price for your manuscript — the editor may return it unread if you name a rate higher than the regular rate paid by that periodical.

Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope, but do not put your manuscript in the *return envelope*.

Be sure to affix enough stamps to *both* envelopes. Sharp practice in saving postage is sure to impress your judge unfavorably.

Cheap envelopes are poor economy and often result in a marred manuscript.

Be sure to write your name and address on the upper left corner of the "going" envelope.

Be careful to send your manuscript to the correct address. Every day, stories are addressed to magazines in cities where they were never located.

"Influence" with the editor will not secure for your manuscript any more careful reading than its real merits will warrant.

Send "timely" material *at least* four months before the date when you hope to have it appear. Six months is even better.

Do not be impatient for a report on your manuscript. Most magazines pass upon all submitted material within two weeks, but occasionally a longer time is required, for sometimes manuscripts come in in unusually large numbers, or sickness or vacations may cause work to accumulate. Furthermore, a manuscript may be held for more careful consideration. If you do not receive a report within a month, it will do no harm to write a courteous request for a report, but brusque letters can serve no good purpose even when editors are disregarding of the writer's convenience — and this is rarely the case.

Every time your manuscript comes back, go over it carefully to see if you can discover why it was rejected.

Keep a manuscript record so that you may know at all times where your story is, when it went there, and when it came back. This will save you the embarrassment and needless expense of re-submitting a story.

Do not be discouraged with one, two, or even ten rejections. The "big" magazines are extremely hard to sell to because their standards are high and you must compete with the ablest and most experienced writers. Remember that there are literally *hundreds* of places to sell manuscripts, and not merely the score or more of periodicals with which you are familiar.¹

¹ *Where and How to Sell Manuscripts*, compiled by William B. McCourtie, published by The Home Correspondence School, gives over 6000 classified addresses of all sorts of periodicals, with detailed information regarding their particular needs. Price, \$3.00.

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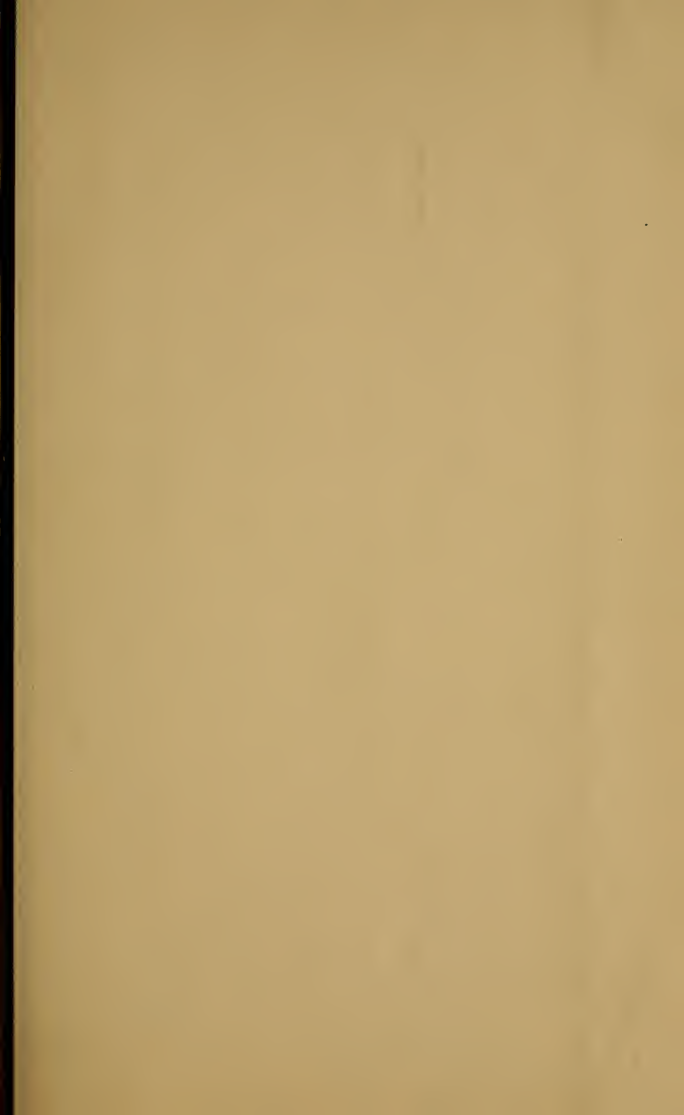
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